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Mrs. Marx

Period 4

Holocaust Remembrance Essay Final

That spring morning in 1945, Arthur Butler, an American soldier who liberated a Nazi camp, woke up to see that his shoes had been shined. These refugees were on the brink of death, and the person who had done it was most likely sick with hunger and disease, and probably didn't even have the strength to stand. People have heard the horrific tales of the Holocaust, how they dehumanized, tortured, and killed those in the concentration camps. The survivors tell their stories of how they survived physically, but there's very little on how they survived mentally. How did they keep their humanity, hope, and will to live while all around them forces were at work to destroy that? Kindness. Kindness helped to keep the spark of humanity alive in the sheer dark of terror in the camps.

Arthur and his troop marched into a small concentration camp to free the prisoners. The prisoners of the camp were sick and dying. They were skeletons of the people they once were and barely holding onto life. Arthur was horrified by the conditions of these prisoners, "It makes you wonder about man's humanity to man." (Arthur Bell testimony) It shocked Arthur how horribly these people were being treated and it made him question how a human could do such a thing. One night, after a long day of taking care of the prisoners, Arthur laid down on a metal table to sleep for the night. All around him were dozens of sick refugees, and he slept on the table to prevent

catching one of the many diseases plaguing the survivors. The next morning his shoes had been shined.

In the midst of all the chaos and tragedy that had plagued the camp, there was still humanity and kindness. The Nazis had done everything they could to try to dehumanize the concentration camp inmates. They shaved their hair, made them wear prisoner clothing, and separated them from everything and everyone that they had ever known or loved. These people had been through the worst of humanity, and still found the strength to show kindness to others. The inmate who shined Arthur's shoes was probably sick or at least severely malnourished, and here they were still trying to show gratitude to the soldiers who had freed them. By being grateful to the soldiers, the refugees are keeping their humanity alive while also spreading kindness to those who need it most.

This is something the whole world needs to learn. Kindness in the face of sheer pain shows the world what true character and humanity is. By keeping this humanity alive, they are able to survive in the concentration camps, and the outside world. Because maintaining their humanity shows that they still have morals and will not let the Nazis change them into something inhumane. Because kindness is humanity, and by striving to promote kindness, even during the darkest of times, you are promoting a more fair and compassionate humanity for all, shining the light on others.

Citation:

“Arthur Butler.” *Florida Holocaust Museum*, www.flholocaustmuseum.org/explore-2/testimonies/arthur-butler/.