

Student Essay on The Holocaust

The Holocaust

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The Holocaust

The Holocaust, just the title makes people automatically think of Hitler. But what is the Holocaust? Basically, the holocaust was the killing of about 4.1 to 6.0 million Jews. Why the Jews? Exactly when Hitler's eliminationist hatred of the Jews took form in his mind is still a matter of debate. Some accounts have him violently antisemitic when he still lived in Linz. Others equate it to his experiences in Vienna, when Lanz von Liebenfels, whose journal *Ostara* spoke of a blond haired, blue eyed master race--the Aryans--who were constantly in danger from a parasitic subhuman race--the Jews. Still others link it to his gassing experience at the end of World War I, and others believe the antisemitism took on its virulent form in the early 1920s under the influence of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, another author who believed in the "Superior/Parasitic races", and Dietrich Eckart, Hitler's mentor, and one of the people *Mein Kampf* was dedicated to. As for the German people, their hatred of the Jews was for a simple reason: the Jews were rich, and the Germans were poor.

One of the biggest symbols of the Holocaust is Auschwitz. Established by the Nazis in 1940, in the suburbs of Oswiecim, a Polish city that was annexed to the Third Reich by the Nazis, it was originally built because the mass arrests of the Poles were filling up the local prisons far too quickly, and was supposed to be just another concentration camp like the Germans had been setting up since the 1930's. It served that purpose until 1942, when it became the largest death camp in Nazi Germany. The Polish government originally claimed that 4 million Jews died in Auschwitz. However, historians have set the actual death number at around 2.5 million. This was carried out, for the most part, by starving the Jews, or putting them in large gas chambers and, to be redundant, gassing them. The dead bodies were then cremated, as were young children and those Jews who decided to be disobedient, both of which were alive at the time. After a while of this, the crematoriums were deemed inefficient, and the bodies were put on pyres, or in huge mass graves.