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Reflective Insight: "The Legacy of Holocaust Memory"

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Julius Lacano

The Legacy of Holocaust Memory

To me, the Holocaust is the ever-present reminder of the reasons behind and the importance of the existence of the State of Israel. When in France I asked the panel of Auschwitz survivors on how they felt things were in France, a nation with a history of anti-Semitism. The answer from Ester Sénot was the most shocking and also the most telling. She said “Things today are as bad as they were in 1941.” This simple statement is one of the most powerful and somber statements I have ever heard. To feel that the state of Jews in France is as bad as on the eve of the largest incidence of mass murder that this world has ever witnessed.

Throughout history, the Jews have faced racial violence, enslavement, and other calamities and have survived and prospered. It is a long cycle of hardship and renewal that has strengthened the resolve of Jews throughout history and has reinforced their faith as the cornerstone of their culture and beliefs. The story of every Holocaust survivor mimics that of Israel. Both of them, along with the fact that there are Jews born every day, are the outward and constant reminder that the Nazi’s lost. As Ester Sénot said: “I defeated Hitler. With my three children, six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren, I defeated Hitler. Now I look to the future even while educating others about the past.” This is a view that I believe we all must share and the reason why I study the Holocaust. The horrors of the past and the stories of survival must echo across every generation from now till the end of time because, as Primo Levi once said: “It happened, therefore it can happen again.”