

**My Changed Perspective as a Student in
The Asper Foundation Human Rights & Holocaust Studies Program**

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Being a participant in The Asper Foundation Human Rights & Holocaust Program, administered through the Jewish Heritage Centre, has changed my perspective on the world and on the importance of human rights, forever.

The whole program was composed of education sessions from February to April 2014, 16 hours of volunteer work to give back to the community, a trip to Washington D.C., and a graduation ceremony.

In our education sessions, we learned about many themes and events related to human rights and freedom: the tragic events of the Holocaust, the obstacles that Martin Luther King Jr faced throughout his life, and the propaganda and discrimination towards mankind.

Some of the most powerful moments of this journey happened in Washington, DC at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. One of them happened when I was walking through the dark and emotional halls of the Museum and, suddenly, saw a display, a haunting display of shoes. The shoes belonged to the men, women, and children of a concentration camp. Many would just take a look and keep walking but I stayed; because to me, they weren't just shoes. I imagined the people that had their feet in those shoes, and what they had been through. The pain and loss that I imagined so deeply made the whole experience very surreal.

The second moment happened while I was in the cattle car in the Museum. The cattle cars were used to transport people of all ages to the concentration camps. The trip to the camps may have lasted 2-5 days. To smell, see and imagine the pain that the people felt during their journey was one of the strongest moments of my experience on this program. There is really something dramatically different about being in the cattle car compared to just reading about it.

When I read and heard stories from the survivors, it started to really hurt and disappoint me and make me start to wonder, what can I do to help? I strongly believe that this is why it is our job to have our own voice to stand up and make a difference because if we don't, then who will? We may feel terrified to seem different or stand out by standing up for what we believe in, but, if one of us doesn't stand up to make a difference, then no one will.

In conclusion, The Asper Foundation Human Rights & Holocaust Studies Program has not only given me a different perspective on human rights, but, it has also taught me that we all have a voice to speak up and stand up to make sure that another Holocaust will never happen again. Never again.