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Memorialization & legitimization in the United States: Case studies of the Holocaust and Civil Rights

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Memorialization & legitimization in the United States: Case studies of the Holocaust and Civil Rights

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Memory

By

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If our memory is driven by how we chose to live our life, our morals, values, and beliefs as an individual, Then it stands to reason that our memory goes through a filter handled by those things. But what if the precedent for those things are set by our highest social institution and its current state? There are numerous practices in place that set up the belief that these higher institutions know what is best for society. Since memory is easier to filter for society, these institutions do so in multiple ways. But does the way they memorialize and remember certain events help themselves gain and hold legitimacy and power over its society? If so, then does it help retain that same power over our views on the same institution and those all over the world? On a more specific level, does the portrayal of the Holocaust versus the Civil Rights era gave legitimacy and power to the institutions memorializing these events?

If the way we view the Holocaust and the Civil Rights movement affects our views on the legitimacy and power of these institutions, how does it portray itself when remembering these events? These previously stated questions led me to research the remembrance of the Holocaust and Civil Rights in our borders. I started doing so by looking at different outside factors around each event, as well as different forms of memory. More specifically, I looked into a concept known as subjective memory, which essentially is that memory is not one concrete aspect; instead, it is different in everyone. I then examined what group and collective memory are and how it fit into society. Next, I looked into museums' characteristics, community rhetoric and involvement, and the state of society within each time period. To understand the connections between the individual's memory, society and memorials and museums, we need to examine memory at the individual level, then work into societal memory and lastly how they both affect memorials and museums.

Decades of scholars in all different fields have used their careers to study memory and how it affects society. It was found that memory is subjective and comes in many different forms, hence the subjective memory concept. This makes sense if one understands that every human is different and therefore the way everyone's mind works is different as well. If everyone is different than it stands to reason that memory will vary from person to person, even if it is of the same event. But what makes memory subjective? According to James Young (1993), people remember things differently because of the way they choose to live their life. Every characteristic about themselves and their decisions alter the way their mind works. How we view life spills into how we teach our children, and how we interact with one another. With everyone having differing views and lives, how does it all collectively come together to be filtered by higher institutions?

To better understand how memory works within society, with each individual being different, I examined literature that helped expand the understanding of memory. The next few pages will describe how memory works within the group and individual level. It then examines how memory can be classified into two groups when looking at the individual and how it affects their life. I will use examples of events or people whose societal memory is different than the individual memory. Pointing out these differences with these examples provides the reader with examples of how the government can take an event or person and filter them to where the societal memory of them is different than an individual memory.

We as individuals, living within our borders, collectively contribute to society through various ways such as employment, education, etc. Yet, institutions that are in our society set precedents for us as to what needs to be done in order to ensure that our way of life continues. By setting these guidelines, memory at an individual level filters through what they believe is to be

the correct approach when remembering an event. How this is implemented is through the media, rhetoric, and selectively choosing what should be remembered.

When a significant population has the same memory of an event they share what is called *collective memory*. But then again society can have collective memory of an event, but not all have a concept called *group memory*. Group memory happens when an assembly of people actually experience or are directly affected by that event. By having these two different types of memory you now have two groups that have the same memory but are affected by it in different ways, in other words two different forms of memory that could be taking place for the same event. Another way to view it is a memory that comes from experiencing the event, and a given memory from having higher institutions.

To put this idea into context, we can look at the example of Martin Luther King, Jr., and portrayal of the Black Panthers. The media painted MLK Jr. as a terrorist who spoke out against the government. While the Black Panthers were showcased as an outside group who instilled fear within poor neighborhoods, in reality the Black Panthers were also a group that fed hungry children, and patrolled the neighborhoods to make them safer, while MLK Jr. had spoken out against injustices in many capacities. By portraying a conflicting view on these two, we now have two different memories about them, which feeds a different memory to society that in turn affects the memory of each individual that learned about them from outside sources instead of directly. By putting another memory out of MLK Jr. and the Black Panthers, they essentially chose a memory for others in society that changed views and beliefs that they had about them and other factors that related to them, which affected the way they remembered them for years to come, and changed how they informed others about them as well.

How do the individual memory and societal memory feed into the workings of museums and memorials? If higher institutions are taking their version of a memory, because of the legitimacy that it provides them, and building a memorial around that, what does that say about said memorial? These two types of infrastructures are placed in different areas to commemorate different events. The placement and how they are made are of importance because of the messages that they hold. To be more specific, the National Holocaust Museum is placed on the National Mall in Washington D.C., a place where our nations' leaders stand for all of time as a dedication for the work they have done for this country. Having the museum on this specific strip tells its visitors that while our country has had many leaders who fought for what is right within our borders, they also did the same outside of them when other countries committed travesties. Another example from our own history would be that the streets that are named after MLK Jr. and Rosa Parks are usually in poor inner city neighborhoods. Having run-down memorials of social justice warriors from this country, while having polished memorials for events that were not of our own, is problematic. It tells those who are more affected by civil rights that its past does not matter as much, perhaps because they were not to the same extent as someone else's injustices.

A counterargument that could be said would be that the streets that hold MLK Jr. and Rosa Parks's names have a historical tie to them. But what does it say that our institutions let these neighborhoods become run down and are now inhabited by those below the poverty level? Additionally, most that live there are from the same minority groups that those two people were trying to help.

Therefore, this makes the fight for enforcement of civil rights a backseat priority to remembering another tragedy that was at the hands of another country. A third example would be the fact that in the southern part of the country, on tours of plantations, the slaves are now referred to as

servants. A small change in rhetoric like this impacts how we remember slavery; this is another way that societal memory is fed through a filter to alter the individuals' memory of an event.

The breakdown of memory, memorials and museums into the filter that is made by higher social institutions is of great importance. The effects of having conflicting memories and memorials within the same society is challenging. If institutions truly are manipulating collective and group memory to fit their agenda and gain legitimacy, then what does that mean for the memorials that we continue to visit? The meaning and purpose of the memorials then become contradictory. That does not mean that we should not memorialize certain events, but perhaps how we are currently going about doing that is what is wrong. Having a hidden agenda with building memorials and museums distorts what visitors are going to get out of them. Instead of getting to truly understand where it went wrong, they are focusing on other aspects. Doing that creates the possibility that when history begins to repeat itself, one may not be able to see the beginning stages or believe that it could happen again.

