World War II Prisoners of War - Rights and Responsibilities

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***Process Paper***

The most widely known part of World War II was the Holocaust. Although this was a terrible genocide, it was not the only terror that occurred during these times. Soldiers that were captured on both the Allied and Axis powers were treated very differently and we wanted to explore this idea. The conduct of prisoners of war by governments during World War II depended greatly on each country and their willingness to follow the terms of the Geneva Convention.

Our group conducted research by going through books at the college library, as well as finding websites for our topic: rights of the prisoners and responsibilities of governments to uphold them. One of our members focused on the Geneva Convention and how it set guidelines to how countries should treat their prisoners of war. Two group members focused on the how the two main Axis powers, Germany and Japan, did not treat their prisoners according to these terms. Lastly, the fourth group member looked into how the United States treated their Axis prisoners of war and more recent ideas of prisoners of war in America at Guantanamo Bay.

Our group’s website had the similar topics of prisoner rights and how certain countries were treating their prisoners. The four main topics of the website were the Geneva Treaties and Conference, Allied POWs in Germany, Allied POWs in Japan, and Axis POWs in America. Each country treated their prisoners differently: some following the Geneva Convention terms, such as America, and some not, such as Japan. Although the website is separated into different parts, it is still very interconnected by the main points.

The topic of prisoners of war and their rights, as well as the responsibilities of the governments holding them, directly relates to this year’s theme in many ways. First off, after World War I, there was no regulation or acknowledgement of POWs or their rights, as they were treated awfully, often with unnecessary torture and lack of medical attention. Then after World War II and conflict in Vietnam, when the Geneva Conventions were established, governments were required to recognize these rights and had responsibilities to protect and uphold the standard, or face consequence.