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Kristallnacht, May We Always Remember

Nothing but loud screams of terror, shattering glass, and crackling flames filled the streets of Germany on the evening of November 9-10, 1938, as Nazi forces and followers smashed Jewish businesses and set Jewish homes and synagogues ablaze. This was the night of Kristallnacht, otherwise known as “The Night of Broken Glass”, considered to be the single-most life changing event in the history of the German Jews and the forceful start of the Holocaust, when everyday comforts such as safety and peace of mind were stripped from the Jews; Jewish belongings, businesses, homes, and synagogues were seized and destroyed; and a pathway was paved to wipe out the entire German Jewish population in the Holocaust. The Nazi forces used this night as their first true outlet to implant fear into the Jewish and German populations alike.

Incited by the assassination of a German official by a Jew in Paris, SS-Heydrich of Germany ordered all State Police to conduct demonstrations against Jews on this fateful night. The Nazi forces gave the German people two options: to follow or not. The followers followed and did as they were told, killing Jews or arresting them as a scare tactic to create fear in the Jews. The Nazis continued terrorizing the Jews by seizing and destroying all things important to them such as their homes, worship centers, belongings, and businesses- basically their entire way of life. During Kristallnacht, 30,000 Jews were arrested, approximately 100 were killed, and countless more were injured, leaving families torn apart and children to survive on their own. Over 7,500 Jewish-owned businesses were seized, vandalized, or destroyed by the Nazis. Fire departments were ordered not to control fires at homes or businesses unless they threatened those of non-Jewish Germans. There was no one left to help the Jews. Many of the Germans were too

terrified of the same treatment to stand against such orders, and many Jews felt defeated already. This sense of helplessness and hopelessness paved the way for the eventual Holocaust. When seizing and destroying every aspect of the German Jewish culture wasn't enough to break their spirit, the Nazis decided that mass execution of the entire population was the answer. In the several years of horror that followed, millions of Jews were hunted and shipped to concentration camps where they were starved, worked to death, gassed, or shot. This horrific black mark in history is known as the Holocaust, and it was kicked off on "The Night of Broken Glass", Kristallnacht.

As hard as it is to revive the memories of such an awful event in history, it is incredibly important to do so because it affects all of us, even today. The German Jews could have been any population of people; in fact, it could have been us. If the coming generations are not informed on the topic of the Holocaust and Kristallnacht, what is there to prevent such a massacre from happening again?

Without education about history, history is bound to repeat itself. It is important to remember the past lives and souls that have been taken through the events of the Holocaust. May these events always be remembered in order to prevent a catastrophe like this from ever happening again.

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