

Eighth Grade Post

After the Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community Middle School's civil right's trip, eighth grade students were tasked by Morah Alysha to create news stories relating to the trip as part of their journalistic unit in Language Arts. After two weeks of writing, their mission was complete. These are their stories.

The Bridge Over Water By Dani Wasserman

The students of Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community school have recently been seen crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. Sources say that they were walking two-by-two with linked arms across the bridge. The students have previously seen movies and pictures of activists marching across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, but have never experienced it for themselves. As they crossed the bridge they were filled with emotion. They were stepping in the same steps that Dr. Martin Luther King stepped in to get equal voting rights.

In 1965, whites and blacks joined together to march across the bridge. They fought together for equal voting rights. Fast forward to 2019, the Mirowitz students marched across the bridge in unison. They knew what needed to happen, so they went into action to achieve their goals. During the Civil Rights era, anyone who decided to march across the Edmund Pettus bridge was considered a foot soldier. Being a foot soldier meant that you had a cause and you thought needed to be changed. When the Mirowitz students marched across the bridge it was as if they were foot soldiers, and they were fighting for a cause.

Alyssa Weisenberg, an eighth grader at Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School, knew that so much history was there around them. She knew that the one small act of

crossing the bridge was the same act that was the breaking point for equal voting rights. She told us, "It felt awesome to have history under my feet, and to feel like I was a true foot soldier fighting for equality."

Confusion filled the students when they wondered what it would have been like to be an African American in the 1960's, and if they would have risked their lives for equal rights.



Little Activists, Big Bridge

By Alyssa Weisenberg

A little after noon, on August 20, 2019, students from Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community Middle School walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. The bridge stood tall as Bloody Sunday swept through like a hurricane almost eighty years ago. It is remembered as one of the hardest days in African-American history. Yet the bridge is remembered with pride because it is the same bridge that Martin Luther King led many different people from all over the nation toward freedom of voting rights. From African-Americans, Jews, Catholics and many others walking side by side, they fought for their rights and won. The middle schoolers walked on the opposite side of the bridge, in the opposite direction, but

each of them walked as though they walked with Martin Luther King on that day.

Dani Wasserman specifically was very moved to be walking on this bridge like a true foot soldier. Many foot soldiers marched both of these Bloody Sunday protests in peace with signs. Dani said, "It felt empowering to be crossing the same bridge that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. crossed while protesting for equal rights for everyday life." Dr. Martin Luther King led hundreds of people to Selma to march for voting rights. The middle schoolers got to feel history under their feet and enjoyed every minute of it.

The majority of the middle schoolers enjoyed this stream of emotions and took in everything from the strong white bars holding up the bridge to the beautiful river below them. Even the people that zoomed by in their

cars honked their horns to support and encourage the young activists. They knew that the world will be better because this generation is being educated on the history of our people.



Breaking News

By Omri Kielmanowicz

Younger audience are at times prevented from watching or learning about the news. When a group of students from Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School went to the Legacy Museum you could see the effects of not reading or watching what's happening around the world. Witnesses that were there could see all the shocked faces when the students saw 12-year-olds getting arrested and sentenced to life in prison. If the students had never gone to that museum, they might have thought that the justice system was just.

Another example of what ignorance can do occurred during the era before the civil rights movement ended. At the time, most white children were only taught one thing or they read only one news source that was most likely very opinionated against rights or freedom for African Americans and in support of Jim Crow. This led racism and segregation to prosper.

These examples show that not being informed or being too stubborn to listen to people with different opinions can form biases and misconceptions. This can lead to people letting racism or other hatreds continue. If this happens on a grand scale, it can and will lead to making laws that are unjust towards minorities.

Knowledge is Power

By Yeshasra Reznikov

On August 21st of this year, a group of children from Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School were seen crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge. They were there in Selma on a school trip to places where history happened during the civil rights movement. They had already been to Birmingham, AL, and they were planning to go to Montgomery, AL, and Memphis, TN. During this trip they also planned to visit many museums and memorials throughout those cities like the Lynching Memorial in Selma and the the Music Hall of Fame in Memphis.

Before the students had come to the Pettus Bridge they had come from the Jackson house where Martin Luther King Jr had often stayed when he was in town. They had gotten to see the very chair that MLK Jr had sat in and the phone he used to talk to President Lyndon B. Johnson. Their tour guide told them a lot about the Jackson house, the Pettus Bridge and the Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

When one of the students, Mia Meir, was interviewed, she reported, "The trip was

interesting to get into a different mindset of those who have suffered racism and inequality. Even to walk on the bridge that others have marched on was really powerful and touching."

