**EMEK SHOLOM HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL CEMETERY – Kristallnacht Memorial Service**

**Samuel Franco** November 8, 2015

L. C. Bird High School, 11th Grade

*“Never Again – What We can Do Today To StopAnti-Semetism”*

I was born and raised in Germany, a mere thirty minutes from the city of Bergen, home of the death camp of Bergen-Belsen that obtained international infamy as the place where Anne Frank died, along 50,000 prisoners. My grandfather grew up during World War II. He and his family witnessed the horrors of the regime and of the final years of war at the doorstep of their countryside home. In my many conversations with him, I always asked him how did a decent, educated and cultured people fail to stop this genocide but take part in it?

This question has continued to linger on my mind, even after my move to the United States as a child. Today, as a naturalized citizen of these United States of America, I still wonder if we as a people have truly learned from the horrors that the German people brought over an entire continent just 70 years ago, and that took the lives of over 6 million Jews. Discussing my concerns with Americans, I always get the same response: Not here, this would never happen in America. But can we be so sure?

To get to the bottom of this, we first need to understand why and how such thing could happen in the center of such a cultured society.

It’s easy to reject the idea that the holocaust could happen anywhere in the world, including the United States. So did a group of students at  [Ellwood P. Cubberley High](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellwood_P._Cubberley_High_School%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) School in California, about thirty years after the end of World War II. Ron Jones, a history teacher at this school, set out to create a social experiment to show how people accepted and the embraced the Nazi movement and its philosophy in Germany.

This experiment was titled “The Third Wave” and began by Jones enforcing strict classroom discipline. Next, he emphasized a sense of community along with discipline. Students enthusiastically joined this movement and began to create their own salutes and banners and symbols, just like the Nazis did, and pledged allegiance to a fictional leader. At some point, students crossed the line of their own ethical principles as long as it benefitted the movement to the point that they were willing to renounce their peers and even subject them to physical pain. Jones called all students for a rally under the pretense that their leader would address them. Instead, he showed them film footage from Nazi rallies. His students came to the painful realization that, although on a much smaller scale, they had become just like the Nazis.

To me, this experiment has shown me that no society is immune to becoming a

totalitarian regime and that we as a people are willing to give up our individual liberties

in exchange for a sense of order and confidence as a nation.  I want to use my

education and knowledge to share with others how dangerous and seductive such

movements can be if they appeal to our most basic instincts.

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**WHAT ATTENDEES CAN DO TO HELP ALLEVIATE THE SITUATION?**

1. In high school history classes, students need to be more educated and go more in depth into past oppressive movements. Education about this topic will prevent anyone from accidentally joining a movement they do not fully understand.
2. Stand up against individuals who seem as they may be gaining too much control for the wrong reasons by questioning their intentions. Followers might stop supporting these people if they are shown the bigger picture.
3. Convince others to attend events and memorials to show them the devastating impact discrimination can have on a group of people.
4. Do not directly or indirectly support any cause that could potentially aid in starting or continuing an oppressive movement. This includes attending supporting rallies, assisting individuals who support the cause, and following the crowd mentality in order to not be seen as an opponent of the cause. Contributing in any of the aforementioned could help advance a genocide.
5. Maintaining a democracy will keep any country from falling into the hands of a dictator. Voting on non-extremist officials will prevent countries under a democracy from crumbling and will put a stop to anyone attempting to start a dictatorship.
6. We need to educate people about Jewish culture and elaborate on false stereotypes in order to show that no group of people is inferior to another.
7. Interactions between Jewish and other religious and nonreligious communities to create a cultural diffusion so people will not have a one sided view of a certain group.
8. We can’t legitimize political ideas or movements like Neo-Nazis or white supremacist groups in order to keep approval and support of these groups low.
9. We should encourage schools to have regular exchange programs with Israeli schools to start this blend of cultures at an early age.
10. We need to be open minded about all religious groups and see every group as equal to prevent the division of people amongst different groups.

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