



Holocaust Memorial Day



29th January 2021

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Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) was founded 20 years ago, in 2001. It is recognised on the 27th of January in the UK and internationally, too. Its purpose is to commemorate and educate everyone about the Holocaust and all the victims of Nazi persecution, but also to include and raise awareness of genocides that have taken place since 1945.

The world was horrified to learn of what had happened to Jewish people and other minority groups in Germany and Occupied Europe during the war, but unfortunately, similar events have happened since. That's why it's so important that we remember the past and try to learn from it because the fight to stop atrocities happening to other people is still going on today.

Learning from the past can be difficult, no two sets of events are the same, but perhaps what we can do is allow the past to provide us with insight and understanding into situations and turning points and how they have played out in other contexts and situations around the world. We must do whatever we can to avoid genocide happening anywhere, ever again.

Learning from the past also allows insight into how people can behave and from that we can be aware of those that take advantage of a situation to behave callously or selfishly, and also take inspiration from those that behave with kindness and humanity, those who have shone a light in the darkness of evil and despair.



What was the Holocaust?

The Holocaust (The Shoah in Hebrew) was the attempt by the Nazis and their collaborators to murder all the Jewish people in Europe as they saw Jewish people as inferior to the master German race and the cause of many of the problems in Germany at that time.

From the time that they gained power in Germany in 1933, the Nazis used propaganda, legislation (the law) and persecution to deny German Jewish people human and civil rights.

The Nazis continued their policy against Jewish people when they took over other countries and by 1941 they had begun The Final Solution - the systematic murder of Europe's Jewish people through firing squads, extermination camps, gas chambers and concentration camps.

Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazis created over 40 000 camps as part of their plans to destroy the Jewish people.



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Poem - Auschwitz, by Charles N. Whittaker

The semiquaver chugging of the train on the track
And the people on board who will never go back
And the terror in the eyes of all the young ones to go
With no one knowing as the train comes to slow

Those men at the station as the ramps dropdown
Where humanity lost is the only crippled sound
Hope gone for those who stand behind the hard sharp wire
And the smoke in the towers rises just a little higher

And the blue ink stabs a little harder in the skin
Above the veins of despair where murder let it in
And the terror in the eyes of all those about to leave
Another train on the track no last-minute reprieve

And the slow, crot...chet chugging of the train on the track;
And the people on board. Who will ne...ver go.
Back.



Translation "Whoever bears this sign is an enemy of our people".



It is important to have a place to go and remember and pay respect. See below for some of the memorials from all around the world.

Yad Vashem, the national Holocaust Museum in Israel

This photo shows the 'Hall of names'



The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington



The Berlin Holocaust Memorial



Why is Holocaust Memorial Day on the 27th of January?

This is the day in 1945, when Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp, was liberated (freed). On this day in the U.K. thousands of local and national events usually take place, in schools, communities, libraries, prisons, museums, galleries and more. There are candle lightings, performances, art projects, readings, talks and much more.

Each event is an opportunity for people to reflect on the lives of people affected by genocide and to challenge prejudice, discrimination and hatred in our own society today. It is important both for our past and our future.

On this day, we also remember other groups who were persecuted and murdered by the Nazis, such as Roma and Sinti people (Gypsies), disabled people, gay people, Jehovah's Witnesses, political opponents and anyone else who didn't fit the Nazi ideal.

These are all examples of genocide - the intentional action to destroy a people based on ethnic, national, religious or racial factors. That means, a group of people targeted for destruction just because of who they are.

Why do we still remember it today?

We remember because we owe it to those innocent people who lost their lives through no fault of their own.

We also remember because the world didn't learn from the atrocities carried out by the Nazis and has let more genocides take place since 1945. Millions of men, women and children have been killed or affected by genocides that have happened since the Second World War.

For example, in Cambodia up to 3 million people died from government actions between 1975-1979; in Bosnia, nearly 40 000 died between 1992-1995 in a race-related war and in Myanmar since 2017, 43 000 people so far have died in attacks towards Rohingya Muslims.

This shows that genocide is in our present and not just our past. We all have to make sure that it is not in our future.

What is the theme for this year? 'Be the light in the darkness'



It is aimed at encouraging everyone to think about the depths and darkness that humanity can sink to, and about how we can all stand together to be the light that shines out in contrast. It is about each one of us being that light, and not waiting for someone else to do it for us.

Some people in our world today still think that race, religion, disability or sexuality make other people's lives worth less than their own. There is false information on the internet and social media that encourages discrimination, identity-based persecution and hostility, against individuals and groups. We all have a shared responsibility to fight these beliefs. We must learn the lessons from the Holocaust and other genocides.

We must all stand against that darkness and be the light that shines out instead - at home, in school and online. We can all be that light. Don't wait for someone else to do something.

At Highlands, we know it is wrong to discriminate against anyone because of their race, culture, sexuality, appearance or any other reason. We know that tolerance towards everyone is what makes the difference between a positive environment and one that is full of hatred and violence. That's why we should all be the 'Light in the darkness.'

These are some examples of people who have been the 'Light in the Darkness'



Sophie Scholl and her brother Hans, along with their friend Christoph Probst and others, founded the White Rose group in Munich. They were a resistance group to Nazism that told people - especially those in universities - of the atrocities the Nazis were committing and that this should not be supported. The group was discovered and in 1943 Hans and Sophie were executed at only 24 and 21 years of age.



Frank Foley, a British spy who helped save thousands of Jews from the Nazis during the Holocaust.

Michael Mamelok, one of the survivors who managed to flee Berlin due to the efforts of Foley, a major from the MI6 foreign intelligence agency, told his story to Prince William before Foley's statue was unveiled in Mary Stevens' Park, in Stourbridge, West Midlands. Speaking to the Press Association about what the day meant to him, Mamelok said: "I'm here to honour this great man who saved my life. My daughter wouldn't be here today - there have been 17 children directly descended from me which wouldn't be here."

Foley used his power and influence as a British passport control officer in Berlin, a cover for his intelligence work to help German Jews immigrate to Britain and its colonies. This included pre-state Israel. He was recognised as a Righteous Among the Nations, a non-Jewish person who risked his life to save Jewish people during the Holocaust - by Israel in 1999.



Sir Nicholas Winton, 1909 - 2015.

He was a British banker with German-Jewish parents who organised the rescue of 669 children from Nazi-ruled Czechoslovakia during 1938-39.

How can we remember?

You can watch back the Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony that was streamed online on the 27th of January 2021. [CLICK HERE](#)

Households across the UK will be lighting candles and putting them in their windows to:

- remember those who were murdered for who they were
- stand against prejudice and hatred today

Upload a photo of your candle on social media using the hashtags #HolocaustMemorialDay and #LightTheDarkness

How can you make society a better place free from hatred, prejudice and discrimination? How can you 'be the light'?

- Get involved with a charity who works to combat prejudice and discrimination
- Learn and read about the Holocaust, Nazi Persecution and subsequent genocides, further information and reading can be found here: www.hmd.org.uk
- Challenge and report any incidents of hatred, prejudice and discrimination you hear at school, work or online.

Be kind to others - remember "No act of kindness, however small is ever wasted" - Aesop

Holocaust Memorial Day enables us to remember – for a purpose. It gives us a responsibility to work for a safer, better, future for everyone. Everyone can step up and use their talents to tackle prejudice, discrimination and intolerance wherever we encounter them.

