

Human Trafficking and the Holocaust (Final Paper)

One of the most graphic and horrific genocides that shaped our world today is the Holocaust. The Holocaust led to the death of 6 million Jewish people based solely on their ethnicity. Many believe "the date most frequently associated with the start of the Holocaust is January 30, 1933 when Adolf Hitler was appointed German chancellor", which marked the start of the inhumane events to come. [9] Jewish males, females and children were sent to concentration camps where their lives changed forever. The most popular camp, Auschwitz, was in Poland and was "home" to thousands of Jews. These camps held Jewish people captive, and treated them so inhumanely, that those who lived through the hardships, still have trouble reflecting on the things that happened in the camps. Millions and millions of lives were brutally taken, and the effects of this gruesome time have carried on to the happenings of today.

The events of the Holocaust, and the mistreatment of humans, specifically women, is a historical root to a contemporary issue present today. The Holocaust is one of the many events that wrongly justified the poor treatment of women, which has continued through time to today. Human trafficking is a prominent issue which is a growing industry. The poor treatment of women during the Holocaust, has facilitated the degrading treatment of women in terms of rape/human trafficking. When looking at present day Eastern Europe there is evidence of a direct correlation between the Holocaust and human trafficking.

Although many believe the mistreatment of Jews during the Holocaust fell equally between men and women, rape and prostitution were greater for females, causing further pain and suffering as a Jewish woman. When women first came to camps, they, like men, underwent inspections, shavings of their hair on their head and body, and taking all of their belongings. Many separated with loved ones, and many children separated from their families. Hundreds died during the selection process but the women who survived "underwent a gamut of humiliations, including exposure, crude body searches for hidden jewelry, painful body shaves, and sexual ridicule". [10] This was the beginning of their journey through sexual assault, mockery, and objectifying women.

"Classification of people into "racial" groups was a deciding factor in who survived and who experienced torture. Jewish women were often housed in their own barracks, which were the worst, and they were in the lowest position in the hierarchy of prisoners". [11] Women and young girls were more vulnerable to sexual abuse due to the separation from Jewish men and children. "Rape involves subjugation and humiliation of a vulnerable victim. In all cases, women were...members of a perceived lower class of human beings". [1] Jewish Women faced "a double jeopardy: First, they were targeted for death because they were Jews; second, they suffered, and those who survived often attributed their survival in large parts to behaviors they learned, as women". [11] These behaviors focus on the sexual comportment women used in hopes of saving their lives. "Sexual exploitation played a part in the process of emigration. [10] One woman, Marion Kaplan writes, expressed gratitude that her mother had "sex with a bureaucrat who then provide their exit paper",

thereby establishing physicality or sexuality as an actual or potential instrument for their survival. [10] Women do not chose to be objects of human trafficking, just like they did not choose to be victims of the Holocaust, but in both circumstances hope is always an underlying motive. At times, they were able to use sex and sexuality to save themselves”, but in reality they were prisoners to the men objectifying them. [10]

As rape became “popular” in the camps, the Nazis eventually passed a law that banned sexual relations between Jews and Germans but that did not protect all Jewish women or stop all of the rapes. The injustice of women during the Holocaust caused more agony in the lives of Jewish women than Jewish men, creating the perception that they were worth nothing. “The Final Solution depended on the annihilation of Jewish women, and, as women, they were perpetrators of future generations of Jews who could be expected to avenge their families’ deaths; second, they had to be “eliminated” because, according to Nazi propaganda, they could and would seduce Aryan men and thereby contaminate the Aryan race for generations to come”. [10] Women were blamed for being women, and punished for men’s sexual thoughts and actions towards them.

Pearl Gottesmann, a Holocaust survivor, reflected on her darkest days in Auschwitz towards the end of the war. Her testimony sheds light upon a time when rape was apparent in these camps, as she witnessed second hand. Gottesmann "associated being raped with prettiness" and felt as though the Jewish women with pretty hair showed more attractiveness to the soldiers. [1] The women's identity was challenged as soon as they entered those camps. "Upon entry into the camp, their heads were shaved, they were given formless clothing, and starvation frequently caused cessation of menstruation and loss of body weight, including in the breasts and the hips, two regions stereotypically associated with femininity and attractiveness. [10] Due to the stripping of women's identities, this reflects on the poor mistreatment they faced throughout the Holocaust. Once a soldier noticed a pretty woman, who had physical characteristics their liking, they believed they had the right to violate the woman's body for their pleasure only.

