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INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CAMP 2024 IN GERMANY

The Nelson Mandela Museum in partnership with the Anne Frank House Museum in Lower Saxony, Germany hosted Youth from South Africa to an International Youth Camp, an Exchange programme under the theme: **Connect and Act**. The participating youth that got the opportunity to interact with their international counterparts are:

- Bianca Roberts, a student at the University of the Western Cape, currently pursuing a degree in Industrial Psychology
- Cham Zondeki is a post-graduate student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg
- Esihle Ndwangu, a student at Walter Sisulu University currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts
- Ndiwanga Murena Overcome Muravha is a student at the University of Mpumalanga.
- Nhlanhla Candy Skosana, a student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) currently doing a Postgraduate degree in Sports and Leisure management
- Nozipho Dube, a law student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Penelope Mvinjelwa, Andisiwe Hlobo is a learner at Jongintaba Senior Secondary School at Mqhekezweni Great Place.

On the 1st day of the camp - participants from South Africa with the Nelson Mandela Museum's Education Officer, Mr Solomzi Bovana and Germany underwent intense engagements and played games, more like ice-breakers.

On the 2nd day of the camp - participants explored the concept of the people's community and solidarity in Germany, questions of inclusion and exclusion of certain groups in the German society, and later explored World War 2. They were involved in a variety of activities from that included a visit to Bergen-Beslen Memorial and to the train station where those destined for the concentration camps boarded the train of death to the concentration camp. It was called the train death because people died of starvation and diseases as they were denied health-care and the trains were

overloaded. The trains were also called trains to nowhere because they did not know where they were going.

On the 4th day of the camp - the participating youth in Bergen-Beslen Memorial Site visited a variety of memorial sites and graves of the Prisoners of War (POW) and Displaced People. After their visit to the Bergen- Beslen Memorial, they returned to the base at Anne Frank House and listened to Gershon Willinger, a German Jewish, contemporary witness and survivor of the concentration camp who was liberated from the on 08 May 1945. Upon his liberation, he was given to good Christian parents in Poland to save him from the NAZIs as the Jews were not wanted. His parents had remained in Amsterdam.

From 1945 to 1950 he lived in different foster homes in different places. In 1950 he was placed with a German family that had no children, attended Special Schools as he was affected by this. In 1959 he migrated to Israel and married in 1979 and had three children.

He moved to Canada in 1977 where he is still living and works as a social worker and street worker, focusing on children and young people.

On the 5th day of the camp – the participating youth went back to the Bergen-Beslen Memorial and reviewed what they did the previous day, followed by systematic introduction: prisoners of war camps and perpetration and explored deepening on concentration camp Bergen-Beslen.

Khadidja from Germany and Penelope from SA reported on their project next to the Star Camps Roll-Call Square inside the Bergen-Beslen Concentration Camp. The many roll calls presented a permanent physical and psychological strain for the prisoners, particularly sick or old prisoners and children found it very hard to stand to attention for prolonged periods. Prisoners frequently died during roll calls and had to be at the square every morning and evening to be counted. Even those who were sick were expected to be as the guards inside the camp showed no mercy to them.

The youth participants Alisha from Germany, Andisiwe, Ndiwanga and Nozipho from South Africa presented on their project about the crematorium inside the Bergen-Beslen Concentration Camp. The crematorium went into operation in the Spring of 1944. The furnace for incinerating the dead bodies was located inside the wooden hut which was screened from view by a fence. The bodies of the dead in the concentration camp were cremated because there was no longer a space to bury them. The crematorium was only removed when the grounds were transformed into a memorial in the Summer of 1946. The grave which is located at the crematorium's former site was only placed there in 1944 after the survivors of the concentration camp found human ashes in the area.

There was a period where Cham Zondeki and Nozipho Dube, the SA camp representatives did an interview with German Journalists on their experiences in the camp. The participants were divided into groups to sort various maps of Bergen-Beslen Concentration Camp into their chronological

order. The participants explored Displaced Persons Camp after the liberation of prisoners from the concentration camp between 1945 - 1950.

Displaced persons were entitled to special care. There were two (2) camps of displaced people, for Jewish Survivors and for Polish non-Jewish Survivors. Displaced People were described as people without a homeland from all over Europe who were deported to the Nazi Germany. One group is dealing with immigration to Australia after the Second World War, another with Life and Everyday Life in the Polish and Jewish Displaced People Camps, the other Emigration of Polish Displaced People and the last group with Emigration of Jewish Displaced People to the West.

On the 7th day of the camp – the participating you were divided into four (4) groups dealing with Mass Murder, Human Rights Violations, Crimes Against Humanity as well as Genocide. They presented what they have found about those topics, their understanding and interpretation of them.

Genocide is defined as a crime characterized by the intention to exterminate a national, ethnic, racial or religious group in whole or in part. The offence of genocide includes: killing or inflicting physical and or psychological harm on members of a group, subjecting the group or its members to living conditions aimed at destroying the group; the deliberate theft of children from the group and the political order to prevent births within the group.

Crimes against humanity are serious violations of international criminal law that are characterized by systematic attacks against the civilian population. They are among the core crimes of international criminal law and are subject to the principle of universal jurisdiction. Crimes against humanity include, for example, murder, ethnic extermination, enslavement and deportation. The participants were divided into three (3) group and conducted research on TRC, Nuremberg Trials and Rwanda Genocide and reported back on their findings.

On day 8th day of the camp – the participating youth visited Hannover and met with the Mayor of Hannover Mr Thomas Hermann at the City Hall and took them through the history of the hall.

On the 9th day of the camp - the participating youth dealt with discrimination as an everyday phenomenon; Social justice as an element structuring society as well as deconstruct false information and explored the topic of conspiracy theories.

On the 10th day of the camp - the participating youth worked in groups exploring the topic of democracy and human rights and presented their work to fellow participants and posted on the wall what they thought it was needed to change society.

On the 11th day of the camp - the participating youth were divided into groups, to engage with their individual projects. The participants went for a canoe trip and swimming at the Aller River.

The river is known for canoeing and boats to sail. Farmers livestock would drink from this river and it is also used to generate electricity.

On 12th and 13th day of the camp - the participating youth were divided and worked on their chosen projects which they had to do a research on and presented their findings. They further reflected on their work for the duration of the past 2 weeks.

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