

# Impossible not to cry at the Holocaust museum

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A group of eight Edmonton students from three different schools had a life-changing experience a few weeks ago. We participated in the annual Asper Foundation trip to Washington, D.C. to witness the Holocaust Museum. Before the trip, we had to meet two criteria: 16 hours of volunteering and 16 hours of classes to absorb information on the Holocaust, including videos to prepare us for the graphic images we would soon witness.

In Washington, the bus ride to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum was one of joy and conversations. The return trip was quite different.

Our tour was a journey into the past. We began with the exhibit Remember the Children — Daniel's Story. Directed towards younger ages, it seems to be less emotional and graphic.

For me, it was the most relevant exhibit because it was focused on our age group. As you walk through designated paths, you go from the early

years of Daniel's life until after the war. At first, you see how he lived like any child with many friends, played on a soccer team and went to school. As you move through, you begin to see his hardships as he loses friends, gets kicked off the soccer team and is no longer allowed to attend school.

Then the real challenge begins. Daniel is sent through ghettos and concentration camps. Here you really begin to feel the emotions. You think about what you would do if all of a sudden you had your childhood taken away. I know the sorrow I would feel if I was told that I could no longer do the things I enjoy.

The main exhibit: we are loaded into an elevator to give the effect of a cattle car. An elevator that could fit 15 people comfortably is filled with about 30. We are set to experience the past.

The elevator takes us to the highest of four levels where we see the early years. At this point, we question how anyone could believe in the ideas of

the Nazis. The Nazis based their campaign against others, yet people followed.

After following this zig-zag path, we descend to the next floor. Here the reading gets harder to believe and the pictures tougher to view. Entering this floor, we have travelled to 1940. Ghettos and concentration camps begin to form along with the genocide.

Walking through the cattle car is one piece I will never forget. It is placed on a lower platform allowing you to walk through where so many people died or were taken to their deaths.

Once again, so many questions form in your mind, along with the thought of being trapped in a cattle car, like so many were.

The next floor, however, is the hardest of them all. This floor is the one featuring life during the Holocaust.

The main display is filled with hundreds of pairs of shoes. Seeing this brings out the emotion in everyone. Personally, I found it hard not to cry. You see all sizes, colours and styles of

shoes, some small enough to fit young innocent children.

Finally you reach the last floor, one displaying the joys of being liberated and freedom.

The bus ride back to the hotel was much different than the one we took to the museum. There was very little talk or discussion. What we had just witnessed was starting to sink in.

This trip was not only about seeing the Holocaust Memorial Museum. We got to tour and take pictures of presidential memorials such as the Lincoln and Roosevelt, war memorials such as the Vietnam and Korean and finally the White House.

The last fun attraction we got to visit was the Washington National Zoo, which is known for its giant pandas. Being 14 years old, I enjoyed this zoo, the first one I had been to in many years. I am glad I got to experience such a trip and will take these memories with me throughout my life.

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DAVID S. HOLLOWAY, GETTY  
Holocaust survivor Susan Taube speaks to students in the Asper Foundation Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program in Washington, D.C.