

READING

My Facing History Journey

I learned a lot about myself, the people around me, human behavior, and the Holocaust in my Facing History class.

By participating in all the different assignments and projects, I really got to think beyond measures. I was able to go deep into thought and really grasp different concepts. Facing History and Ourselves makes you think twice on things you would just overlook. Being a part of this particular class, I feel I became a better person. I learned I'm not the type to just turn the other way and just let things happen and that I am more than what people see on the outside. I learned that everyone is not the same and it is okay to have different views on certain situations.

The class took us through five phases:

The Individual and Society: This was when we got to learn about ourselves and the people around us. It showed me how society can put labels on others. We created our own identity charts, writing down everything that described us. I quickly realized that I am more than just the short, light-skinned girl with a big forehead. I am way more than that. The root of this section was for us to learn that people will put you in a certain category based on how they see you. The way people see you and the way you see yourself is sometimes very different. Never let someone put a label on you without getting to know you first-hand.

We and They: This section was all about groups. This one meant a lot to me because I always felt groups were unnecessary. Yes, it is fine to have your own group of friends, but that doesn't mean you have to judge another group because you feel they don't fit in.

History: We went in depth on the Holocaust. I learned so much that I didn't know. This section showed me that if you give a person too much power, they can quickly and easily abuse their authority.

Judgment, Memory, and Legacy: We learned about Holocaust survivors and the struggles and horrors they went through. It was so sad to hear how families were ripped apart and lives were changed. I learned not to let the memory of the Holocaust die. Thousands of people suffered and it is only right to continue to share their stories.

Choosing to Participate: After learning all I have learned, I know now that I cannot just stand by and watch things happen. I will be an upstander. I will choose to participate wherever I can.

Coming into this course, I was not that excited. Throughout high school, I never really liked history. Each year it felt boring and unnecessary. I didn't feel I needed another history class because I already took it three years in a row and nothing really stuck with me.

Now that the course is over, I realize it taught me a lot about myself – something I wasn't expecting. We really had to think about the background of why people did what they did and we always reflected back on our own lives and what we think we would do in a certain situation. That was something I enjoyed because I got to hear how everyone felt. Not everyone has the same mind set.

My advice to the students who are about to embark on this remarkable journey is to be very open-minded. Not everyone has the same mindset, which means not everyone will agree with you. But to hear what others have to say is sometimes fun. Also, participation is key! Never just sit there and stay quiet. Get involved! You'll learn so much more that way.