

Remembering the Holocaust, the Life of Dr. Ralph Troll

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Germany was in a great economic depression. It had just lost, what was back then, the war to end all wars. Millions of people were out of jobs. Germany was in a bad place. These grim circumstances gave rise to a new political party that promised the people whoever was responsible would pay. This party was the Nazis and they wrongly blamed the Jewish people for what happened to Germany (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC). Dr. Ralph Troll grew up during this time. His mother was Jewish and his father was Catholic. He and his family were fortunate enough to realize the threat the Nazis posed to them, and they moved to a small farm which was isolated from the rest of Germany. This move was great for them because when the rest of Germany was starving, they had food (Callahan). Dr. Troll was a half Jew, and half Jews were not allowed privileges that non Jewish citizens had. Dr. Troll was not allowed to enter into secondary school. On the farm, there were fox holes dug during WWI, as well as a cellar for food. During the air raids that constantly flew over Germany, Dr. Troll and his sister would sleep in the cellar (Troll). Air raids were so common that they had to put cots down in the cellar. Apart from this, life was relatively good. In February 1945, that changed; in the middle of the night the Gestapo came and arrested Dr. Troll's mother. She was sent to a forced labor camp (not a killing center) so thankfully she survived. Dr. Troll and his father decided that it would be best if his sister lived somewhere else, so his sister went to live with another German family. After the Holocaust, when the war was over, Dr. Troll and his family found each other and decided to move to America (Troll). Here Dr. Troll was put into the 5th grade. He did not know any English, but he flourished. He skipped the 6th grade and eventually got his doctorate. As an expression of gratitude toward the United States he served in the military during the Korean War. He is now retired from his job as a professor of Augustana College

(Troll). Not all Holocaust victims had stories of success. Dr. Troll was one of millions Holocaust victims. His tragic early life should be a reminder of the death and irreversible destruction the Nazis caused. We should learn from his life to love one another and never let hate take over our lives.

Before Dr. Troll came to talk to my class, I thought of the Holocaust as tragic event in history, but I could not understand the sheer destruction it caused. The Holocaust was not personal to me; I had no family that were involved in the Holocaust. Dr. Troll gave the Holocaust a face. The Holocaust was not just stories; it was people, families, and lives as well. It was this person standing in front of me. He was living evidence of this tragedy. Dr. Troll also gave us a message. His mom told him, before she was taken, that she did not care what religion he was as long as he was kind to everyone (Troll). He imparted that message onto us. I think Dr. Troll speaks to the strength of people. He went through one of the worst events in all of human history, and when it was over, he went to school, served in the United States military, got a Ph.D, and became a professor. Those four things alone are accomplishments. He did those things and survived the Nazis! If he can do all of that, then what is there that is impossible?

Dr. Troll's story is one of far too many. It needs to be shared, and I am glad I had the opportunity to hear it. It is truly astonishing the capacity for hate people had. We need to educate everyone, today and tomorrow, about what hate can do so that future generations can learn from the mistake that we now call the Holocaust. The world should never have to go through such a tragic event again. We should also remember that out of struggle, comes hope. Dr. Troll survived the worst event of the 20th century. Before coming to America, all the education he had was through elementary school, but even with all of this struggle, he succeeded. His story is not just one of darkness but one of success. He has inspired us to succeed.

Work Cited

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