By gaining legitimacy over its citizens our government now has the foundation to portray itself as a powerful entity that has the best intentions. By controlling the public's perceptions, the government gains support for their actions and/or decisions they want to pursue. Public support leaves the government the ability to relinquish responsibility when things do not go the way they were meant to because the government can now claim they were acting according to what their citizens wanted. Ultimately this gives the notion that they listen to its citizens, through this perceived idea that citizens are heard by their government, those in power in the United States can make a claim to superiority over other nations who do not value its citizen's voices. If enough of the population buys into this notion, a substantial possibility exist that it could create divide in society, between those who support the government and its actions because they believe it is acting

on their behalf and those who think that the government is acting upon the wrong beliefs within society. By having the society divided, the government now is behind a divide and conquer concept where the citizens are left arguing over whose ideal is best and the focus is taken off of what the government is doing or the underlying messages of their actions.

One major realization must be talked about at this point. Comparing these two historical events are not saying one is more horrific than the other, for they truly both are horrific. This research was done by a college student who understands the dangers of taking everything at face value. The empowerment that comes from literary works have an incredible effect on the every changing mind. Whether the findings I reach are something that the reader can agree or disagree with, the most important lesson to take away from this is to question everything and never stop asking why.

Literature Review

The next section provides a basic understanding of how memory works at the individual level, societal level, and how it can be filtered by higher social institutions such as the government. It then gives the definitions to two different memory forms, collective and group memory. By having those definitions the reader will be able to better understand how the higher social institutions, such as the government, could use these two groups to create a legitimization basis for themselves. Next, I provide examples of the rift that collective and group memory can have. I also explain the obstacles that most groups must go through in order to get their information out into the public, and the implications that come from this. Finally, I walk through the multiple reasons why our memory can be affected, such as age, social environment, and the physical infrastructure that we use for memorialization.

We as a nation are built on the foundation of history; we refer back to it for legal, entertainment, educational, and many other purposes. History in a simple form can be seen as a collective memory that members of society share. Having a recollection of a certain event, or time period, is important not only to the individual but to the population as a whole as well. Before we had our technological advances, storytelling was the primary way of passing information down from generation to generation. As time went on we began to have more ways of accessing information as well as validating it. However in certain scenarios memory is something that is still regarded as unreliable. The main question is why? If an individual remembers something that they witnessed or experienced, should that not be the most trusted of all?

Scholars in all different categories have dedicated a huge portion of their career to studying memory and how memory affects society. It was found by many scholars that memory is subjective, and comes in different forms. But one might ask why memory is subjective, and should be looked at on a case-by-case basis? Simply because every human being is different, so therefore the way their mind works is different as well. If everyone is different in that aspect, it makes sense that people will remember the same event differently. But what makes a person different? What causes them to interpret or remember something different about a memory that is shared by society? According to James Young, people remember things differently because of the way they chose to live their life (40). The morals that people believe in, their political views, and essentially how they chose to live their life are all aspects that not only define who we are but how we view life as well. How we view life spills into how we teach our children, how we interact with coworkers and friends. But what we hold dear in life is not the only thing that shapes our memory.

The idea of group memory put simply is that memory of a certain event is remembered differently for those who are in the group that was more affected by that event. (Zerebavel, 285).

For instance anyone can empathize with those who were directly involved in the Holocaust. But they will never truly understand because they did not experience it. Following that logic does that mean their memory of the Holocaust is not correct, or does it mean the way we teach is altered? Another way to look at this would be how members of minority groups are often ignored when they try to speak out against injustices that have endured. The notion that their hardships in life are a byproduct of the consequences of those injustices is often ignored, and replaced with the “Pull yourself up by the bootstraps” American way of life. Additionally those working within the public advocacy sector must also be wary of what stories are put forth and then backed by additional evidence (Zerebavel, 285). Why must these public groups go through extra steps just to inform the public? Perhaps the extra blockage could be social institutions’ way of keeping information less known, with the institutions admitting that they are responsible for the injustices that were done and for the consequences that came from them. Assuming that theory is correct, then they would also be at fault for the shortcomings of minority groups.

Another major factor mentioned by Zerebavel is age, in the way that our earliest memories are just interpretations of things that we were told (284). Following that logic what does this say about passed-down family stories? If memory varies from person to person and we pass down those stories of memories, are they then unreliable? In a more historical context would this create problems later down the road? If yes, does this make testimony of events unreliable as well?

Next I want to shift the focus to our social environment. The type of society we live in actually changes the way we remember events. (Zerebavel, 285). For example the media portrays Martin Luther King Jr as a terrorist who spoke out against our highest entity, the government. The Black Panthers were also portrayed as an outside group causing fear within poor neighborhoods, when in reality they were just feeding poor kids amongst other social justice work. If social

institutions gave a significant portion of society a wrong view of MLK Jr. and the Black Panthers, how does that effect the memory of those that they were directly in contact with? By having conflicting views of the same event or person, it creates a space where the one who holds legitimacy and power is believed more than those who are without it.

By doing this are we making aspects of memories easier to forget and manipulating the remaining parts of it into what we think should to be remembered? The previous portrayals of social justice warriors could fit into this theory. Another way this could be taking place is within the infrastructure we chose for remembrance. By using actual buildings they give us a physical place to go to. By doing that we only take in the pieces that the previous generations chose to leave to us. Another paradox that happens with memory is one that involves community memory. It could be seen as a unifying force, something that brings us together in the wake of tragedy. However a problem arises when groups try to remember their past and are met with “your failures are your own”. This irony comes alive when memorials are built to those who fought for social equality meet the groups who reaped the benefits of their struggles, who are still do not have enforced social equality. Museums and memorials could be looked at in a different light as well. They could be used to show an attachment to event rather than to the human behavior that cause it. (Alderman and Inwood, 187). By attaching sentiment to the event rather than the factors that caused said event we could ignore the reasoning as to why the event happened initially. This is problematic and dangerous because by not paying attention to the state of society before or during that event we will not have an opposing viewpoint when higher institutions decide what is more important to remember. This makes a group’s memory, whose members directly experienced said event, less reliable when compared to what certain higher institutions deem memorable from it.

Additionally, the landscapes that are chosen are just as important as the memory itself. In inner-city neighborhoods, streets are named after Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, but survivors of the Holocaust have great museums in rich neighborhoods such as Farmington Hills and on the Mall of our nation's capital. The counterargument could be that those poor neighborhoods have streets named after social justice warriors because they have historical connections to those people. What does it say that they are now run down and are very poor? What does it also say that we as society and our social institutions let them sit and increasingly worse?

The aspect of legitimization of social institutions is an integral part in all our lives. There are things that they do to let our society know that they know what is in our best interest. A relatable example would be the use of memorials and museums. By creating those for society they also create a sense of authenticity within each of us. It does so by validating that an event happened and that we lived through it.

However picking and choosing what to remember about certain events even subconsciously is problematic. For example, it happens when certain speeches are ignored from social justice warriors like Martin Luther King Jr. His talks about the wealth gap in this country are often ignored, while others are highlighted. Maybe the wealth gap discussion would unite more than divide and cause large groups of society to start questioning the wage gap. By having larger groups with more power than others question this, it could threaten the legitimization of these social institutions. Another example of this could be how tours in the south do not adhere to their past; during these tours slaves are referred to servants, a term that is more pleasing to hear. (Alderman & Inwood, 191). Why do these things happen when talking about our own history, but others history is talked about in extensive and blunt ways?

