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Mount Mercy Teaches the Past to Impact the Future

It is a well-known adage that “history repeats itself”. In an effort to prevent one of the worst atrocities from history from repeating itself, Mount Mercy Academy is teaching a class entitled “The Holocaust”.

The course is in its second year at the Academy and was started partly due to student interest but the prime reason for developing the course was to focus on Human Rights, which is related to the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy. Two of the five Critical Concerns are working against Racism and practicing Nonviolence. Both of these concerns were violated during the Holocaust.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum believes that studying the Holocaust “provides one of the most effective subjects for examining basic moral issues...it also addresses the central mandates of education in the United States, which is to examine what it means to be a responsible citizen”.

In addition, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum believes that studying the Holocaust “helps students to understand the roots and ramifications of prejudice, racism and stereotyping in any society and explores the dangers of remaining silent, apathetic and indifferent to the oppression of others”.

Mount Mercy’s Holocaust class discusses the quintessential accounts of the Holocaust such as *Night* by Elie Wiesel, *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank and *All But My Life* by Gerda Weissmann Klein. The class utilizes the book entitled *The World Must Know* by Michael Berenbaum, “a skillfully organized and clearly told account of the German Holocaust that consumed with unparalleled malevolence, six million Jews and millions of innocent others...”. This book contains much of the information that is included in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The class recently hosted Sofia Vetter, a Holocaust survivor who is a part of the Buffalo Holocaust Resource Center of Buffalo. Ms. Vetter, a native of Amsterdam, Holland, spoke about her experiences during the Holocaust. She described some of the many injustices that were committed during this time. She also spoke of how just one person could make a difference in the world. She urged the students to be “Upstanders” rather than “Bystanders”. She urged the students to not just stand by and watch injustices happen, but to be vigilant and “Repair the World”.

The students were enthralled with Ms. Vetter’s talk and could not believe how quickly the hour elapsed. They wished that they had more time to listen to her speak of her experiences. Junior Emma Fredo of Buffalo commented “Although Sofia does not think of herself as a hero, to me she truly is a hero and an inspiration to all.”

Mount Mercy Academy

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