You could tell that the students were very empowered by this experience by the way that they spoke about it and the way they had soaked in information like sponges. It was very good that they were getting these kinds of experiences for their lives. Hopefully they will remember them throughout their time in this world because just the act of learning these things helps make the world a better place.



The Impossible Alabama Literacy Test By Mollie Nathanson

It was August 23rd and the forty Mirowitz middle schoolers were on their way back home to St. Louis from their civil rights trip in Alabama. They were there for five days and learned a lot. One of the things they learned was that during the civil rights movement, black people had to take a literacy test to be able to vote. It was hard for black people to get a good education, so basically, few black people could vote. In addition, only black people were obliged to take the test, so all white men were able to vote without taking the test. If everyone had to take the test, almost everybody would have failed.

The Mirowitz Middle School was on their way

home when their social studies teacher, Coach Gary, announced that he was going to be giving a test to the students.

The students reacted with gasps of surprise.

"Quiet down," Coach Gary said. Then he explained that they were going to be simulating the Alabama literacy test. Coach Gary gave a sample question "Spell backwards forwards," he asked.

The students started whispering and murmuring among themselves trying to come up with an answer. One person answered "b a c k w a r d s."

"Incorrect," Coach Gary retorted. More people then gave their answers and more times Coach Gary said, "Incorrect."

Then, the students were handed the test. They and the person they were sitting

next to worked together.

There were sixty questions on the test and they only had twenty-five minutes.

When their time was up, Coach Gary called on some people to say how they felt doing the test. Eighth grader Naomi Liebson said, "I didn't know what any of the answers were and I now have a better understanding of how hard it was for black people to vote."

In all of forty middle schoolers, only about one or two passed the test, and that was with a really good education. Just imagine how hard it was for black people to vote back then when they didn't get a good education.

Rock and Soul Museum

By Ben Olson

One day, students at Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School went to the Rock and Soul Museum in Memphis, TN. The children entered, some more ecstatic than others. They sat down to watch a video on the history of music on Beale Street, hearing names such as Elvis Presley and BB King. After the video ended, the students were handed mp3- like devices with a pair of headphones and were sent into the museum to look around as they pleased. Almost all the students immediately went to the jukeboxes to hear songs.

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After the students explored the museum for a bit, the seventh grade girls danced in a circle, and the eighth grade took a picture by a sign the museum had put up saying, "Welcome Saul Mirowitz School!" Then, the eighth graders took a picture with a microphone prop that was staged in a recording studio-like setting. After the pictures were taken, the students moved towards the gift shop. Most students bought a pack of cards, others some earrings, others a necklace. One student bought a necklace, a deck of cards, and a harmonica. Most others were not happy about the purchase of a harmonica.

Once the students had finished shopping, some teachers by the name of Rick Schmidt, Nancy James, and Alysha Black took some groups of kids over to the the local basketball team store. Some students were more excited than others, especially the basketball enthusiasts. A student by the name of Benjamin Olson stated, "All this stuff here is too overpriced! They expect me to be made of money when I was only allowed \$20?!" The teacher by the name of Nancy James replied, "It's name brand stuff, it's REALLY overpriced."

Literacy Test

By Nomi Inberg

All eyes flew to Coach Gary, the middle school history teacher, as he called for the middle schoolers' attention. They were about an hour from Saint Louis and on their way back from their civil rights-themed trip. He introduced their assignment and, in pairs, they begin to work. These sixth, seventh, and eighth graders were about to take the Alabama literacy test, the same one that, until 1965, African Americans had to take to be able to vote. They were able to see exactly how difficult it was to be able to vote.

As part of their educational trip, the Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School middle schoolers and their teachers got first-hand experience at what it was like to be an African American in the '60s.

Today, many Americans see voting as an indisputable and undeniable right, but to African Americans, it was a right that had to be earned. They had to take a nearly impossible test to be able to vote. 6th grader Adeena reflected on the trip saying, "I kind of think like, oh yeah, when I turn 18, I'll be able to vote. But back then if you were African American, you didn't think that. You couldn't do that."

Pencils flew across the paper as the students wrestled with the extreme questions that would decide if they would earn the same rights every white person had, voting.