Shifting to society as a whole once more, could remembering certain events also place a power dynamic over the members? Is who or what is being remembered playing a role in feeding inequalities or providing power? Going back to the run-down street names of our own social justice warriors, or projects dedicated to those who die in a foreign European country, does this simple act feed into alienating certain groups within society? Rewriting our own history to downplay the severity of our actions and the consequences that came from them, or highlighting others mistakes over and over again with countless literary works and media portrayals, do have an underlying message. These previously described things could be seen as hegemony operations, which is defined as picking certain things to take from social groups and highlighting them while ignoring the rest. (Alderman & Inwood, 190). In other words, giving just enough to keep them quiet.

These previously described interpretations of the works I have read stood out to me and highlighted major aspects of how we remember and use memory for our own needs. Are we playing into the power dynamic and alienating certain minority groups? If we are, how will we ever stop? A better question is will these social institutions ever stop? These power dynamics and paradoxes of memory give them a great amount of power, What will it take for us to take this power back?

The next portion of this work will encompass a memorial that is dedicated to a war that is often misunderstood, and one that we could still be healing from. The Vietnam Memorial was chosen because of its complex placement within our society. This memorial is a nice backdrop for how the previously described theories fit into a memorial. It then describes how the government filters their perception through this memorial, which ultimately changes the memory surrounding the memorial.

Vietnam Memorial

It is not easy for most people to heal after any traumatic event, and it makes it even harder to heal from something you do not even understand. Most tend to think of it in terms of physical healing. They see the injury, treat it, and after some predetermined amount of time it is gone. The other side of the coin, however, is the mental healing, being able to comprehend what happened, how it affects you, and how you are going to live your life after the event. The first stage is where people tend to get fixated, comprehending a tragic event. However, how are we as a nation meant to heal from something if we all have different beliefs about an event?

One example of this is the Vietnam War, a long and gory battle that killed countless men, women, and children on all sides. With war being a major part of United States history, society and its leaders thought they knew what they were getting their soldiers into. However, the years that followed were ones of confusion, anger, and sadness. Historically when soldiers returned home, they were greeted with happiness and love, but the Vietnam veterans experienced an entirely different outcome. Their experiences are described by *To Heal a Nation: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (1985), which outlines the various abuses that these veterans were subjected to by our citizens. “Back home, no one wanted to hear what you had been through. If people saw you in uniform they might spit, call you a murderer or more painfully – ask why you were stupid enough to go” (11). These men who were coming back mentally and physically wounded were shunned by their own people. Asking why these soldiers were treated differently will only lead to a multifaceted group of answers in reply. In the years after that the war that same anger, confusion, and sadness spilled into their memorial that now sits in our nation’s capital.

The Vietnam Memorial is one that is never truly alone; whether it is dusk or dawn, someone is more than likely going to be at the memorial. Whether they are taking etchings of the names, remembering a fallen comrade or family member, someone is there. But this memorial was not

always popular and seen for the beauty that it holds today. According to Scruggs and Swerdlow, many fought this memorial both by those who were trying to create it, and non-military citizens (50). The question that remains a mystery is why? Many people during that time did not support the war, especially with the anti-War movement gaining momentum. Others saw the real violence of war televised in their living rooms. The hard truth is that many of the atrocities that non-military people were seeing for the first time had always existed, but this was their first time seeing it in their own homes. The main concept that Scruggs and Swerdlow first outlined in their book was the environment that in which this memorial was born. Our nation was trying to understand what had gone wrong in a war where we were believed we were the helping hand. The memorial was fought for and built in a time period where many were confused and often wanted to just move on from living with the war. But why was this particular war so hard to move on from?

This could perhaps be analyzed from the perspective that this was among the first times that privileged voices were being heard questioning the government's actions. Perhaps when the picture that the government had painted of United States involvement in the war did not match up to reality, people did not know where and at whom to direct their anger. Therefore, they put it on someone that was seen physically carrying out the actions of war, American soldiers. This transferred responsibility from the government onto the soldiers, and by so doing, that it made it harder for the American people to get behind a memorial dedicated to the Vietnam War.

When the memorial was in the beginning stages a contest was held in order to get an idea for how it should look when completed. Maya Lin, who won, designed the iconic memorial (the Wall) that is now standing. However, a stipulation in order for it to be built was added. A statue of soldiers, of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, was to be built a few yards away in front of the memorial. The addition of the statue to the memorial could be seen as something that was done

because of the social political environment that the memorial was being created. Through the statue's addition to Maya Lin's design it gave a different face to those who died. Rather than depicting soldiers as "baby-killers", a term that many of the public called them, they were now young soldiers who bravely fought for the United States of American. This one statue forever changes the way that future generations would view our involvement. By changing the way citizens would see United States involvement, the way that they correspondingly view the government changes. It takes the focus off the decisions that were made to go there, and instead focuses the attention on the loss of life when visitors view the faces of the statue. When one visits this memorial, they do not see the role that politics played, they see names. Names of humans who never got a chance to add to our society. We in turn mourn these names and their fate is viewed as a natural consequence of war, instead of placing that blame on those who made the decision to "put our boys on the ground." This then begins the process of restoring the public's faith within the United States government.

To this day there is still debate and questioning over the United States involvement into the war, which reinforces the ways the memorial itself is interpreted. For many soldiers it was the first time that they had seen the extent that war could go. For the rest, they were just trying to make it through the night in a strange land. That divide in society shifted the focus to whether or not the war was justified. The soldiers that were drafted were left to muddle through the pieces of a confused society when they came home, leaving the government in the backgrounds of people's minds, while society's attention and anger landed on those who came back home.

The next portion of this research will discuss how another memorial can be seen to display these same theories. It will discuss how the Holocaust Museum on the National Mall

does portray the government in a favorable way that provides legitimization. However, it will also outline how it does it in a different way than the Vietnam Memorial does.

Case Study: National Holocaust Memorial Museum

Memorials and museums, of any sort, could be seen as having multiple functions for those that visit or view them. Depending on who you are in relation to the event it could be for remembrance or for education. While the purpose of the memorial or museum changes for the visitor, there is a trait that tries to send the same message to everyone. But how could any infrastructure be anything more than a place to grieve or for historical purposes?

