

Auschwitz

Not long ago. Not far away.

Holocaust Myths and Misconceptions

1. German Jews were a large proportion of Germany's population.
 - a. In 1933, approximately 9.5 million Jews lived in Europe, comprising 1.7% of the total European population. This number represented more than 60 percent of the world's Jewish population at that time, estimated at 15.3 million. Of these, the largest Jewish community was in Poland – about 3,250,000 Jews or 9.8% of the Polish population. Germany's approximately 565,000 Jews made up only 0.8% of its population.
2. Killing Jews was on Hitler and the Nazi Party's agenda from the beginning.
 - a. Plans to murder Europe's Jews began when forced immigration out of German territory was no longer a viable goal. In part because German territory kept expanding into areas that contained millions of Jews. The authorization for the "Final Solution" began in July 1941 and was finally ratified in January 1942.
3. The Nazis system of concentration camps consisted of about 10,000 camps.
 - a. From 1933-1945 over 44,000 camps existed across occupied Europe.
4. Most concentration camps had a gas chamber and crematoria.
 - a. Only six camps were designated as systematic killing centers. Camps equipped with gassing facilities, for mass murder of Jews included Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Industrial scale crematoria only existed at Auschwitz-Birkenau and only after 1943. Up to 2,700,000 Jews were murdered at these camps, as were tens of thousands of Gypsies, Soviet prisoners of war, Poles, and others.
5. All Jews in camps received tattoo numbers on their arms.
 - a. Auschwitz was the only camp to do systematic tattooing. Those selected for immediate death were not tattooed.
6. All Jews were killed by gas.
 - a. While millions were murdered by gas in the 6 death camp facilities, over 1.5 million were killed in mass shooting actions. Thousands more succumbed to disease and starvation.
7. Hitler was singularly responsible for the Holocaust.
 - a. While Hitler was the leader of Germany during the Holocaust, the planning and execution was only made possible by the active and passive participation of millions of individuals across occupied Europe.

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8. Those who perpetrated the Holocaust were sadists and monsters.
 - a. Although there were certainly “happy killers,” the vast majority of those who perpetrated the Holocaust were ordinary citizens. Their reasons for participation ranged from dedication to Nazi ideals to social pressures and personal career concerns.
9. Germans were brainwashed by Nazi propaganda.
 - a. Although effective at normalizing Nazi ideals, Germany was an educated, literate society. Those within it made choices about the information they consumed what actions they took or did not take based on this messaging.
10. Jews did not resist.
 - a. Faced with overwhelming obstacles, Jews resisted Nazi policy in various ways. Some took up arms in uprisings in ghettos and camps. Others performed more social acts to preserve community and create a record of their experiences. Social Resistance In many ghettos, people chose to resist though a variety of social acts. Some attempted to continue cultural life though the establishment of schools, theater groups and libraries. Others helped maintain community though soup kitchens and hospitals. Several ghettos collected material to document life within the ghetto. For many, the most well-known example of Holocaust resistance are the events of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in April of 1943. In addition to the Warsaw ghetto uprising, the killing centers of Treblinka, Sobibor and Auschwitz-Birkenau all saw prisoner revolts. In each of these cases, prisoners revolted once they realized the end of their camp or ghetto was imminent.

<https://mchekc.org/holocaust-history/misconceptions/>

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