Eda Lichtman, another Holocaust survivor, shared her testimony in 1965 at the Ghetto Fighter's House in Germany. As she states at the very beginning of her testimony, this is "dedicated to the organizers of the revolt at Sobibór and to all those who took part in it and to the memory of the hundreds of thousands of victims of Sobibór." [3] As Lichtman shared her story, there were parts of her past that she kept to herself. She was not extremely specific in the happenings of her time in the camps during the Holocaust. As if a Jewish person being trapped in a camp full of hunger and suffering had not caused enough pain, a Jewish woman in the camp was treated ever worse. Eda Lichtman had a job of bringing “flowers to the clubhouse to decorate the tables.” [3] This was not the worst thing a woman could have faced during these times, but the soldiers expected most female Jews to act like servants as well as their sex slaves. They had normal jobs that they would do at home, like cleaning and folding laundry, as well as being toys for the guards and soldiers.

the horrible mistreatment and abuse of women during the Holocaust was unforgivable. What seems to add further insults is the perpetuation of women as sexual objects. Human trafficking is on the rise, perhaps because the notion that women's bodies are primarily for the use and enjoyment of men. Like many countries in Europe, Croatia, Serbia, Romania and Bosnia, have been fighting human trafficking and looking for plans to stop the horrible act. "The number of women and children sold that have passed through Serbia is estimated to be about 10,000-100,000". [2] Many organizations have been created with the purpose of stopping human trafficking that has been on the rise globally. "Victims come from Moldova, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, Belarus and Albania, they are resold not only in neighboring countries but also in The Netherlands, Italy, Germany and Cyprus." [1] Human trafficking is one of Europe's greatest challenges, and one many are working hard to end. [4]

"World War II saw new forms of human slavery. Jews, gypsies, and opponents of the Nazi regime were moved across Europe to slave labor and extermination camps in Germany, Poland, and elsewhere. Many women were trafficked into prostitution to serve the German troops" [7] Because of the mindset during the Holocaust that women were inferior, it is only in recent history that society is emphasizing human rights crisis. "Looking at subaltern women with little or no agency and the central socioeconomic causes that enable and perpetuate their trafficking." [6] It is not only men who use women's bodies as objects for gain. Just as women use their bodies as an instrument for their survival during the Holocaust. Women today may use their bodies through prostitution as a way of hoping for a better life. In some cases, the women who are sold into trafficking are told their better life can be reached through unlawful acts they are forced to perform.

The inhumane acts that occurred during the Holocaust should have led people to value all human life equally and with great regard. Unfortunately, those who suffered during the Holocaust have not found peace even still today. In part, because of the sexual exploitation of women in concentration camps, the belittlement of women continues today. There is a direct correlation between the Holocaust and human trafficking as a contemporary issue faced today. It is important to understand this history for a couple of reasons. First and foremost is to strive for equality of all genders, races and religions. Another reason as to why it is important to understand this history is to learn from it. In the future, and betterment of countries, there will be no human trafficking, no belittling of others, and no mistreatment. Every story has a lesson, and if we learn from these issues, we will find ways to prevent them from every happening again.

[1] Sonja Hedgepeth, Rochelle Saidel, "Shattering Shame and Silence," *Jerusalem Post*, January 2011, <http://search.proquest.com/newsstand/docview/848530620/FD8329EFAFBC4C6DPQ/6?accountid=14902> (accessed March 20, 2017).

[2] Lehti, Martti. *Trafficking in women and Children in Europe*. Finland, 2003. <http://www.heuni.fi/material/attachments/heuni/papers/6KsX2Mctz/heuni18painosta.pdf>

[3] *From Mielec to Sobibór* (2005) (testimony of Eda Lichtman).

Web. <http://www.theverylongview.com/WATH/> (accessed March 20, 2017).

[4] "Human Trafficking Growing in Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia", *BBC Monitoring Europe*. November 14, 2004.

<http://www.search.proquest.com/newsstand/docview/459519966/18CC0C19A6524185PQ/1?accountid=14902>

[5] Alexis A. Aronowitz, *Human Trafficking, Human Misery: The Global trade in Human Beings*. (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1956-), Book.

[6] Reinares, Laura. *Sex Trafficking in Post Colonial Literature*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

[7] Louise I. Shelley. *Human Trafficking: Global Perspective*. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

[8] "The Holocaust", *History.com*. 2009.

Web. <http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/the-holocaust> (accessed April 16th)

[9] "When Did the Holocaust Begin? A Genesis of Genocide", *HAARETZ*. (February 17, 2014). Web.

<http://www.haaretz.com/1.574739> (accessed April 16th)

[10] Friedman, C. Jonathan. *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2011. Accessed April 16, 2017. ProQuest EBook Central.

[11] Hedgepeth, Sonja M. Saidel, Rochelle G. *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*. Lebanon: Brandeis University Press, 2010. Accessed April 26, 2017. ProQuest EBook Central.

Illustrations

Figure 1. Jewish Women at Concentration Camp after Inspection.

<http://womeninholocaust.weebly.com/images.html>

Figure 2. Jewish Women Folding

Clothes. <https://www.ushmm.org/lcmedia/photo/lc/image/80/80417.jpg>

Figure 3. Human Trafficking Graph. <http://acelebrationofwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Human-trafficking1.jpg>