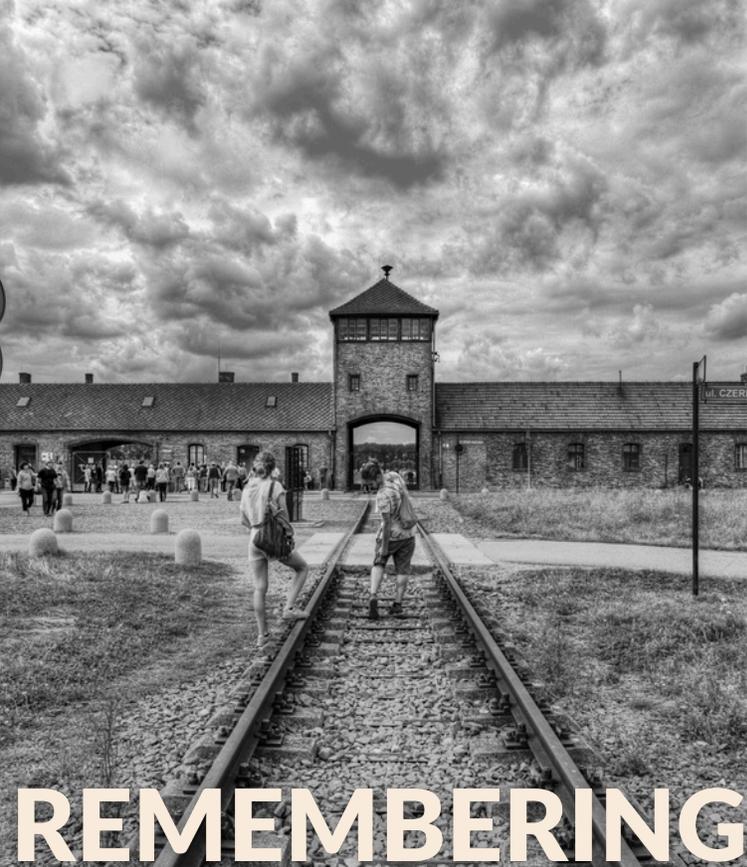


September 15th, 1933



In Nuremberg, Germany, Hitler's Reichstag (the Nazi parliament) ratified the 'Nuremberg Laws'. The Nuremberg Laws were legislation pieces aimed at depriving Jewish people of their citizenship rights. Though this was not the first crime leveled against the Jewish people under the Third Reich, it was the first concrete step towards what would be later known as The Holocaust. The events that led to the systematic murder of 11 million people were gradual. A ramp rather than a cliff. It all began with rhetoric. Amid the economic devastation left behind by the first World War, the German people faced a lot of hard questions regarding the reality of their loss. Germany's reluctance to address the result of the war led to them othering and oppressing Jewish and Romani populations as scapegoats. These actions were justified by the idea of a threat against German ethnic "purity" being the cause of their collective woes. It's easy for people to hate what they fear, and easy to dehumanize what they hate.

"Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul, and turned my dreams to dust."

-Elie Wiesel

REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

Over the next four years, anti-Jewish legislation grew in scope and complexity. Germany defined Jews as those with either three Jewish grandparents or those with two Jewish grandparents who at any time self identified as Jews. Jews were banned from marrying non-Jews. Jewish doctors were banned from practicing medicine. A federal mandate demanded all Jewish businesses be turned over to 'Aryan' hands. In January of 1939, the sixth anniversary of Hitler's rise to power, he warned that if war broke out, it would mean the extermination of European Jews. Hitler began WWII nine months later by invading Poland.

"The Night of Broken Glass"

'Kristallnacht', or the 'the Night of Broken Glass', was a pogrom sponsored by the SS (the Nazi's paramilitary arm). Across Germany & Austria paramilitary led riots targeted Jewish places. 7500 Jewish businesses and 200 synagogues were vandalized or destroyed. 30,000 Jewish men were sent to work camps. Following this, the German government levied a billion dollar fine to the German Jews for destruction of private property during the night.



Above, Left; the front gate of Auschwitz Death Camp.
Left; the interior of a burned out Austrian synagogue.
Above, Right; a Polish Jew showing his enforced armband.
Below, Right; the outside of a Jewish Ghetto

Reinhard Heydrich was Chief of the the Nazi Gestapo, Hitler's secret police force, and as such he was given directive to manage all Jewish people inside German occupied territory. Heydrich orders the establishment of Polish Ghettos to contain the Jewish population. Jews under occupation were mandated to wear an armband or patch showing the Star of David in order to be more easily recognized. On October 28th, 1939 the first ghetto was established in Piotrków. Ghettos in Warsaw and Lodz followed. Germany began forcibly deporting Czech and Austrian Jews to Poland in order to centralize the populace. By the time they were sealed, Lodz had crammed 165,000 people into a 1.5 miles. Warsaw? 500,000.

