

Felix Steiner
Rongotai College

Year 9 - 10

The events of the Holocaust led to unfathomable suffering amongst millions of people throughout Europe. Explain how the idea of resilience helped Holocaust survivors throughout the events from 1933— 1945.

During World War Two, the Nazi implementation of concentration and death camps in Europe forced people to adopt the resilience needed to survive. The detainment of these people ruined the lives of everyone around them and forced the inhabitants to fight for their survival.

Jews demonstrated the concept of resilience through resistance; both physical and spiritual. The first examples of true physical Jewish resistance during the Holocaust occurred between 1941 and 1943 when underground Jewish resistance movements started forming in over 100 concentration camps throughout German-occupied Europe. The main goal of these uprisings was to break free and join the fight against the Nazis. Ultimately, the Jews knew their resistances would not do much against the wave of German influence spreading across Europe at that time, yet they still made the decision to fight for their freedom and to spread the idea of resistance across Europe. A famous example of the revolution fever was the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt in 1943. The revolution in the ghetto lasted almost a month before the Nazis finally managed to pacify the remaining Jewish fighters. But even with it ending in a loss, this is still one of the key events that boosted the Jewish community to ignite the spark of revolution and lead the final charge to revolt against their Nazi oppressors. This shows that resilience took the form of physical resistance against Nazi oppression.

Violent revolution and resistance was not the only way Nazi prisoners were able to show resilience during the decimation of their people. Underground Synagogues and prayer houses were created to allow Jews to practice their religion in secret. An example of this is when prisoners were killed in concentration camps (not deliberately by the Nazis) the Jewish community would offer a 'Kaddish' or prayer for the dead to make sure that they passed peacefully. The fact the Jewish people were willing to risk their lives to spite the guards and continue the religion that bound them all together even if it was just a small remnant of their past prayers shows the strength and resilience these people demonstrated everyday. The Rosenstrasse Protest is a good example of non-violent resilience as this was a peaceful march by non-Jewish spouses and relatives during 1943 to protest the arrest of their husbands, wives and relatives. *"I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."* This quote by Elie Wiesel, the author of 'Night' which perfectly shows the resilient mindset between prisoners in the concentration camps. It reveals that the idea of never giving up and making sure that you always stand up for what you need, even if it may cost your life.

For many of the Jewish prisoners though, the struggles did not end with the liberation of their iron-clad cages. In fact, with the stigma behind the Jewish peoples, it was very hard to leave Germany let alone Europe. Between 1933 to 1939, while the Nazi Party was slowly gaining traction and revealing their anti-semitic beliefs and the idea of a 'Master Race', the Jewish community looked to escape this persecution. New Zealand was one of the most appealing options for relocation, but there were certain boundaries as at the time Jews weren't classified as refugees and so were subject to the Immigration Restriction Amendment Act, which stated that it '*prevented aliens from Europe entering New Zealand unless they had guaranteed employment, a considerable amount of capital or 'possessed knowledge and skills which would enable them to rehabilitate readily, but without detriment to any resident of New Zealand.'*' This meant it was a lot harder for people to easily relocate to another country to escape the Nazis, henceforth being resilient was a much needed requirement.

Resilience is a feeling which everyone has experienced at least once during their time on earth. But this feeling has never been more demonstrated than during the Holocaust. This feeling is the driving force behind a lot of the great revolts that helped and succeeded in taking down Nazi Germany. The human instinct to preserve what they believe in is shown in full force when people will sacrifice themselves for the good of their family, friends and people they had never met just to make sure that they will be safe to live and continue in the memory of those they had lost.