



## **Is the Holocaust still relevant? - Nicoletta Gray and Joshua Evans**

In March, we were given the opportunity to visit Nazi concentration camps at Auschwitz, where over one million people were killed. This was made possible through the Lessons from Auschwitz Project, run by the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET). Through this project, we have learned a lot about the Holocaust in relation to modern-day society, and how we can prevent its tragedies from happening again.

Firstly, it is necessary to understand what is meant by the Holocaust. According to the HET, it can be defined as an attempt to murder all Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. Approximately six million Jews were murdered, 1.5 million of whom were children. However, it is crucial that we remember it not as one murder of six million, but as six million individual murders. We must remember that the Holocaust is still significant today, not just through those who lost friends and family during the Holocaust, but through how it demonstrates the reality of human nature.

The anti-semitic nature of the Holocaust by Adolf Hitler was undoubtedly cruel. But how did a hatred of one man extend to a genocide of the Jewish community in Europe? As Hitler's power increased within Germany, his radical views became normalised, or ignored by the desperate, directing hatred towards the Jewish community. This gave Hitler an excuse to start the Holocaust. As World War II progressed and Germany invaded many other countries, his anti-semitic policies targeted Jews not just in Germany, but across Europe. But did the Jewish community actually do anything wrong? No, and in fact many of the targeted "Jews" did not even practise Judaism, and were German before they were Jewish.

But how is this relevant to modern day society as the Holocaust happened over seventy years ago? In modern day society, the hatred may not yet be as extreme and lethal as the Holocaust, but it is still present in our lives. These people do not care about those they are hurting, or the implications their views may have on society. What happens if these people get in positions of power? Would society's morals be abandoned if these people are allowed to discriminate freely?

The Holocaust is important in teaching us that we have a responsibility to love everyone, even if we aren't the same race, religion, ethnicity, etc. We cannot allow people to discriminate against others, whether that be on a small individual scale like bullying or on a large national or global scale.

A current example of the discrimination is the prejudice towards Muslims, for example, UKIP's proposed burqa ban if they get in power. The prejudice and discrimination towards Muslims causes an entire people to feel victimised and demonstrates the lack of understanding that many people have for other cultures.

Knowing about the Holocaust and the lessons it teaches us can give us more confidence in to stand up to discrimination and refuse to let it happen. We must understand that community is extremely powerful and can be a great positive force. We can choose to include or exclude. We can help those discriminated against, as so few did during the Holocaust. We can protect each other and celebrate our differences rather than using them to feel superior. We must use the Holocaust as a tool to understand how destructive discrimination is to our society, rather than giving hateful people the means to act upon their hatred.

The Holocaust teaches us that no form of discrimination, no matter how small, can be allowed to escalate into something devastating. It warns us that we cannot be inactive just because something does not affect us. We must love those around us in order to better our society. The Holocaust teaches us that love is the best weapon against discrimination.