The challenging questions, paired with Coach Gary counting down, started to stress the students. With three minutes left, some began to panic and voice their concerns.

"Time's up! Put your pencils down!" the history teacher called from the front of the bus. Did any of them pass? Would any of them be able to vote? After grading their quizzes, they found that the majority of students couldn't vote, just like in the '60s.



Students March Across Pettus Bridge

By Eli Peters

Cars are driving over the top of a bridge in Selma, Alabama. Most of the people driving over the bridge don't even think about what happened there only less than a century ago. However, today is different. It is August 20, 2019, and a line of almost forty middle school students march across the bridge. They are marching to remember what happened there all those decades ago, before they were born. That event was Bloody Sunday.

Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School, a Jewish private school in Missouri, is doing a march over the Edmund Pettus Bridge to learn a bit more about Bloody Sunday. Bloody Sunday was an event that happened on March 7, 1965, when a group of protesters marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge and were attacked and beaten by state troopers.

A buzz of noise drones around the students. Many are talking about how hot the weather is and what would happen if they fell off of the bridge. Despite the random conversations, this crossing

does greatly impact some of the more thoughtful students, who pay more attention to what had once happened here rather than what is happening as they march.

However, this is now just an ordinary bridge in the public eye, and hundreds, if not, thousands of people cross it every day, without even thinking about what happened here not too long ago. But Mirowitz knows that education about the past is important, so to them, this bridge is not so ordinary.

National Memorial for Peace and Justice

By Nomi Inberg

Wednesday, August 22. The Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School sixth, seventh and eighth graders stepped off the bus and onto the sidewalk. They were blinded by the sun and decided to go into the shade, passing by the entrance to the National Memorial to Peace and Justice, otherwise known as the Lynching Memorial. Complaints about the Alabama heat echoed through the otherwise silent entrance.

The middle schoolers are in Alabama for their yearly trip, which is civil rights-themed this year. Though throughout the week, they have explored other museums and gained knowledge on the subject, this particular experience has a huge impact on them.

As the students stepped onto the trail leading up to the memorial, their complaints slowly died and were replaced with quiet conversations. They divided into groups and moved onto the next display. Surprise, shock, and anger clouded their faces as they read the horrific events that happened in the country many of them call home.

They finally made it to the main memorial, towering over the nearby area. Passing through the rows of pillars and reading the names of people who were lynched, disgust was seen in the students'

features. Every one of them seemed deeply affected by the memorial and what it stands for.

Caleb Arnow, a seventh-grader, reflects about his experience walking through the memorial: "One thing that really stood out to me was that it said lynching was a public event. Families would go there to watch and bring food because it was a fun thing to do. It was entertainment. That was just crazy, horrible, to me. And I think that will stick with me for a while."

As Caleb pointed out, lynchings were public events. They were violent racial terror acts that traumatized African Americans throughout the southern states. The memorial's mission is to publicly confront the truth about US history. Sometimes lynchings were forms of voter suppression. In 1920, on the day of the presidential election, as many as seventy African Americans were killed in a riot for trying to vote.

After they walked through the memorial, many students sat down and reflected on the memorial they passed through with their classmates. The stairs they sat on are in front of a cascading waterfall. The scene would have been tranquil if it weren't for the pained expressions on the students' faces. The whole trip was an experience they are sure to remember.

A Bridge Through History

By Naomi Liebson

At the beginning of the school year at Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School, middle school students packed their bags and headed south to explore the civil rights movement. Mirowitz middle schoolers marched down the Edmund Pettus Bridge. This was to get Mirowitz middle schoolers to walk through history

At the Edmund Pettus Bridge, two main events in the civil rights movement occurred there. This was Bloody Sunday, where blacks were beaten and tear gas was sprayed. These protests were a visible step to help grant African Americans the right to vote.

As students walked down this bridge to experience the horrific battle to get African Americans the right to vote, multiple students shared their feelings, including frustration and guilt. One student said: "I kind of think like, oh yeah, when I turn eighteen, I'll be able to vote. But back then, if you were African-American, you didn't think that. You couldn't do that." These young Mirowitz students marched in the steps of major civil rights activists, including Martin Luther King Jr.

