

All things being equal

I didn't grow up in a household that preached prejudice, thankfully. The closest we all came was against Germany. We had axe to grind, sort of, and we wouldn't buy a Mercedes even if we could afford it (we couldn't). After learning that Price Club (now Costco) film was made in Germany, I think I boycotted. We spoke in German accents to ridicule bossiness. As far as I can remember, none of us found Hogan's Heroes funny.

In a way, this seemed justified. As more time goes on, though, I can't help but feel my ban on Germania is a bit silly. I would not liked to be judged solely by the actions of my parents, grandparents, or great grandparents so I should probably follow suit with others. I hope that I speak for myself and people judge accordingly. (If you happen to not know me, I'll save you years of investment: I mumble, fairly reserved, and could always use a meal.)

But also, Germany seems to have made real changes. Berlin is once again a hedonistic and accepting culture (as it was during the Weimar republic), there are multiple monuments and memoriam, school kids have to visit concentration camps, Germany has an influx of immigrants, the nation as a whole has emphatically admitted they were wrong (which is a pretty unusual thing to do, even for such heinous acts), and have made monetary reparations to survivor's families.



There have been recent blows to the Ban on Bavaria, likely only to increase with my recent visit: The Great Ruth Wachs BMW Purchase of 2005 was revolutionary, I grew a fondness for hefeweizens, etc. As such, the only German I'm scared of currently is financed, ironically, by a Jew.

The fact that there have been monuments erected and reparations made struck me, unexpectedly. I became ashamed once more. Germany was financially suffering after World War II, yet they doled out money within 20 years of Hitler's death. America, by contrast, became the wealthiest nation in no small part due to slavery but has never paid a penny. We couldn't even spare 40 acres and a mule when push came to shove? Seriously.

I still have a pretty visceral reaction to the holocaust but not one person that I was immediately related to perished. If you're black in America, then that means (I'm guessing here) there is a 96% chance of you being a direct descendant of U.S. slaves. Is it any wonder black people are still pissed off?

Blacks in America is too mammoth in its own right and vastly different to be rambled about by me. All I will say is that maybe even a monument might be appreciated.

Which brings me to my next point: Jews and the holocaust/Nazism. For a long time I've cringed whenever stats about the holocaust have been thrown out: "6 million Jews!" "Uh, yeah," I say to myself, "but 11 million people died." Yes, I know 6 million is more than half, but 5 million people is nothing to sneeze at; those people's lives should be in vain, either. This leads to two things: more cringe-inducing memorial names (The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin is quite moving, but couldn't it just have easily been called The Memorial to the Murdered People of Europe?) and more subtlety, the belief that it was just the Nazis against the Jews. 6 million Jews. 6 million Jews. 6 million Jews.

Constant repetition of this belittles the fact that Nazism were a series of crimes against *humanity*. If you were gay you could be castrated. If you were a drunk you could be executed. If you were a political dissident you went off to the camps. Handicapped, roma (gypsy), criminal, etc., etc., etc. No one was truly safe in Nazi Germany and hopefully everyone remembers that: 11 million people died in concentration and extermination camps, not only 6.