The memorials and museums that are built here in the United States not only pay tribute to the events that they were born from, but they also serve another purpose. The characteristics of their infrastructure as well as their placement help hold the government in a better place within its citizen's minds. While the visitors' focus is on the memorial itself, another idea is placed into their memory, the idea being that the government uses memorials and museums to legitimize itself to its citizens. This notion is not easily seen when just looking at the museum or memorial itself, but these theories can be displayed in a few different ways. First it changes the way the event is seen through society's collective and group memory of the event. Then it uses characteristics of the memorial to change how societies view the government's role in the event. Lastly, by doing this the government is able to legitimize itself to its citizens over and over again. This is how the government is able to gain support for any future decisions, or even relinquish responsibility when consequences of those decisions are thrown in society's face.

Now the question becomes, how do these memorials have a legitimization factor surrounding them? The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial could be seen as an example of this. This

memorial was built from a war that is still very heavily debated, and came out of an anti-war movement where voices stood against the government. But none of that is seen when one visits this memorial. One is filled with the incredible heaviness of sorrow for those who lost their lives. When one leaves the memorial, those who visited do not remember that the government was criticized for involving us in the war, nor are they reminded of the hatred that these same soldiers received decades earlier. Additionally, by adding the statue of the minority soldiers next to the wall with the names of all who died in the war, the protested role of the United States government is now re-written. The notion that stands before us with this memorial now is the loss of life because of war, not the loss of life because of the government.

By placing the blame of those deaths on the war and not their decisions to send them into the war, the government changed society's collective and group memory of this particular event. Collective memory was defined earlier as the memory that a significant portion of the population shares, while group memory is specific to those who actually experienced the event. The government changed society's collective memory by shifting the focus from their role in drafting the soldiers, to the role in the tribute of their death. By placing the statue with soldiers, across from the memorial, holding parades and national recognition for the veterans, society now sees them as equals in remembering those who have died. However, it changed the group memory by giving the returning soldiers another aspect to focus on. Those involved in the war, do not see the anger of being drafted, instead they pay more attention to the names of their fallen brothers who did not get to return home.

The Vietnam Memorial was not the only one that the United States government uses for legitimization with its citizens. Another example is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, located on the National Mall in Washington D.C. This particular memorial sits next to

our nation's leaders who are remembered for their fight to gain independence and for the United States' way of life that continues to exist today. This memorial pays tribute to events and deaths that did not happen within our borders. This memorial not only contains artifacts from the Nazi regime period, but replicas of items from concentration camps as well. The museum also tells the story of the events that led up to the Holocaust, such as how Hitler came to power, and how he used that power to convince others that this genocide was needed for their survival. Lastly, this memorial holds videos and pictures of the concentration camps being liberated by United States soldiers, while strategically leaving out the liberations that were done by other countries like the Soviet Union. These characteristics of the memorial also play into how the government legitimizes itself. Instead of indirectly changing the collective and group memory of society, it works under the notion that as a nation, the United States is the hero, and that our soldiers and government will stand up against evil acts committed against human beings. By giving off this idea that if the government can go to that extent for foreign lives, than it will stop at nothing for the best interest of its own citizens. This gives the space needed for more citizens to put their trust into the United States government and its actions.

The Vietnam Memorial and the United States Holocaust Memorial are from two different historical events. However, they have more commonality than they appear to. Not only are they dedicated to those who lost their lives, but also as memorials their purpose is to educate the public. The United States government has taken that purpose and transformed it to give them legitimization from its citizens. From the Vietnam standpoint they are seen as our equals in mourning the soldiers who never returned home, but from the Holocaust standpoint they are the liberators who will always fight for those in need. By operating under the notion that the government has its citizens' best interest in mind, it reinforces the notion that we should fully

trust the government. By having that in its citizen's minds, the government can now use that to pursue any agenda that they see fit. And by changing collective and group memory, the government now has a way of surrendering responsibility when its people start to experience discontent with their decisions.

After examining the National Holocaust Memorial Museum and then using the Vietnam Memorial to help solidify how the space is used to create a positive perception of the government. I wanted to see if my theories would be displayed in memorials and museums that were not in the nation's capital. I decided to then re-shift my attention to those spaces that were placed in a geographical locations that were significant to the Jewish community. I chose the New York location because while doing this research, it became clear that New York held a large portion of the Jewish community. I began to contemplate if the trends that I was seeing, was because of outside factors, such as the amount of political clout a group may possess. By choosing this specific location as one of my case studies I found that while even having a large Jewish population the same theories still worked within this particular museum.

Case Study: The Museum of Jewish Heritage

It is human nature to have the craving to provide an explanation as to why something had occurred. Some make careers out of this urge, while others provide the reasoning behind the explanations. It is claimed that we have a sense of responsibility to understand why something happened so that it can be prevented. The idea of responsibility is a complex afterthought, sometimes born from guilt from being a bystander. The idea of memorials and museums in any capacity, especially those centered on the Holocaust and the gruesome deaths that live within it, are said to provide history and not answers to questions. On the other hand, the way that they are constructed builds another pathway of thinking into its participants' minds.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage located in New York, NY was built in dedication not only for those who perished but as a substantial call for a reminder of how the Holocaust transpired. While this memorial focuses their attention on the Jewish culture before, during, and after the Holocaust, the primary goal is to educate the public so that it could be stopped from happening again. The mindset here is that since it happened once before, it could again. We have a shared responsibility to memorialize it and never forget. This memorial holds Jewish artifacts from the time period as well as having a virtual tour that you can take. The tour, provided by the Shoah Foundation, takes you with a survivor returning to the camp where his family was murdered. This not only has an intense impact emotionally on those experiencing the video, but has a profound message as well. By creating an exhibit like this, we take the perceived experience of the Holocaust and try to incorporate it into our society. Showcasing this experience in this way changes the societal memory of the event, as well as how we see our own country.

The United States has relatively few people who have group memory of the holocaust, but a growing number of those have collective memory. A memorial such as this categorically changes the way group and collective memory are set up around the Holocaust. First, the idea perpetuating that this category of genocide can happen again scares the public into paying attention, even though genocides like the Rwanda genocide happen more often than they are portrayed to be. This particular memorial uses the fact that we have more individuals that possess collective than group memory to their advantage. The virtual tour of being able to walk with a survivor into the concentration camps strengthens the harshness of other countries and the extent that violence can extend to in other countries. By having this type of visual aid, it also changes the dynamic of the collective memory by making it more real. It is easy to talk about the Holocaust when you are in another country, but to see a survivor walk through the camps, and

watch the emotions they experience, changes your mindset. The emotion this leaves you with is more than what you expect, and you began to see your country and government in a different way.

