



Gratz Insider, Summer 2017 - Story Continuation

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Brittany Snyder: A Middle School Teacher on a Mission to Foster Genocide Education and Conflict Resolution

Snyder was 11 years old, when, browsing in the school library, she happened upon the book [I Have Lived a Thousand Years: Growing Up in the Holocaust](#) by Livia Bitton-Jackson. The middle schooler was flabbergasted by what she read and began devouring other books on the subject. Flash-forward about 15 years, and Snyder is back in middle school - but this time, as the teacher, a teacher determined to tell the story she had had to learn on her own.

In college, Snyder broadened her knowledge of genocide. An English major with an aptitude for language, she developed a particular interest in how language was used as a tool for genocide during the Bosnian conflict. Therefore, she planned to begin a master's program in sociolinguistics after her first year of teaching. But, her plans abruptly changed when she stumbled upon the Gratz master's program in Holocaust and genocide studies.

"When I read about it, I knew this was it," said Snyder. "The Gratz program was way too perfect to pass up."

Teaching middle school while earning her master's degree online, Snyder graduated from Gratz in May 2016. With no option available at that time for a Ph.D. in Holocaust and genocide studies at Gratz, she applied to and was accepted into a doctoral program on mediation and conflict resolution at another institution.

Meanwhile, Snyder had the opportunity to bring her passions into the classroom when she was tasked with the responsibility of designing the curriculum for her English enrichment class. Her curriculum focused on social justice issues for the first semester, and Holocaust and genocide, along with conflict resolution, for the second semester. She and her students discussed the root causes of genocide, and worked on resolving conflicts in the students' own lives.

Snyder firmly believes that teachers have to continue to be educated themselves. And, with an insatiable desire to learn, she lives that credo every day. This summer, she is traveling to Poland and Germany with a group of two dozen teachers as part of the Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Teachers' Program. When she returns, she will head to Washington, D.C., for her second summer in the competitive teaching fellow program at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. And in the fall, she will be among the first cohort of students in the new Gratz Ph.D. program in Holocaust and genocide studies.

What does Snyder ultimately hope to do with all of her education? One day she hopes to teach Holocaust and genocide studies on the college level. She would also like to create state-wide curricula for secondary schools on genocide education and conflict resolution. Finally, she would like to provide teacher training on these subjects. She believes that some teachers avoid teaching Holocaust and genocide altogether because they have had no guidance on how to approach these sensitive topics.

Snyder still often comes across students who have never heard of the Holocaust. She says, “We talk about ‘never again,’ but we haven’t really done anything to make that possible. I want to provide the tools and skillset so that it won’t happen again.”

For more information on the Gratz Ph.D. program in Holocaust and genocide studies, contact Dean Rosalie Guzovsky at rguzofsky@gratz.edu or at 215-635-7300, x 137.