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### Application Essay

As a social studies curriculum coordinator, I am constantly looking for ways to improve the educational experience for students in my district. One area that I believe is critical for students to understand is the history of the Holocaust, genocides, and human rights violations. The Holocaust, in particular, is a devastating chapter in human history that must be remembered and taught to ensure that we never forget the atrocities committed and to prevent similar events from occurring in the future.

I am a 21 year classroom veteran and have taught a variety of social studies courses, including U.S. History, World History, History Through Film, Psychology, and Sociology, through which I was able to responsibly share the background and teaching contexts of the Holocaust through a variety of lenses. My current position as a curriculum coordinator allows me to have a greater impact on the district curriculum and instruction practices.

In addition to learning from experts, the program offers numerous opportunities to collaborate with other educators from across the country. As a curriculum coordinator, I am constantly seeking new ideas and best practices to share with my teachers. Through this program, I can engage in meaningful discussions with other educators and gain new perspectives on how to effectively teach these complex topics.

As I personally reflect on what I would like to gain through this experience, there are many questions that come to my mind:

- How can I effectively guide the teaching practices for the Holocaust, genocides, and human rights violations in a way that engages students and encourages critical thinking? Specifically, I would be interested in exploring the use of primary sources and inquiry-based learning strategies that enable students to develop a deeper understanding of these complex topics.
- How can I develop curricula and lesson plans that are culturally responsive and address the diverse needs of our students? As a curriculum coordinator, I am committed to ensuring that our students receive a well-rounded education that reflects their backgrounds and experiences. I would be interested in exploring how to integrate diverse perspectives and narratives into the curriculum, and how to ensure that our teaching strategies are inclusive and equitable.
- How can I collaborate with other educators and coordinators to develop a network of support and share best practices for teaching the Holocaust, genocides, and human rights violations? I believe that collaboration is essential to effective teaching, and I am interested in exploring how to build a network of educators who are committed to teaching these critical topics.

Through this institute, I believe I will gain a deeper understanding of the events leading up to the Holocaust, the factors that contributed to its occurrence, and the aftermath of the genocide. This

knowledge will enable me to develop more nuanced and accurate curricula and lesson plans for my teachers to implement in their classrooms. The Missouri General Assembly has recently passed SB 983, which will require all public schools in the state of Missouri to begin implementing Holocaust education curriculum by the 2025-26 school year. I have volunteered my district to be involved in the pilot program, which would entail providing input to The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the development of said curriculum.

Furthermore, the program's focus on inquiry-based learning aligns with my own pedagogical philosophy. I believe that students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process and are encouraged to ask questions and seek answers. By attending this program, I can learn new inquiry-based teaching strategies and bring them back to my district to implement in our social studies curriculum.

Finally, attending the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Summer Institute at Penn State will enable me to better serve the students in my district. As a curriculum coordinator, my primary responsibility is to support teachers in developing and implementing effective curricula that meet the needs of our diverse student population. Through this program, I can gain new knowledge and skills that will enable me to better support our teachers and ensure that our students receive a high-quality education.

In conclusion, I am eager to attend the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Summer Institute at Penn State because of the opportunity to learn from experts in the field, collaborate with other educators, and gain new teaching strategies. By attending this program, I can deepen my understanding of these critical topics and bring back new ideas and best practices to support the teachers in my district. Ultimately, my goal is to ensure that our students receive a well-rounded education that prepares them to be informed and engaged citizens in an increasingly complex world.