With this memorial, there is still a connection with the Vietnam Memorial. The theory of how can be filtered through the lens of the Vietnam memorial. One could ask how this is to be done through a memorial dedicated to our own soldiers. Specifically this memorial was filtered to change the view of the governments' involvement. The emotional connection was changed, from hatred to sentimental. Hence why when this memorial is viewed, an incredible amount of emotion is invoked. The emotional response within the Holocaust memorial is meant to connect you to not only that history but those affected by it. This process then allows the government to bring it in as part of its own history, while having the emotional factor reinforce that for its citizens. The same process followed the Vietnam Memorial; the government found a way to draw more attention to the sentimental factor and therefore was allowed to be viewed as the entity paying tribute to those that died.

The government has also gained another way to establish legitimization from this memorial. The key here is the emotional aspect, by invoking it and ultimately sharing within the gloominess of what transpired they allow themselves to be seen on the same level as its citizens. This veil that is then put up allows those citizens to think that the government will step in and prevent more devastation, while not actually holding their government accountable for doing so.

The Holocaust is and will continue to be a heavily discussed topic. In some ways it should be, but when should be drawn? Is there even a line to say there is too much memorialization of it? At what point are we no longer remembering those that died and the event

itself, and in turn making it a part of American culture? Or have we already reached that line? The government has placed itself in a unique position when it comes to how it legitimizes itself through memorials and museums. It gave its citizens a two-way mirror that they can only see into when it is convenient for the government. The government has also set up these memorials and museums as reminders to the public that while some may believe our government is corrupt and harsh, it is in a different category than the governments who throw cause genocides against their own citizens. This only reinforces the idea that the government should be followed and not questioned about its actions, and it makes it easier to reinforce that when atrocities like the Holocaust are showcased and named as horrible actions by other governments.

Case Study: Holocaust Memorial Center

The last case study of the Holocaust memorials is one that is chosen from Farmington Hills, Michigan. This museum was one that I actually had the chance to visit. This museum was one that encapsulates you as you walk through its door. It is meant to shock you, and really drive home the extent that the violence was taken during this genocide. Originally I chose this memorial to stay close to the geographical map of the Civil Rights museums. However as the research developed for this particular museum, I began to remember seeing the exhibits that were showcased on their website. Then I started to visualize the key points of that tour that were significant to me, such as the tour guide having actual artifacts that were from his family. Or hearing the soldier who was near the camps when they were liberated speaking. Having memories of myself actually walking through this memorial, I realized that I fell victim to the same blindness that I was trying to outline in my research. After coming to that conclusion, it reinforced the belief that this memorial belongs with the other two case studies.

Education often has rhetoric around it that depicts its importance. Society tells itself that in order to prevent future disasters, the past needs to be examined. To an extent, that is true but at what point is the remembrance no longer for educational purposes? What if instead it is used to lay the foundation for the government to give a specific constant reminder to its citizens?

The Holocaust memorials that have been discussed so far all speak to the common understanding that we as a nation and as humans must never forget what transpired. Another mutual element to these is the belief that every corner of the Holocaust must be examined in order to fully comprehend the genocide. The Holocaust Memorial Center located in Farmington Hills is no exception to this concept. Within this memorial you can find a box car that was actually used to transport loads of people to the concentration camps, speakers who are connected to the Holocaust in some way, and even a projector room filled with sheets that replay the unearthing of the concentration camps by our soldiers. Within the museum it also tries to put you in a similar mental state by having enclosed spaces, which gives you the sense of being in a train car. Aspects of the memorial center can be viewed as truly trying to get the viewer to have empathy for those who died and suffered through the Holocaust. However, another viewpoint can just as easily be taken from an experience like this. By trying to place those into a similar situation along with showing the gore of the camps being liberated, this puts fear into the viewer. They now fear what another country did to their citizens, but it also places a sense of trust within the United States government as well. After they are put into those situations and then showed images of our government officials and soldiers liberating and saving those in the camps, their sense of trust increases. It does so by being fed the idea that our government steps in and saves those in peril, and that the nation as a whole was devastated by the tragedies that took place overseas.

Portrayals such as the previously described change the role of collective and group memory of the Holocaust within the United States. A major question that will get asked is, how could group memory be changed with so few survivors left in the United States? The answer is that it instills fear and trust at the same time. Fear of the unknown of a foreign country for those who did not experience the Holocaust, and a constant reminder of what happened to those who were more directly affected by it, makes this happen. It then provides the foundation for a layer of trust when it shows how the government placed itself within the camps to find out what was going on, furthering the idea that our government will put itself in soldiers' shoes to investigate what is going on overseas. That gives off the idea that the government places itself on the same level as its citizens, which adds to the rebuild of trust from its citizens.

The environment from this memorial also adds to the legitimization theory. Adding trust to the United States government only places themselves in a better place with their own citizens. While at the same time adding fear of outside countries, it makes the citizens wary of anything that is not their own. Having those two mindsets run parallel with each other creates a cycle where the citizens are placing their trust in the decisions and actions of the government, because they believe that they are constantly doing what is right. With that belief within the government, they are now able to swiftly convince mass amounts of their citizens to rally behind them. A similar notion was created with the Vietnam Memorial as well. By refocusing the attention on the actual death of the soldiers and by passing their role in why they died, they created a continuous reminder of what war could do, instead of what the government can do. Secondly by having a memorial dedicated to those who died built in the nation's capital it portrays the government and the citizens on the same level of grieving. This then reinforces the instilled

belief that the government is on the same level as the citizens, which feeds into the trust that the citizens now have behind the government's decisions and actions.

The environment that these memorials and museums create are not only ones of educational purposes. They work to serve an agenda for the government as well. It was seen how much the government was protested with the Vietnam War, and how trust declined dramatically. While, they were always protested to an extent, this was among the first time privileged and educated voices stood up. However none of that is essentially remembered when the memorial is viewed. The same could be said about the Holocaust memorials, where the government did not step in until much later on in the war towards the end. That is also not remembered or portrayed when viewing these memorials. The spotlight is fixed on the tragedies of lost lives, and how the United States government worked to not only save those that were left but to make sure it never happened again. This then leads the citizens down a potentially dangerous path, one where their blind trust can be used against them.

The case studies of the memorials and the museums that were centered on the Holocaust were ones that spoke about it in a way that was popular within the United States. The findings and my theories were not meant to speak in a way that tells us that the Holocaust should not be remembered in countries it did not happen in. Instead, they speak to the way in which we memorialize it when compared to parts of the United States own history. History often is said to repeat itself, whether that be in any capacity. The notion of the "Never Again" movement that is often alongside education of the Holocaust, tells society a few things. It perpetuates the idea that it could at any moment happen again. While yes, mass murders of people have happened before and after the Holocaust, this seems to be the model of genocides. If one looks through history it will find countless stories of mass killings, perhaps the one that is pertinent to us more is the one

that is often forgotten and yet celebrated in a different way. Christopher Columbus in history is said to be the one to have discovered America, but we often ignore the genocide that was inflicted by him and his men on the Native Americans. If we must know every little part of the genocide to make sure that it never happens again, why are other genocides not as talked about as the Holocaust?

