A Trip That Left A Mark On My Life: Visiting The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

From the black & white images to the pile of lifeless shoes, it was a trip that I would never forget. Visiting The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was a moving and shocking experience. After years of Nazi rule in Germany, Hitler's "final solution", now known as the Holocaust, came to the mass killing centers constructed in the concentration camps of Poland. Germany's politician Adolf Hitler ordered the Nazi party to take the lives of 6 million innocent Jews by using many unforgivable methods to accomplish these aims, some of which were revealed to me during my visit to the museum. I was not aware of the extent of their attempts to establish themselves as ideal specimens of the human race. Before the trip I knew that the world wasn't always filled with great people but afterwards I realized how hatred can go so far and how the world is not always filled with sunshine and rainbows and that hatred has always been a part of our world, even till this day.

During my freshman year of highschool, my English teacher decided that we were goning to go to The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. She wanted to take us there because we recently had finished a book in class called "Night" by Elie Wiesel. "Night" is about Elie Wiesel who is a holocaust survior. In the book he talks about his experience with his father in the Nazi German concentration camps at Auschwitz and Buchenwald. The story was not only moving to me but it was also moving to my fellow peers and teacher, which is why we were all eager to visit the holocaust memorial museum.

Walking into the museum I made my way towards the elevator and before I entered, I received an ID card. The ID card was a passport-sized booklet that told the true story of a person who lived during the Holocaust. Grasping the identification card, I looked around and noticed that people's voices lowered and their faces turned somber. The walls were painted grey and they were paneled with plain dark gray steel. I got the feeling that I was trapped, that something bad is about to happen. There were many exhibits throughout the museum but the exhibit that really hit me was when I stood in the boxcar for a couple of seconds, and I looked at the scuffed floor, where the paint was worn down to the wood, and I could really picture all of those people being crammed into the boxcar that were being sent to their deaths. It was upsetting to know that an event so cruel happened and that so many innocent lives were taken. After the exhibit I learned that one individual can make a great difference and I believe that it's important to visit the museum and all the exhibits, so that we don't forget about the cruel events that occurred.

Another exhibit that shocked me was this small dim lighted room that was filled with thousands of shoes. The pile of shoes were filled with Men's loafers, children's boots and women's heels which are piled in a disordered heap. The shoes belonged to the Jews that were entering the gas chambers, they were told they would be building new lives someplace in the East, but they were not told that they were being sent to be killed. The longer I kept looking at them, the more I wondered about the people that once wore these shoes. What were they like? What were they thinking when they wore them? These were all questions that lingered in my mind, even long after I left the museum. The shoes said more to me than words could ever because before this trip I had only heard about the holocaust from my history teachers or in books, but seeing the pictures and the exhibits in person made it more real and moving for me.

After the visit, I begin to understand the importance of decision making and how their are people in the world who decide to do good but there are also people in the world that decide to do bad. The museum taught me that the Holocaust was not only about the loss of six million, It was also about the loss of future generations. Not only did it show me the horrors and hatred that genocide brings, but how we need to take responsibility in mking sure that something like that never happens again. Visiting the Holocaust Memorial Museum was an eye opening expericne for me, it was a trip that left a mark on my life which made me realize that we all need to learn and appreciate our role and the importance of it not only our own communities but of others as well.