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The Holocaust Scholarship 2016

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Never Forget!

The genocide of six million people that took place during the Holocaust is considered to be one of the most tragic events in human history. It exposed and laid bare the darkest and most evil side of humanity and for generations has served as a warning of what can happen when democracy is not appreciated and protected. Indeed, the horrors of the Holocaust can never be forgotten. Failing to remember would be dishonoring and disrespecting the victims. The South Carolina Superintendent of Education proposal to deny students the opportunity to learn about the Holocaust makes this horrendous event in history seem trivial. Holocaust education is important because it relays the message that racism, hatred, and oppression should not be tolerated. It teaches and urges the students of South Carolina to not be indifferent and apathetic as they watch injustice happen, but to instead protest, speak up and stop atrocities.

Indeed, the Holocaust learning experience is of vital importance to the young people of South Carolina, who at times have seen infringement of civil rights, abuse of power and prejudice in their state. Learning about what occurred in the Holocaust helps students realize that sitting in silence, watching any race or human being be discriminated and subject to intense hatred is never acceptable. Being educated about the Holocaust inspires students to be a voice for those that don't have one. Being indifferent and failing to take action is dangerous to both society and the soul. Each of us has the responsibility to fight intolerance and hatred. When we

don't embrace that responsibility we become accomplices! Martin Niemöller (1892–1984), a German anti-Nazi theologian and pastor, describes these sentiments so vividly in his famous poem, "First They Came":

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—

Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

On May 8th, 1945 boys from the Hitler Youth and residents of Dachau, were forced by Americans, to come face to face with the terrors of the concentration camps. The German people, were forced to tour the camps, look at the naked corpses and take personally responsibility for the horrors that occurred in those camps (German Civilians). They had done nothing to help the innocent prisoners. They went on with their lives denying the horrors and brutality that was happening in the concentration camps. Their goal was to forget and put it behind them. Surely the goal of the Superintendent of Education is not to shield the students from the unimaginable atrocities? Surely it's not an attempt to bury and forget such a vital part of American history?

Furthermore, Holocaust education provides the students of South Carolina the opportunity to learn about hatred and forgiveness, fear and hope, courage and survival in the face

of immense suffering and challenges. It enables students to face similar daunting challenges with an open mind and with greater awareness to morality, as well as, consider and reflect on their own hearts and the adults they want to become. It encourages students to carefully consider the culture they live in and never repeat the same mistakes (Why Study the Holocaust). It opens their eyes to the dangers of peer pressure and conforming and helps them recognize their own prejudices. We cannot allow the Holocaust to be just another event that happened in the past. It needs to become personal and touch our hearts. I will never forget the day I had the privilege of walking into Anne Frank's house while visiting Amsterdam. As I walked into the secret annex, Anne Frank and the Holocaust became painfully real. It struck a profound chord in the depths of my heart that will stay with me forever. This is the kind of connection South Carolina students need to feel with the Holocaust. It's the emotion and inspiration that will help the students become better people.

In conclusion, Holocaust education teaches South Carolina students how to embrace people from all walks of life and accept diversity. Tragically, the Holocaust is not an isolated event in history. It has happened in countries like Rwanda, Liberia, Yugoslavia and Sudan. Disapproving or even feeling heartsick about such atrocities is not enough. It is vital for the students of South Carolina to keep the terrible events of the Holocaust alive. Students must learn how to take a stand, nourish democracy and make a difference.

Works Cited

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