

The Holocaust was one of the largest genocides of the twentieth century, when 6 million Jews were killed, which is almost twice the population of Connecticut today. Millions of people were targeted and killed primarily based on their ethnic, cultural, and social background. The Holocaust was not an accident; it occurred because individuals, organizations, and governments made choices that not only legalized discrimination but also allowed prejudice, hatred, and ultimately mass murder to occur. In order to prevent this tragedy in the future, we must make the active choice of educating people about acceptance of all races and religions.

In addition to targeting the Jewish people, the Nazis also targeted Gypsies, homosexuals, mentally ill, the handicapped, the blind, the deaf, and the African-German population. Teaching the Holocaust shows where anti-Semitism, prejudice and racism in their extreme form can lead to. Not only will teaching the Holocaust educate students about diversity, but also inclusion.

Most students demonstrate a high level of interest in studying this history precisely because the subject raises questions of fairness, justice, individual identity, peer pressure, conformity, indifference, and obedience—issues that adolescents like myself confront in their daily lives. Personally, within my high school career, I have experienced peer pressure on numerous occasions. It has helped me realize the amount of power that just one voice can have by speaking up. During the Holocaust, there were many times where one voice was able to save many lives. It is this concept that we want to convey to students in all levels of education. The best way this can be done is mandating the Holocaust in all schools curriculums in Connecticut.

If you do not speak up on yours or someone else's rights being infringed on, you are contributing to the problem. As the late, great Elie Wiesel once stated, "to forget the Holocaust would be killing twice." So I challenge you, the legislators of Connecticut to mandate the teaching of the effects that racism and prejudice can have on the world through the Holocaust. By teaching these effects, we can single handedly create a more accepting community throughout our great state. We can be the catalysts for change.