The United States government and Civil Rights

Throughout the past, the United States has had its share of darker moments from early colonial ages, women's movement, and many more. But the one that should be talked about more is one that is neatly categorized put in the back of the country's mind. The history of the Civil Rights within the United States, could be said to still be going on. For we do have Civil Rights established legally, but there is trouble enforcing the laws that were once fought so hard for.

The next set of case studies are ones focused on the Civil Rights memorials and museums. I chose to do this particular time period for a multitude of reasons, one being, that always being exposed to different aspects of the world, I always wanted to know as much as I could. Additionally being on such a diverse campus and one that paid attention to the changes that were trying to be made in society, gave me a question everything approach. Lastly, I had always known that the United States tends to hide the past when it comes to the topic of slavery and civil rights, but I wanted to know the extent of it and to see how it compared to the over-examination of the Holocaust.

Case Study: National African American History and Culture Museum

The first case study is the National African American History and Culture museum located on the national mall in Washington D.C. I chose this one because it would be an easier to follow comparison with the United States Holocaust Memorial museum located on the National Mall in D.C. as well. The second reason I chose it was because having a museum that is partially dedicated to the Civil Rights era, next to the same founding fathers that owned slaves or were alive during that time, speaks to the mindset the country now feels it possesses.

The United States is a country that is built on the premise of the American dream, the notion that with hard-work you could attain a good life. This notion has followed those that live here for generations. As Americans we tend to believe that if you do not have the life you envisioned for yourself, it is because you did not put the work in. The American dream is partly why a significant portion of immigrants came to this country, freedom being the other. The United States was built on the backs of immigrants, either the ones that came voluntarily or involuntarily. However, that work that was done for this country by the hands of immigrants and slaves are often ignored.

The United States has had an intense battle for civil rights and liberties for decades. The fight for enforcement of these rights is still happening and so is the healing process from years of pain, loss, and suffering. The National Museum of African American History and Culture is a memorial that is dedicated to the African-American journey in the United States.

This museum has a portion of United States History that is often skillfully re-written. The United States government itself tends to shy away from the blunt truth of that part of history. The museum teaches what some of the country would rather wish to forget. The truth of it is that our previous generations separated families, beat innocent humans, traded them like commodities, and lastly tried to take away their humanity. But why is that part of history often brushed off and

silenced? With this country's history being re-written in a way that downplays the severity of its own actions, it not only discredits those who experienced this event. It does so by highlighting more positive aspects of the African American experience, like involvement in Hollywood. Doing this then makes it easier for people to push it to the back of their minds and even easier to ignore warning signs, for the simple fact they are more focused on the evolution of the African American community after civil rights.

This action is what ultimately changes the collective and group memory of the Civil Rights Era. By softening the blow that the fight for civil rights had on society, it tells those who still have memories of that time period that times like those are over and it is time to move on. It then teaches those who have collective memory that incidents and mindsets like those are in the past and the country we have now is fair and just. These are two competing notions within society. This leads to a rift created in society where both sides are left arguing with each other over whose version of society is correct.

This helps the government gain legitimization in a slightly different pathway. By creating a gap between the two groups within society, the government gave itself a defensive group that it can count on when making difficult decisions or pursuing actions that some might not agree with. This group that believes that the government acknowledged its role in civil rights and is now atoning for it will always provide the government their support and work to gain them support from others. Having a portion of society continuously fight for your actions and decisions now provides you a scapegoat if needed. If the government is involved in something that ends in a negative light, they now can stake the claim that it was only doing what the citizens wanted.

The United States government and the society has a complicated history, in simple terms. However having that history downplayed, or re-written to portray a different perspective only hinders the future. For the Holocaust memorials, the belief is that we always must know and understand every aspect to prevent it and for remembrance. Why is that not the same actions for the atrocities committed against African Americans? Yes, this does an injustice to the United States own history, but perhaps it is not ready to be confronted with its own history. For once it is confronted, it has to admit responsibility, and then be held liable for the after effects that the past still has on society today.

Case Study: Civil Rights Memorial

The next case study is one that comes from a memorial that is located in Montgomery, Alabama. I chose a southern state for this case study because of the historical connection between the two topics. Since this topic is seen as sensitive, I wanted to understand how a country would memorialize its own events, in areas where those events occurred

There comes a time when everyone can admit that a mistake was made on their part. We acknowledge the harm that we have caused, try to fix the damage and move forward. In retrospect it is always easier said than done. When this process happens a form of healing can begin. But what does it say when the highest entity in the United States puts in minimal effort into the previously described process. Does that tell its citizens something about themselves or something about their government?

Understanding a mistake or a wrongdoing that was committed is never easy, and it certainly is not easy to try to incorporate the past into the future. What is often said is that we must look to the past to understand what happened and how we can be preventative and not

reactive the next time. The notion that is accepted by today's society is that racism no longer exists. Since we do not have the same restrictive laws that we once did does not mean that racism is gone from peoples mind. It does mean that a certain face of racism does not exist in the same manner it once did. Memorials and museums, such as Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama, pay tribute to those who fight and lost their life in the fight for full equality. It was designed by the same women who originated the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C. In a similar manner, the names of social justice warriors are carved into black granite. In what can be described as a dedication for the loss of life, this memorial shows how much tragedy can happen from racially motivated actions and biases. When constructing this memorial Maya Lin said: "To honor those killed during the struggle, to appreciate how far the country has come in its quest for equality, and to consider how far it has to go."

Racism still exists in modern society, it has just adapted to fit into the world today. This memorial through its construction and meaning changes how society views racism and how it is ingrained into their memory. Those with group memory of the time period leading up to the Civil Rights era and the time after have a different perspective than those with collective memory. Those with group memory can see the parallels between the racism that is showcased, and the face of it that exists today, while those with collective memory only remember and are acknowledgeable about the racism that use to exist within society. The population that holds group memory will never have those memories taken from them. However with collective memory, they will now have a reinforcing factor that always shows them how racism use to exist and perpetuate how it does not exist anymore.

A similar process happens through the Vietnam Memorial as well. With this memorial, even at the beginning stages, government officials were hesitant with helping build this

memorial. The public condemning the war, and the crosshairs that the soldiers found themselves in, essentially eliminated any public support that previous war veterans had seen. The government changed the public's focus of their role with this memorial. As earlier stated, their polished role became their involvement with the tribute to the soldiers' death, instead of their hidden reason of why those soldiers died. With the Vietnam memorial the government changed the collective memory, which started to conflict with the group memory. It can be difficult to see the similarities between two different memorials. However, if you look at them with the mindset of trying to understand how the government is portrayed it becomes more clear. The government had to legitimize itself through these memorials. It does so in an interesting way, by admitting just enough responsibility. More specifically, it is paying tribute to those who died for the fight of equality but drawing more attention to their death. By changing the focus to their death, they drive the notion of loss of life. Those who view this memorial now see those whose life ended prematurely and a mourning process can begin. They do not think about the actions that drove the attitudes that took those lives. The government acknowledges that during this time those people were murdered and in that bare minimum standard it is a tragedy. While taking some blame in this aspect, they avoid the actions that took place before and after each death. They do not talk about how many did not go to jail for these murders, or how long it took to even arrest the guilty persons or parties.

