**France The Dark Years: World War II and its Legacy**

In July, I spent eight days in France studying the legacy left by World War II. I researched the Holocaust, the Nazi Occupation, the Resistance, and the Battle of Normandy in order to guide my students through exercises and reflections on civic duty, empathy, moral dilemma, and collective memory. Each place visited left an indelible imprint on me. I began with a memorial in the heart of Paris, an underground crypt where thousands of backlit crystals represent each person deported to camps under the Vichy Regime. Located on an island in the Seine, thousands of tourists take selfies with Notre Dame in the background, unaware of this sacred ground under their feet. This memorial is within walking distance of the Shoah Memorial, where I spent hours with an expert guide who was a walking encyclopedia of the Holocaust. Entries I visited were multimedia, featuring photographs, video, animated maps, objects, and human stories. The experience left me emotionally exhausted, especially the research I did on child victims of the Holocaust; but it was absolutely necessary to prepare me for the lesson I will do with my students on genocide, abuse of power, and racial stereotyping. I followed these two days with a visit to three museums dedicated to the French Resistance, where I saw how ordinary French citizens faced excruciating choices and became extraordinary heroes. I ended my research with a trip to Normandy where I visited the D-Day landing sites. Here I walked the same beach young American soldiers crossed against all odds to participate in the largest amphibious operation in history.

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**Links of Interest:**

**My travel blog**: <http://sondramaniatis.wordpress.com>

**A Stolen Life: Hélène Berr**: [**http://frenchculture.org/visual-and-performing-arts/events/stolen-life-helene-berr-exhibit-mobile-al**](http://frenchculture.org/visual-and-performing-arts/events/stolen-life-helene-berr-exhibit-mobile-al)

**Three museums dedicated to the French Resistance:** <http://parismusees.paris.fr/en/city-paris-museums/city-paris-museums-network/museum-general-leclerc-and-paris-liberation-jean>

**Mémorial de la Shoah: Holocaust Museum of Paris:** <http://www.memorialdelashoah.org/index.php/en/>

**My guide to the D-Day beaches:** <http://www.visite-plages-debarquement.com/401/login.php?redirect=/mentions-leacutegales.html>

**Big Red One Assault Museum, Colleville-sur-Mer:** <http://en.oti-omaha.fr/241-visit-having-fun/294-dday-landing-and-battle-of-normandy-museums/752-d-day-museum-big-red-one-assault-museum-colleville-sur-mer.html>

**Mayor Hardelay’s photo album and diary:** <http://omahabeach.vierville.free.fr/861-MH-7-le8juin.html>

**The National WWII Museum/New Orleans**: <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/visit/index.html>