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Historical Amnesia

by Joe Escobar - Friday, May 17, 2013, 9:29 PM

This forum thread is for Historical Amnesia posts and replies.

After studying the required materials, address the individual questions in SEPARATE posts.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post.

To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post.

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Historical forgetfulness; remembering the painful past for the benefit of all

by Barry Sommer - Saturday, May 18, 2013, 10:06 AM

It seems the Japanese dillitante are more than willing to follow holocaust revisionists and whitewash, if not eliminate altogether the historical proof that they have been as evil and bloodthirsty as other societies. Denying what happened demeans the survivors and the families of those who died, and it restricts the ability of historians to get to the truth. On the other side we have such things as censorship; you will be prosecuted and jailed in Germany and some other European countries if you question any aspect of the holocaust. Which is worse; denial or censorship? They both work hand in hand to severely restrict academic inquiry, but they are part and parcel of how history is manipulated by those who have a lot to lose.

Research the Turkish/Armenian genocide and you will see how one side wants justice based in historical records, while the other side wants to erase this chapter of their history in order to avoid responsibility. The argument has been going on ever since it happened in the years surrounding WWI, and the Turkish government refuses to accept the common truth that they massacred up to 1.5M Armenians. An interesting side note to this is the fact that the Ottomans were Islamic, and the

Armenians were virtually all Christians, Catholics and Protestants. There might have been a bit of religious fervor going on, but in the end the murder of over a million people is disputed to this day.

How does society deal with burying history that is uncomfortable? Usually by denying, sometimes by lying, occasionally by projecting. In each case the result is the same; a gross misunderstanding of historical fact. George Santayana says if we refuse to remember the past we are condemned to repeat it. By denying what is a part of human history we doom ourselves to repeating the behavior, and expecting different results. Is that not the definition of insanity?

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The problem with Amnesia

by Kinzi Silburn - Monday, May 20, 2013, 9:02 PM

It is pretty safe to say that every country has done things they might not necessarily be proud of. But the thing is, no matter how much they try to forget that it happened by purging any information about it from society, there are always going to be other countries that remember. Just like a person with amnesia, they might not know what they did in the past, but everyone else around them still does. No matter what, certain events cannot be erased from history. If Germany suddenly "forgot" that the Holocaust happened, I am positive the rest of the world would never let them forget.

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Re: The problem with Amnesia

by Barry Sommer - Monday, May 20, 2013, 10:34 PM

"No matter what, certain events cannot be erased from history. If Germany suddenly "forgot" that the Holocaust happened, I am positive the rest of the world would never let them forget"

One would think that history is carved in stone, and for the most part it is.

Taking into account that the victor writes the history, it is history none the less and not (usually) subject to a re-write. As to Germany and the Holocaust, for a long time after the war there was a political incorrectness about how, between the years 1936 and 1945 Germany knew nothing of the "Final Solution" and that the German people were not culpable because they were all making chocolate and Cookoo(sic) clocks during the war. History books for school kids told almost nothing of the war years, it was too painful to remember. The world did not let Germany forget, and today schools teach the truth about the war years and show the NSDAP (Nazi party) for what they really were. The downside to this is that now in Germany if you question the Holocaust (say it never happened) you will be arrested and jailed. I believe the propaganda the West used during WWII showing the enemy in the worst possible light played a part in

the self-demonization after the war ended, and did prevent an honest assessment of the results of the war by the loser, and by Western scholars. We must never forget history, it is a part of who we are and where we can go, propaganda included.

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Hiding History

by Charlin Carlisle - Monday, May 20, 2013, 9:41 PM

Hiding history because your ashamed of your past is a bad idea for multiple reasons. First, without the knowlege of what happen someone is most likely to repeat it. Second, you learn from your mistakes along with others with the same knowledge. Hiding the past is disrespectful and it doesn't erase the memories of the past from the mind of whom was involved.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Hiding History

by Thomas Comings - Tuesday, May 21, 2013, 9:12 AM

Your point is well taken, but it's harder to freely speak of history when your country or even your ancestors had a hand in such great inhumanity. Imagine if you found out that your great-great-grandfather owned slaves? Or rather if he took place in some of the Native-American massacres in this countries history? Would you be eager to discuss those events then? If so, I admire your courage and acceptance.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Hiding History

by Lesley Pilz - Saturday, May 25, 2013, 7:21 PM

I'm not so sure why everyone would mind so much. My ancestor is not me and I have nothing to do with what they did in the past. It would interest me historically and maybe even make me want to do more research on a subject but I don't feel shame from something I personally had nothing to do with. We learn from the past so we don't repeat past mistakes. A lot of people have living relatives that were involved one way or another with the school desegregation and racism issues. My mom wasn't allowed to have black friends growing up. Her mom was half black but my grandfather lived in denial his whole life and insisted she was Spanish. why should I feel anything but sad for the man? His crimes are not my own. If my mom had never talked about race issues with me because of her father he might

have indoctrinated me to see things that way when we lived with him and I was small.