Re-organization of the blame for these deaths gives a legitimization factor to the government. It tells the viewers, the government's own citizens, that since these deaths are acknowledged that they know what happened is wrong, and should not happen again. However this does nothing to shed light on their own actions that normalized the behavior that caused those deaths. In other words, giving just enough to take the focus off themselves.

Memorializing or remembering any event brings its own sets of complications. What do we focus on? What is deserving of being remembered forever? Trying to do this from any perspective can be daunting, especially if your standpoint is one that is not in a good light. The government is in a unique position with memorializing Civil Rights. Perhaps that is because many believe that fight is over, while the few know that is not.

Case Study: Charles H. Wright Museum

The last case study is one that is focused on the Charles H. Wright Museum located in Detroit, Michigan. I chose this location for a few reasons. One being the actual city has historical ties to the African American community as well as the Civil Rights era. The city being one that was home to race riots, police brutality, and many other racial problems, it provided an opportunity to see how the historical context plays into a museum that is dedicated to the same community it is tied to. Lastly, I thought it would be a fair comparison in that aspect as it would be for the previously described case study.

The controversy with history is not what took place, but how it should be memorialized from then on. Those who this responsibility falls on now have to shift through not only the events, but the environment it came from and outside factors surrounding the historical event. History is not just the actions that took place, but everything that came before and after it as well. African American history within the United States could be seen as an example of this idea.

Within the borders of this country, African American memorials and museums hold a wide range of information within them. A portion of material is focused on slavery and the Civil Rights era that came after. Within the Charles H Wright museum in Detroit, Michigan, there is

no exception to this thought. Throughout this memorial you will find multiple faces of African American culture, and exhibits that deal with civil rights and slavery.

One specific exhibit named, Slavery at Jefferson Monticello Paradox of liberty, talks about the irony about a founding father owning slaves. While this exhibit does call out the inconsistencies within that specific part of history it changes the environment in which slavery is discussed. It changes the environment because now, the names of the slaves who lived on this plantation are now looked at slightly different because of who owned the plantation.

Having a memorial dedicated to African American history and then having an exhibit that seems to support the inconsistent idea of creating a fair and equal life and owning slaves perpetuates the notion that the government realizes it as well. That notion feeds into the belief that the government can understand its role in the mistakes of this country and can take responsibility for them, by placing it in a museum. However, while it is easy to believe that is in fact what is going on here, another strategy is co-occurring. This can be seen as giving just enough to the public to support the government. Showcasing an exhibit in this way, and softening the Civil Rights portion of African American history, changes collective and group memory within society. It changes collective memory in the sense that it bypasses events that certain members of the population can actually remember, such as the Civil Rights, and displays more of the theatre side of African American history. But one could ask how bypassing actually changes collective memory, and it does so in a subtle way. Focusing the memorial more on African American culture as a whole, while not paying much tribute to slavery and civil rights, actually refocuses their attention to more positive notes of culture. It changes the group memory by placing glamour on the slaves and their descendants, rather than discussing the tragedy of their relatives being owned by a man who wanted freedom for his country.

This memorial not only changes collective and group memory but builds up how the government can gain legitimization. However, understanding the notion that this memorial does acknowledge some of the inconsistencies, it could be easier to see the legitimization route through the Vietnam memorial lens. With the Vietnam memorial, the government was able to create a space where all the negative connotations of the war could be forgotten. It did so by refocusing the public's attention to a different aspect of the war, remembering the fallen and not why they fell. Similarly, the memorial here is memorializing the names of the slaves, but not actually remembering their time as slaves. This nourishes the legitimization theory because it provides the public with the idea that the government is admitting just enough responsibility without claiming the more harsh parts of their role.

This memorial, while placed in the historical city of Detroit, could pay great tribute to the African American community, and to some extent it does. However, it could do much more in the memorialization of the fight for Civil Rights and enforcement of those rights. The trouble that could be seen from that would be how far the memorials needs to go in order to sufficiently remember those events and civilians. Remembering the past can be problematic, especially when a society is not fully healed from the effects of such event. How far does one go into the past? To what extent should it be studied and showcased, time and time again? Do we need to fully understand each aspect so history does not repeat itself? If our society believes that is what should be done for the Holocaust, is it not true that memorializing slavery and Civil Rights deserve the same?

Conclusion

The Holocaust and the Civil Rights should be memorized because they changed world history and United States history. The individuals that lost their lives in either event were people

who never got the chance to contribute to society through any means. However, the problem arises when we start to memorialize the event over the person. We must never forget the actions that transpired to cause them to lose their lives, meaning the actions that lead up to those events must be remembered just as much as the perceived highlighted parts of those times. While yes these memorials and museums do speak about the actions that took place in between peaked parts of those eras, it does so in a way that often gets twisted. Since the government uses these spaces to paint itself a more favorable portrayal the actions that the government did or did not take often get forgotten or painted in a different way. Doing this not only helps them gain legitimization, but changes the memory of the event and it becomes something different than it essentially was. By changing that, it creates not only a division in society but ignores problems that the divide then creates.

Strategically, creating the divide within society does help the government out in the legitimization aspect. As previously stated the government now has a group that will come to its defense that they can also use as a scapegoat for when things are more negative than positive. However, by helping push those two groups further apart the citizens are then left fighting with each other over whose version is more correct. Since both groups feel that they have evidence that backs up their claim over being in the right, they will defend their side to any extent. By arguing with each other the government has now created a veil in which they can start acting on their agenda while the citizens are left arguing with each other. This then creates the space for the government to step in periodically to give the appearance that they are trying to do what is in our best interest while not infringing on our freedom.

Understanding the problems that the portrayal within these spaces created not only helps the viewer at the individual level but at the societal level as well. For the individual level it can

help identify the problem and start trying to get others to pay attention to it as well. At the societal level, if more and more are starting to see the implications that these spaces bring they can start to try to work together to come to a solution. Or in the very least stop arguing with one another and start working as a connective unit against unfairness that the government puts into society. Doing this uses the platform that many social justice warriors once used before to call out injustices being done by the government and other fellow citizens. Perhaps using the same platform in a similar way that they used it is the ultimate tribute to their legacy that they left behind. Simply staring at a picture, or a physical artifact that they once owned is just one way to memorialize them. But to continue their work is another layer of memorialization that can be given to them and their work.