Lynching Memorial

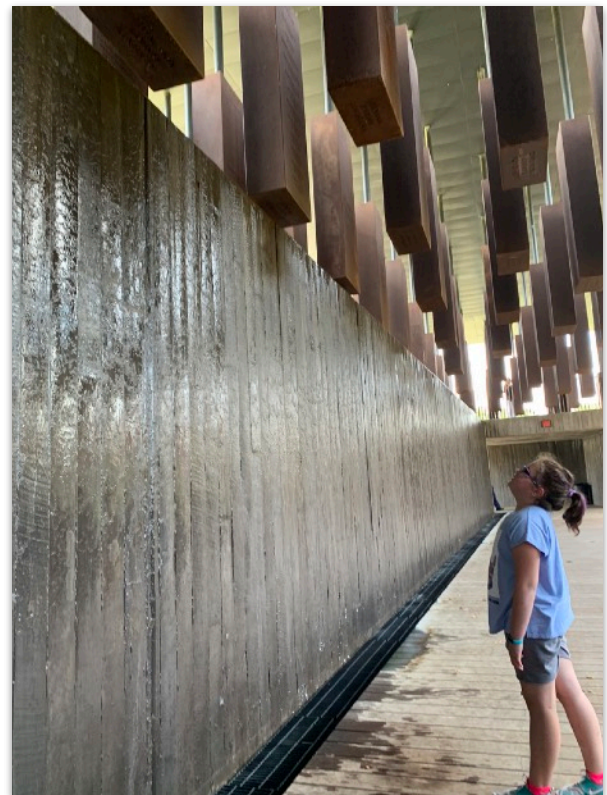
By Jacob Padratzik

It was the last day in Alabama during the civil rights trip. Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community Middle School grades sixth-eighth stopped at The National Memorial for Peace and Justice lynching memorial. The children saw all the pillars with names and dates corresponding to the people who were lynched between 1877 and 1950. They represented the people being lynched by starting with the pillars on the ground. As you walked through the memorial, step-by-step, the pillars would rise like the process of lynching.

The children turned the corner, and they read some of the reasons people were lynched. One of the reasons was a black man said hi to a white woman. Mirowitz kids commented on how stupid the reasons were. "It was a very meaningful experience. "It is a shame they died in such an unjust way," says a Mirowitz student.

At the end of the memorial, there was a waterfall. It was so peaceful. But if you looked

around, the children's facial expressions reflected on the monument itself. The expressions were devastated, showing disbelief about how many had died. They were upset about what they saw during their walk in the memorial.



The Impossible Test

By Zach Cohen

On Friday, August 23, approximately one hour outside of St. Louis, Coach Gary came up to the microphone on the bus that was bringing students home from their civil rights trip. He told the thirty-nine students and seven other teachers and parents on the bus about literacy tests, tests used in the Jim Crow era to prevent African Americans from voting. He asked the students to answer this question that appeared on the Louisiana state literacy test, “Spell backwards, forwards.”

Many students attempted to answer this impossible question, with answers ranging from s-d-r-a-w-r-o-f to i-m-p-o-s-s-i-b-l-e. The only thing in common with the answers, at least according to Coach Gary, was that they were all “wrong.”

Literacy tests were created in the aftermath of the Civil War and Reconstruction to, along with poll taxes and thugs ready to beat up a potential black voter, prevent African Americans from voting in the

South. In order to make sure that only blacks would fail these tests, the people making these tests would put in tricky and confusing questions, giving people many ways to fail them. An example of a question that anyone could fail or pass on the Louisiana state literacy test besides the one above, is Write right from left to right as you see it spelled here. Do you write the word “right,” or do you write the sentence right from left to right as you see it spelled here? Both ways could be correct or incorrect, and in most cases, the thing that determined if you passed the test was your skin color.

The middle school students and teachers were then given a copy of the Alabama state literacy test. They had twenty-five minutes to answer sixty-eight difficult questions about government and law. The rules for this test weren’t as strict as the Louisiana test, as there were set answers and you could get up to seven questions wrong, opposed to no wrong answers in the other test. You would still need to get almost 90% of the questions right to be able to vote. Questions from this test

included, Does enumeration affect the income tax levied on citizens in various states? and If it were proposed to join Alabama and Mississippi to form one state, what groups would have to vote approval in order for this to be done?” Those confusing questions were not meant to keep the illiterate from voting, as the test was supposed to have done, but to keep the whites who made these tests in power.

When the twenty-five minutes were up and the tests were graded, only one person, Morah Alysha, was able to pass. “I gave up around the third question,” one eighth grader stated. These hard tests that the students took ended a bus ride, but they also ended a journey.