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The Real Danger of Forgetting

by Thomas Comings - Tuesday, May 21, 2013, 9:07 AM

Forgiving is hard; forgetting is easy. And, while wartime atrocities should never be forgiven, it is more important to understand and always remember that they happened and more importantly *why* they happened -- what could lead to such horror. Countries like Japan and Germany (not to mention the US throughout history) have done a lot to erase and downplay significant violence and human rights violation during this WWII time period and simply write it off as a dark spot on their national history that needs not to be spoken of again. As mentioned in the article, it has even gone so far in Japan that the curators of the tell-all museum on the time, the Chukiren museum, have been physically threatened. More violence to stop the flow of accurate historical information?

Which brings me back to my point on forgiveness. Could you imagine the guilt you would feel as the decedent of a Nazi officer or an Japanese Imperial soldier? I'm sure that, in that position, you'd look back and shudder to think that you could be related to someone so callous and inhumane. I'd posit that many would try to expel that information from their lives and those around them as to not be view in association with those times and ideals. While never forgiving what was done, I think we shouldn't condemn those modern, guilt-ridden countrymen as guilty by association -- lest it leads to further suppression of historical truth.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: The Real Danger of Forgetting

by Barry Sommer - Tuesday, May 21, 2013, 4:41 PM

I visited Pearl Harbor back in the mid-80s. The last thing I expected to see were Japanese tourists praying and laying flowers at the USS Arizona. The mood was somber and there was little talk, only the quiet murmur of shinto prayers over the dead entombed below. I was stunned. I asked, on pain of insult why they felt the need to come and pray over American dead. The one woman who spoke to me said that they were there to atone for the sins of their country and leaders during wartime. There may be a governmental myopia regarding Japans role in WWII, but the people, I believe took to heart the feeling of the Jews "Never Forget" As long as those Japanese tourists feel it necesessary to come and pay respects for the sins of themselves (in some cases) and the sins of others history will never be reduced to the dustbin of forgotten truths.

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Re: The Real Danger of Forgetting

by Thomas Comings - Friday, May 24, 2013, 12:13 PM

That's a beautiful story, Barry, and great evidence as to why we should never forget the sins of our fathers. At the same time, we have to learn from them as to correct our future behaviour -- to do so is much more valueable than being mired by associated guilt. Either way, it's important for global and cultural unity to have people of different nations who have wronged eachother in the past come together out of respect for those fallen and agree that in the future such violence should be avoided at all costs.

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Re: The Real Danger of Forgetting

by Alex McNeil - Saturday, May 25, 2013, 10:50 PM

Posterity inheriting the mistakes of a generation brings to mind the idea of slavery reperations. To what degree should the decendants of a generation that committed a serious crime (like being involved with the holocaust) be responsible for those mistakes? I tend to think that generations succeeding the original offender shouldn't bear the burden of the mistakes made by that offending generation. Thoughts?

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revisionists

by Francisco Gomez - Friday, May 24, 2013, 8:43 PM

I find it quite funny that revisionsts keep on denying the past horrors of World War II. In the case of the Japanese, their historial perspective of the war was to forget what they have done to the Chinesees. Instead of being accountable, they accused the Chinesse for their"brainwashing propangda" on their soliders.

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Don't ever forget

by Keeler McJunkin - Saturday, May 25, 2013, 1:31 PM

To say we should just forget about parts of history is not right. Yes, there are obviously good and bad things that have happened in our history but we can't just forget them. Many of the things that have happened in the past that we may want to

forget, were needed at the time for the greater good. Pretty much every country in the world I'm sure has parts of their history they aren't proud of or would like to forget. Does that mean we can or should? No.

They need to be remembered and go down in history so that future generations know what happened, know why it happened and hope they don't let it happen again. There is a lot to be learned from bad parts of history. Trying to cover them up just gives them a chance of happening again. People knowing the terror of what may have happened in years past will help it from happening in the future.

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Re: Don't ever forget

by Hayley Demanett - Saturday, May 25, 2013, 11:33 PM

I like the point that you make about some events in history being for the greater good. Historical events aren't isolated in that, once they happen there are no other affects caused by them.

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Forgetting History by Hayley Demanett

by Hayley Demanett - Saturday, May 25, 2013, 6:19 PM

This is the first time that I have heard about what happened at Nanking. I understand why people from Japan and even China would want to forget what happened but I think it is important that this atrocity is not forgotten. People don't always like to talk about the bad things that have happened but I think that it is still important that we remember them.

Not having heard about this before reminded me of how I had heard that some schools have banned their teachers from teaching about the Holocaust, which I find disturbing. Some school's reasoning is that it could offend some of the students and their families. On the flip side of that, couldn't it be offensive to some students whose older family members were somehow involved in World War II and now schools refuse to teach about some the events that occurred. I think that sometimes people try so hard to not step on other people's toes by not talking about sensitive subjects that they forget that actual people were involved in those events and they are getting forgotten along with what happened.

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