The crowded living inside a Ghetto was an atrocity. Ghettos were intentionally walled off from surrounding cities and other members of society, often in isolated country side areas. Individuals trapped inside were subjected to extreme confinement and limited entry and exit options due to the razor wire and solid wall barriers. Multiple families were forced to share small apartments. The human demand would cause plumbing to fail, leading waste to be tossed in the streets. Food was a resource to be competed over. Combined with the inaccessibility of fuel for heating or warm clothes, tens of thousands would die to disease, starvation or exposure. In spite of the oppression they faced, members of the community were still able to set up many schools in secret to teach and shelter children in the ghetto.

“The Road to Auschwitz was Built by Hate, but Paved with Indifference” -Ian Kershaw

January 22nd, 1942

Confident in their ability to win the War, at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin top ranking SS officials outlined their ‘Final Solution’. The Final Solution would be their plan and strategy towards murdering every Jewish person in Europe. The language is key, as terminology such as ‘Solution’ or ‘Liquidation’ serves as a psychological smokescreen for mass murder. That disconnection can benefit the criminal ordered to carry out the orders and provide opacity to outside parties looking in. Technology during the 1940’s saw advancement in its lethal capacity and its capability of inflicting harm or causing death on larger populations of people. As a result, the need for direct violence by soldiers was minimized.

The industrial approach to crimes against humanity came in several forms. Most infamous were the gas chambers. Jewish people would be made to undress and surrender personal belongings. Prisoners would either be ordered into fraudulent Red Cross vans that were hermetically sealed for a medical exam, or, more prevalently, herded into the showers with the false promise of cleanliness. The lights would go out and from the faucets came Zyklon B gas. After 5-10 minutes, men would enter the gas chambers and clear out the bodies, sending them to crematoriums to be burned to ash, but not before gold and silver fillings were extracted from the victims’ teeth. the estimated worth of all property stolen from Jews by the Nazis is 170 billion USD.

The insides of many death camps played host to cruel human experiments. Not having rights, the human prisoners made for convenient test subjects. Prisoners were subject to deadly cold, rapid changes in air pressure, and were intentionally infected with diseases just to gauge what would happen. Nazi Doctor, Josef Mengele, had a particular interest in twins. He scoured Romani sections of the camp for them, as one twin could serve as a ‘control sample’ while he could conduct any kind of experiment on the other.



In November of 1945 an international tribunal formed to pass

judgment on surviving Nazi war criminals. The trials, fittingly, took place in Nuremberg; the city where the campaign of hatred began. For the first time in human history, not only were people charged on ‘Crimes Against Humanity’, but the term itself was defined legally for the first time. The spirit of the law emphasizes the intent to cause suffering among a civilian population, something that distinguishes it from war crimes.

By reducing a person to a serial number, labor, and shortly after...

ashes, the process of dehumanization compartmentalizes the humanity of those victimized. Holocaust Remembrance Day, observed annually, serves a solemn occasion to honor the millions of lives lost and to ensure that the insidious atrocities are never forgotten. In recognition of Holocaust Remembrance Day, explore several online exhibition accessible through the US Holocaust museum by clicking [here](https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/online-exhibitions); <https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/online-exhibitions>



The infamous gate to Auschwitz Death Camp. The sign translates to ‘Work Sets You Free.’

No element of the Holocaust is more emblematic of the scale of horror on display as Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp. In May of 1940, Auschwitz was established as a Work, or Concentration Camp. Shortly after the Wannsee ‘Final Solution’, Auschwitz was modified with its Birkenau expansion to serve as an Extermination Camp for Jews, Romani people, and Polish & Russian prisoners. During it’s operation, at least 1.1 million people were murdered inside its walls. According to the facility’s commandant, Rudolph Höss, in May & June of 1944, 10,000 prisoners were being murdered per day. Prisoners such as Anne Frank, Elie Weisel, and Primo Levi were all interned at Auschwitz. Victims would be forcibly tattooed with serial numbers; on the breast for soviet prisoners, on the left arm for all civilian prisoners.

The Holocaust ended in the first half of 1945. The Allies, lead by the United States and Soviet Union, had invaded Germany liberating camps as they went. Hitler and his Reichstag committed suicide rather than face justice for their crimes. By the end of the Holocaust, Nazi Germany murdered 11 million people. 6 million of those were Jews. That amounted to two thirds of all the Jewish people in Europe wiped out, and a whole third of Jewish people worldwide. Other victims of the Holocaust include large numbers of Romani, African, and LGBTQ+ ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

This exhibit to the right, from the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, intends to illustrate the scale of lives lost with this mass pile of shoes, each belonging to a real victim.