A question was once asked of me, essentially stating what else we could do for these events or people that these museums and memorials are dedicated too? In the moment I answered that we should not try to create new spaces, but try to make the spaces that we have equal in the way they memorialize each event or person. I still believe that to be true, but with using their actions a blue print for how to get people to come together, and stand up against unfairness in any capacity, is the mental part of their tribute with the memorial being their physical.

This research started off as another classroom assignment for a writing intensive course. In the beginning stages of this work, I focused more on how memory was processed through the individual, societal, and governmental lenses, and how it impacts society. I then investigated how this takes place in memorialize through memorials and museums. Since they are said to be of educational purposes, I wanted to see how much of that was true. I then wanted to see what other influences are in play with these spaces. What I found is that while yes history is often

complicated, there is an uneven way in which we memorialize certain events. While counterarguments could be made to question how many historical events should we memorialize? Should there be museums to each one? What is the extent that needs to be done in order to ensure that these are all represented in the same way? This research is not meant to give answers to those questions, and there may never be answers. This was done in order to pave the way for people to start thinking about how these memorials and museums show more than just past historical events. I also want a takeaway to be that highlighting certain historical events over others is just as harmful as not memorializing those events at all, in the way that it changes the meaning and the significance of the events, and paints it to be different than what it was. Choosing to only show slightly less horrific versions of slavery is an example of this. This could instill in the viewer that those time periods were not as horrific as they were, and then downplays the intensive effects that it still has today.

Showcasing other nation's faults in a more harsher light than our own only creates more disconnect between citizens in society. It blinds us in a way that makes it harder for problems within this country to be identified, validated, and then solved, which only leads to more issues that stem from this type of blindness. Museums and memorials are said to be for multiple purposes. Education and dedication are often the public reasons as to why they are built for any event. But if those in charge of designing them are not depicting them in the way that is truthful to them, how problematic is that memorial or museum going to become?

Understanding the implications of how these spaces are used is a step in the right direction. It is meant to get one to understand that certain things should not be taken at face value. A citizen needs to question everything, and to not just accept explanations or answers just because they come from someone or something with power. Within the United States we have

the freedom to speak up and speak out against injustices that are important to us. And this is something that needs to be taken more advantage of. The two topics that the case studies focused on were ones where many people stood up against what was happening, whether that was from hiding people within your home, shielding them from prosecution, or taking a stand against not only other citizens but the government as well. These individuals that are immortalized by these memorials left their mark behind on society. Many lost their lives in the fight, or lost their reputation. But that did not stop them, simply because they knew that things were unfair and they knew their fellow citizens and country deserved better than their current situation.

This research outlines the problems that misleading representation of historical events causes within society. It does so in hopes that it causes individuals to start questioning why this is happening, and why the United States cannot hold its own faults in the same light as other nations. Within today's society a gap exists, between those trying to move forward and find a way to make the United States better, and one that is still holding onto old roots. Tradition comes into the conversation time and time again. But one must understand that sometimes breaking old traditions means gaining better ones. We live in a country where a majority of the population believes that calling out our own faults means disrespect. But in reality it means those individuals who do call the country out have more respect for it than those who do not. It says that they respect it enough to call it out because they know that it can do better. This is the same as those who are depicted in the memorials and museums that were discussed earlier.

Another point of this research is that while yes I did notice the discrepancies within these memorials I wanted to research it more not because I thought our country was in the wrong, but simply because the spaces could create more issues later down the road. To this day we are still dealing with effects from slavery, civil rights, and many other injustices that took place in our

country and in foreign ones. But instead of pointing fingers at who has done worse to their citizens we need to examine what went wrong so we can prevent the loss of lives again. Because that is the ultimate tragedy of it all, was the people who never got to see their children grow up, or seen the wonderful advancements that were made all throughout history after their death. The untimeliness of their death is what should be a motivation into looking at what went wrong, and admitting responsibility when it is warranted.

When one admits that they were at fault for any reason then a healing process can begin, and perhaps that is why the previously discussed subjects were often not talked about. We never healed from those events. With the Holocaust the United States could be said to have never healed from the pain that was felt from not getting involved sooner. Pain was felt from the slavery and Civil Rights because those individuals lived within our borders and were still victimized over and over again in a land that was sought out for freedom. Perhaps truly admitting fault would get this country the healing that it needs. So that it can move on from the event, and start to fix the problems that stemmed from those events. Hypothetically speaking, if those problems could be fixed now, we could avoid more issues in the future, which would allow more time to fix the issues that will arise later down the road. An industrialized country will always have some sort of issue arising in any capacity, but when they continue to ignore the problem until it grows so large that it is everywhere, that's when powerful entities are truly at fault.

Over time we have seen the world come together in the wake of tragedies, and we have seen them in combat with each other. The United States have been the helping hand and the hand that has hurt others. However, being the hand that hurts its own citizens by giving a false portrayal could be the most hurtful. It allows the citizens to exist believing in the notion that their government is fair and just. Leading them to defend it against others who are attacking it and

everything that it stands for, while in reality the government is doing things that are putting itself and its citizens at risk.

This study was conducted in hopes of giving myself and the reader a new understanding of how memory works, how it filters into society and then how the government uses it to their advantage. As a student who has always been pushed to keep investigating and to look at things in a new light. I was afforded amazing academic opportunities while conducting this research, including personal interviews with authors such as Michael Berenbaum. The research that is presented here does not include the multiple ideas that I had wanted to originally include. But for the purposes of this project I decided to narrow down those ideas in order for the reader to have a clear and concise understanding of the theories. In essence these theories were developed over time and were helped by the literature that I came across. It happened in the fashion that reading one type of material lead to more questions, which ultimately lead to more different types of literature works. That process not only helped me deepen my critical thinking skills, it also taught me two things. One being the importance of literature works and the impact that they can have on a hungry mind. Two was developing the ability to teach what I had learned to peers who were not as well versed as I was in this matter.

By being able to teach those what I was working on, I achieved a long term goal of mine. Which was the ability to open up others minds and get them to questions things that were perceived correct because they belonged to those in a higher power. It also allowed everyone that came into contact with this work the tools that they needed to never stop asking why in any capacity. That notion was how this project got started, and the ability to pass that urge on to another academic peer gives me hope. It does so in the way that perhaps this could become a learning block to the reader, and they can use it to help their drive for knowledge Lastly, I want

to state that within this world, people come and go easily. But their work is what gets left behind for future generations, and it is up to them to use it as they see fit. A portion of the citizens within this country have tried to make steps in order to fix what was left broken by the previous generations. If this work has an impact on anyone who is trying to help that movement along, I will consider this to be a success.

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