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Application Essay  
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I am very much interested in the National Endowment for the Humanities' Institute, *Making Holocaust and Genocide Education Relevant Through Inquiry and Classroom Application* for several reasons. I took an early retirement as an elementary school teacher after 35 years of teaching, and now teach history and social studies to middle and high school students. I also teach basic skills to parolees who attend California State Literacy Learning Centers located at Parole Centers throughout California. Both the high school students and parolees have little or no knowledge of what conditions and policies led to such atrocities as Hitler's Final Solution that ultimately took the lives of more than six million innocent individuals. I have struggled when this issue and other such butchery come up in classroom discussions. Attending *Making Holocaust and Genocide Education Relevant Through Inquiry and Classroom Application* will help me develop methods and strategies when discussing these topics, and improve social studies and history lessons for all my students, and lead to my own understanding of this unfortunate chapter of world history.

My own personal biography is fairly straightforward, I grew up in Venice, California when it was still a working class neighborhood, and I am a sixth generation native Californian and Mexican-American. Our parents were committed to having their children have the best education possible, and they sacrificed so that my four siblings and I could attend a Catholic parochial school. After eighth grade, my sister and I attended a Catholic all-girls high school in Los Angeles. After graduation, I took advantage of the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), and received a B.A. in Liberal Studies at Cal State University, Northridge, and a teaching credential at LMU. I started teaching fourth grade in Lynwood, California in 1977. I changed school districts and taught the lower grades at Hobart Blvd. Elementary School in the Koreatown section of downtown Los Angeles for LAUSD. My third and last school was Charnock Road Elementary School in West L.A. All three elementary schools were in low income areas, all schools had English Language Learners, and all of the schools had free meal programs. Hobart Blvd. Elementary had 2400 students enrolled at the time and had a year round program due to overcrowding. During this time I completed an M.A. in Education, Reading Improvement at CSUN, a Bilingual Certificate of Language Acquisition and Development (BCLAD) at CSUN, a Reading Specialist Credential, and an Administrative Credential. I also completed a M.Ed. in Curriculum at UCLA. Ultimately, in 2003, I finally completed my Ed.D in Curriculum at UCLA. It was a proud moment for my family, and my Charnock Elementary School family as well. My thesis, *Bilingual Teacher Certification: A Context for Learning and Instruction*, surveyed forty bilingual certificated teachers, videotaped them, had them complete questionnaires and had several students from each class complete student questionnaires. Although the 299 student questionnaires yielded limited results, the teacher questionnaires revealed that the forty teachers believed that they provided a constructivist, student-centered teaching environment that supported the students' home

language and resulted in students having complex and rich educational experiences. Further it was established that these same teachers used methods of inquiry in the classroom, and that school projects and lessons had value beyond school.

I learned about the Holocaust when I was a ninth grader. A school friend and I read Exodus by Leon Uris, and the lengthy and dramatic tome enlightened us as to what occurred in Germany during World War II. We were horrified and confused, and did not understand how such a bloodbath could occur. This was during the Viet Nam war when our friends' older brothers were fighting an unpopular war in a foreign country thousands of miles away. These tumultuous times marked the change between our childhood and adulthood and we were never the same. During my undergraduate years, I met and married a fellow student, an American Jewish transfer student who had lived in Israel for two years while he attended Tel Aviv University. Although I never changed my religion, I respected my husband's Jewishness and we celebrated all holidays and observed all of the customs of both faiths until he passed away in 2009. Our two boys attended local synagogues, and were bar mitzvahed, My husband was also a school teacher and parttime cantor and he taught Sabbath School and prepared twelve year old boys for their bar mitzvahs. Although our home was not strictly kosher, I deferred to his dietary regulations out of respect for his religion. My husband shared his family history and stories of his great-uncle who emigrated to America after World War II, and started a new life in the USA. Although I was always acutely aware of the outcomes of the Holocaust, I was always stymied as to how to properly handle the teaching of the Holocaust.

I have several questions that I hope to explore through participating in this Institute and they are listed below:

1. How did the German government allow such a thing to happen? What lessons can we take away from this? I read *Caste: The Origin of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson, and she has an entire chapter devoted to the how the Nazis used the caste systems of India and the U.S. southern states as models for separating the Jews and Christians from each other in Germany in the 30's. The Jews were vilified and targeted for extermination under the Third Reich. How did this happen? Can it happen again somewhere else?
2. What countries knew of these heinous Nazi plans? Why was nothing done?
3. What materials can we use to teach about the Holocaust? *The Diary of Anne Frank* has been a go-to resource for decades now, but there should be other resources and curriculum. What do other countries use?
4. Other incidents have occurred globally since the Holocaust and they include Rwanda and even the ongoing strife in the Ukraine. Clearly, history is repeating itself, maybe not on the same scale as what happened in Nazi Germany, but happening nonetheless. How can we address these issues in the classroom?

Last year I visited Heart Mountain, Wyoming, where thousands of Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II, and found the same dilemma of how best to teach this ugly and racist part of American History. I had visited Manzanar a couple of times since I live in the Los Angeles area and it is a three hour drive away, and again I wondered how best to create meaningful lessons on racism and human rights for high school and adult learners. The background information this Institute experience would provide will help me understand how to impart these brutal realities that are part of our history. I hope to create middle and high school level curriculum units based on what I learn and experience firsthand. The urban groups of students and parolees that I teach do not have any prior connection with what occurred in Germany ninety years ago, but they need to know what happened so that history does not repeat itself.

As a veteran teacher, substitute, researcher and curriculum specialist, I enjoy these opportunities to revitalize my teaching techniques. Please consider me for your Institute. I would love to be a part of your group. Thank you for considering my application.