

'Holocaust Center' Work of Students

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By JOHN HAMILL

The gaunt faces of doomed children stare from the walls, while under glass in the center of the room are examples of the priceless papers that meant the difference between life and death during the greatest slaughter of the 20th century. A museum? Hardly. It is the "holocaust center" of John Dewey High School.

The "holocaust center," presently located in the school library is the result of six months work by 20 students and one teacher who immersed themselves in the nightmare world of genocide. Though the center stresses the Nazi extermination of Jews, there are also exhibits dealing with genocide against American Indians and Armenians.

"A study of any of the groups proves the same thing," said Ira Zornberg, a teacher at Dewey and director of the center, "that man is capable of doing the unimaginable to his fellow man."

Survivors Memories on Tape

Zornberg is an intense man who has been teaching for 16 years, and for the past several has offered a course on genocide at John Dewey. Last summer Zornberg applied for \$3,000 grant from the state to create the center.

Armed with video tape and recording equipment, students from Dewey fanned out into the community to gather firsthand resource materials—the painful memories of Nazi concentration camp survivors who live in Brooklyn.

"In another 20 years or so most of the survivors of those camps will have passed away and we felt that getting their story on tape—where the emotion is visible—would serve as a constant reminder to people of what can happen if they are not vigilant," said Zornberg.

The students did all the work from filming and recording interviews with survivors to translating the interviews into the languages taught at Dewey—Italian, Hebrew and Spanish. In the process, all concerned, their lives and consciousness had been changed.

Find It All Hard to Realize

"For instance I never knew of the tough resistance that many Jews raised against the Nazis," said Alice Fernandes a 17-year-old senior. Like most people I thought all the Jews just marched into the camps without fighting back."

For Nachman Gruengras the opening of the center last week was perhaps more special than most. One of the video-taped eyewitness accounts of life and death in the camps was by the Israeli-born senior's mother.

"It is hard for all young people, including me," Gruengras said, "to realize what these people went through. Perhaps this will help people to keep their eyes open."

Zornberg hopes that the center, which he claims is the first of its kind on the high school level, will serve as the model for other centers and further such search.

"The encouraging thing is that students of every age and nationality participated and learned from this project," he said.