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Dark Tourism: "Rage"

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Jackson Blaschum

Rage

Auschwitz was a very strange day for me. I found myself trying to control the emotions that flooded over me upon entering the camp. These were not the same feelings of sadness that many of my classmates felt, but anger, even rage. I found myself struggling to control the anger I felt that the human race was capable of committing such horrible acts of violence. I doubt that I will ever forget the various exhibits in the camp. Among these were two tons of human hair collected from women who arrived at the camp, roughly 40,000 women, which was taken from victims in order to make fabric for use in the Third Reich.

In my experience with what has been described as “dark tourism,” I can say that the term is befitting. There were signs advertising the camp along the road as if you were travelling to Busch Gardens. However, perhaps the most striking example of this term would be the people taking photos with each other smiling with their arms around each other outside of the latrines. This made me sick to my stomach. Even though there are negative aspects of dark tourism, I believe that it has its merits as well. Though some might come to visit this site as a tourist attraction, I saw many people evoke deep reverence and leave as though they were leaving a cemetery. Auschwitz has a way of changing the visitor that is impossible to describe unless experienced. I can say that it takes a bit of innocence out of one’s view of the world. It left me with an empty feeling, and for days after I found it hard to see much good in the world. However, after taking a step back I can see the resiliency of the human race through the words of one survivor we met in Paris, who claimed that she beat the Nazis because she survived and had many children and grandchildren. And in the end, Hitler was defeated. I plan to make a career in the armed forces and intend to carry these lessons learned at Auschwitz into my professional life.