

For the majority of people, looking back on the Holocaust brings about mental images depicting horrific conditions in concentration camps, Jewish families hiding in closets and basements, and millions of deaths in the gas chambers. While it is only natural that these are the thoughts that come to mind given their significant emotional value, it is equally important to remember the smaller-scale civil rights violations that served as a precursor to the atrocious events to come. Access to education has long been a reliable indicator of a group's social standing, so when the German government restricted Jewish children's rights to receive a public education in the 1930s, it foreshadowed the revolting infringements of human rights to follow just a few years later. Fortunately, there were Jewish activists that recognized the intrinsic value of an education, and refused to let publicly-funded anti semitism keep Jewish youth from receiving what was rightfully theirs. One of these warriors of education was Jewish-German teacher Leonore Goldschmidt. The work she did and risks she took to educate Jewish children in budding Nazi Germany serve as an ever-important reminder of the value of education -- particularly to Jewish people -- and the lengths we should go to today in order to preserve, improve, and expand it.

Before what is now regarded as the official beginning of the Holocaust in 1941, anti semitism had been brewing in Germany for quite some time. However, anti-Jewish sentiment reached new heights in 1933, when Adolf Hitler was elected

the chancellor of Germany. With this decision, what had previously been anti semitic culture turned into systematic anti semitic laws -- over four hundred discriminatory laws, in fact. The government regulations on Jews made in the earlier years of Nazi Germany focused most of their attention on the extent to which Jewish citizens could participate in German life and culture. Turns out, not very much. Ways by which this phenomenon manifested include the April 7, 1933 Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, which deemed German Jews too risky and dangerous to include in state service matters. Thereby, this allowed any Jewish professional in a sector of the government (including public education) to be fired due to their ethnic/cultural identity. Jewish involvement was also heavily limited in endeavors such as legal and medical careers, acting and performing, and working as tax consultants. All of this was in anticipation of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, which tore Jewish Germans of their citizenship, among other injustices. While the general consensus is that the Nuremberg Laws are the most egregious bills passed during the early-to-mid 1930s, I don't believe that is grounds to forget about the laws leading up to it - in fact, those laws may be even more important from a historical perspective. In particular, I'm referring to the Law Against Overcrowding in Schools and Universities, passed on June 6, 1933. Despite being under the guise that this law's purpose was to lessen the problem of overcrowding, its true purpose was to force young Jews out of German schools.

They accomplished this by setting a strict quota that no more than 5% of a school's population could be Jewish. And aside from this law, anti semitic sentiment was so high by this point that many Jewish students did not feel safe or comfortable in German schools. It was in this age of Jewish teachers being fired and Jewish students being pushed around that Leonore Goldschmidt made her difference.

Despite being a teacher for over twelve years, Ms. Goldschmidt was dismissed from her job at a public German school due to her Jewish identity following the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. While this act of blatant discrimination may have discouraged some, Ms. Goldschmidt channeled her frustrations with the Nazi regime's injustices into action. Thinking of the thousands of societally-displaced Jewish students across Germany, Ms. Goldschmidt opened her own private boarding school for Jews in May of 1935: the Dr. Leonore Goldschmidt Schule. Her school was able to operate in Berlin until 1939, when she was forced to relocate her practice to Britain due to the suffocating anti semitism of the growing Nazi regime. But during those four years working in Germany, Ms. Goldschmidt was able to educate hundreds of Jewish youth, employ over forty teachers, and become a certified Examination Centre for the University of Cambridge, which heavily aided many of her students in finding professions outside of Germany -- something that turned out to be crucial. Without her tireless

efforts, Jewish children in Germany (Berlin in particular) would have had far fewer options for receiving an education.

Given this information, it's clear that Ms. Goldschmidt must have seen something incredibly valuable in having access to an education -- or she could have easily justified packing her bags and leaving Germany the second she was fired. Additionally, it's obvious that the Nazis themselves understood the value of an education, given that they tried so hard to strip Jews from it. So what is it about an education that makes it worth fighting for? For starters, education has been a tenet of Jewish culture since the very beginning. While this originated in the form of Jews' dedication to reading and understanding the Torah, this easily translated into more general studies and learning. Furthermore, education gifts people with knowledge necessary to know their history, to stand up for themselves, and to fight dirty lies with cold hard facts, which easily explains the Nazis attempts to rob Jewish people of an education. They knew that if Jews had the necessary tools that a true education provides, it would be that much harder to get away with stealing their rights. And while the Nazis were successful, at least in the short term, of ridding Jewish people of their humanity, the education provided today that exposes Nazis to be the power-hungry, disgusting humans that they were will be the story that prevails.

Unfortunately, the struggle that Jews went through to obtain an education back in the 1930s still exists for many underprivileged communities in the modern world. Teachers are grossly underpaid in several places across the US (including North Carolina) and the quality of education provided in poorer counties that tend to have more diverse populations is staggeringly low compared to the educational opportunities for the rich. This inequality is massively disappointing considering all of the lessons from throughout history, including the Holocaust, that prove that an education is necessary in order for a group to be integrated into society.

Education, as one can learn through Ms. Goldschmidt's example, is power. Let's not rob anyone else of their own.