

Paul Seideman Essay Competition: *Susannah Hansen, 14, Year 10, Woodford House*

The Holocaust was one of the most horrific events in world history, but it holds many lessons for New Zealand and the world. The refugees who fled the Holocaust to New Zealand teach us that compassion is important and strict regulations simply marginalise the vulnerable. We also learn how prejudice and racism are extremely dangerous.

The Holocaust caused many Jews to flee their homes and countries, such as Poland and France with New Zealand being a safe destination with a low population. Frank Briess's daughter said, when he was fleeing the Holocaust, "he turned the globe upside down to show which country was the most distant from Europe and chose that country as the place he wanted to come to" (Claire Bruell). The fact that New Zealand was an ideal destination, and yet so few Jews were allowed in proves that we needed to change our immigration system. Even now, despite our efforts, people fleeing from their homes need more support, and to be provided with a safe place of refuge where they are able to live out their lives in peace.

Refugees fleeing Nazism who immigrated to New Zealand have proved to us that the strict rules that bind them, are often marginalising. As an example, Frank and Alice Briess immigrated to New Zealand and managed a very successful farm. However, due to the 1939 restrictions for foreign persons, the Briess's were forced to sell their farm due to it being within 15 miles of an airport. Paranoia and mistrust originated from the fear the European immigrants may have been enemy spies. Despite trying to control the situation and protect New Zealand, these measures simply escalated the barrier between the Jewish refugees and the New Zealanders, separating them into factions. In future cases, care must be taken to integrate the refugees into society rather than separating them from the community.

The Holocaust has proved to New Zealand and the rest of the world, the dangers of racism, prejudice, and dictatorship. Prejudice and racism are similar in the way that they are both without reason, and hurt those who are innocent. The power that Hitler had as a dictator, enabled him to propagandize against Jews and therefore gather support for his cause, leading to the Holocaust. This event, however terrible, has provided an event that taught the world that one individual should never hold such immense power over people's lives, and people must stick up for their values and other people. It also teaches us that racism and prejudice need to be stopped in their early stages to prevent escalation and the devastation that they cause.

The Holocaust was one of the most horrific events in the history of the earth, but it has taught New Zealand and the world, things that will hopefully improve the future. Compassion for the vulnerable, integrating them into society and the dangers of racism are all very important lessons that New Zealand has learnt and it is imperative that we do not forget.

Bibliography

Bruell, C. (n.d.). *Survivor Stories - Frank and Alice Briess*. Retrieved from Holocaust Centre of New Zealand: <http://www.holocaustcentre.org.nz/index.php/holocaust-stories/survivor-stories/37-frank-and-alice-briess>

Phillips, J. (2012, November 15). *History of immigration - The Second World War: 1939 to 1945*. Retrieved from Te Ara - The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand: <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/community-contribution/2143/refugees-from-nazism>