One Small Spot Where One Great Leader Died

By Dani Wasserman

It was Friday, the 23rd of August, when the middle school students of Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School were spotted looking at the place where Dr. Martin Luther King had been assassinated. A big red, white, and blue wreath hung on the balcony where Dr. King stood right before he was assassinated. The simple teal building, directly in front of them, was beating with emotion. It was a mix of sadness, disappointment, and confusion. The sun was beating down on everyone as they stood in the spot where the great leader died.

The students made their way inside to see the perfectly still room where Dr. King stayed right before his death. Every detail remained the same, no modification. Not even the bed was made. The brown sheet was pulled halfway up the bed, and the coffee cup still sat on the nightstand.

Dr. King had a close inner circle of friends. They helped him plan his speeches and his events. After Dr. King was assassinated, his inner circle got together to discuss what would happen next. The students struggled to imagine what it would have been like for them if they had been one of Dr. King's close friends. Alyssa Weisenberg, an eighth grader at Saul Mirowitz Jewish Community School, gave us some insight on this. She said, "I would have felt scared for my life because of the way our great leader was assassinated."

The students continued to observe the room that looked like someone had been living there the day before. As they made their way through the museum, they wondered: What would it have been like to live in the civil rights era? Where would I have stood on issues?

Mirowitz Middle Schoolers Visit the Lorraine Motel By Mia Meir

The Mirowitz middle schoolers stepped out of the bus. The heat hit them like a baseball bat. Memphis, Tennessee, was practically the sun compared to St. Louis, Missouri, where they had come from. They filed into a line waiting for the ok to go ahead. As they approached the infamous hotel, small butterflies turned into lions and bears wrestling as they realized they would soon be looking at the place where one of the most influential men of all time got shot.

They stopped at the plaque in memorial of Dr. King. "Whoa, look at that!" a student exclaimed, pointing at the hundreds of flowers placed around room 306, the late MLK Jr's room.

The rest of the middle school looked up, followed by: "Whoa, that's cool!"

"No, it's kinda sad."

"I wonder how they got flowers up there. Maybe I could buy some."

"Shhhhhhhhhhhh"

Everybody turned their attention back to Reb Scott, who was waiting patiently. He then continued to talk more about the history of the museum.

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The rush of cool air as they walked into the building made several students sigh in relief. A tour guide wearing shimmering pearls approached the group. While she spoke with Cheryl Mayaan, the school's principal, a number of students drifted away from the group and struck up small side conversations to pass the time.

They began to regroup as they noticed the tour guide was speaking. She directed the middle schoolers' attention to a sculpture. As she saw multiple confused faces amongst the students, she explained that it was a symbol of how African-Americans had to work together to get equal rights. There were happy faces when she announced that they were able to go through the museum at their own pace. Many of the students wanted to find the Bornblum students. The Bornblum students were middle

schoolers who lived in Memphis, and the Mirowitz students had stayed with them the night before.

Around fifteen minutes later, the hungry middle schoolers were spread out all through the museum. Some carefully read the texts within the exhibits, some made jokes with their friends and read and looked at the eye-popping exhibits, and some ran around, touching the exhibits that were marked, "Do not touch."

But everyone fell silent when they reached the end, the thing that the whole museum was structured around, the room where Dr. King got shot. The bed was messy, and there were half-smoked cigars on the ashtray. Everything was untouched. Nobody spoke because if they did, it would feel like they had broken a delicate balance.

The Stones of Remembrance

By Naomi Liebson

In August, shortly after the school year started, these students ask themselves: Why would people punish the innocent? The Saul Mirowitz, middle schoolers during their Civil Rights trip, look back at history as they are immersed in knowledge of how people were treated and learn from the mistakes of the past. These students walk through a lynching memorial at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama. They are surrounded by gargantuan-sized stones which state the names of all

known lynchings in the 19th to 20th centuries.

After the students walked through the Lynching Memorial, the principal of the school, Morah Cheryl said, "We walked the path of those who made our country more just by bringing attention to cruelty, oppression, prejudice and even racial terrorism that were once accepted as part of the country's culture."

As students looked at the reasons that the people were lynched, they realized that the reasons were for ordinary actions that were not even crimes. Students saw the innocent thousands of people who were lynched in the United States. They learned that there

were many more who were not named, and they will remember them. These students are learning the good and evil deeds of America's history.



