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Cultural News

Alec Fox

D-Day 80 years on: Why should we learn about pre-World War 2 Jewish life?

Understanding the relevance and importance of the Holocaust in today's modern-day setting can be difficult. When most classroom-based learning focuses on the dehumanizing statistics, it is hard to understand what was lost during this time, and what is important to learn from it. The Holocaust was the murder of 6 million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators, erasing culture and bloodlines from all over Europe. Before the Holocaust, Jewish culture had been thriving across Europe for up to 2000 years. The largest Jewish community in Europe was found in Poland, where approximately 10% of the country's population were Jewish. Across Europe the scope of Jewish culture was incredibly vast, with multitudes of communities spanning different beliefs, political ideologies, wealth, languages, and more. Understanding the vastness of Jewish culture pre-war is incredibly important, as the Nazis attempted to strip Jews of their human characteristics and reduce them only to their racial identity. In this regard, simple statistics often reduce the complexity and individuality of the lives lost and damaged during the Holocaust, so it can help to seek out specific and personal stories and testimonies to deepen our understanding of the tragedy.

Technology News

Freddie Kingham

People changing to older phones to cut screen time

Recently, people have been increasingly concerned about their screen time, and as a result many have been changing to older phones. Many have said that they cannot get off their devices. This may be because phones have constant notifications buzzing to encourage users into getting on to the app more often. These apps also use red as a common notification colour as it is more eye-catching and so it will more likely make them go onto the app. Research from Ofcom UK stated that a quarter of five - seven year-olds already have smartphones. This statistic could be concerning when taking into consideration that many still can't get off their phone, and some are now worrying if these children may be at risk. Due to this, some campaigners want age limits to be introduced to phones to make sure they don't get "stuck" to their phone at a young age. Others are switching their phones to older phones in order to try to get rid of the amount of screen time they use on their phones. Although, instead of having to change your phone to an older one, you can always change it to grayscale. This changes the whole phone display to grey. Also, you can change the notifications to calls only so your phone does not disturb you, or turn it onto 'do not disturb' mode entirely.

Sports News

Isaac Eccles

What is the best activity to do as exercise?

Many people do some form of cardiovascular exercise to better themselves as a person; however, which is the best to do? Running is a very common option because it is the easiest to do and requires, at maximum, only new shoes. On the other hand, many people cycle as it can be seen as more fun and can create greater physical strain, making it more affective. However, cycling is also more dangerous, as seen by the recent accident with Gordon Ramsey, and other accidents can be much worse than this accident. These sorts of collisions include *Tour de France* crashes, which often cause broken limbs. This can also be seen on a lower level in running because sprained ankles are very common when too much load is applied to the ankle joint.

So, which one is better? Ultimately, it comes down to personal preference and budget; if you have money to spare and great amounts of time then biking is definitely available, although if you do not have as much time available and a lower budget then running is a better option. Or, you could do both and gain both benefits. Running in particular can help to increase your anaerobic capacity, and help to develop your speed. Despite their differences, I think all will agree that both of these options are an excellent choice, and both are obviously better than nothing!

Environmental News

Rachel Ballantyne

UK Biodiversity net gain policy

The UK has passed a mandatory biodiversity net gain policy in the first half of June, which focuses on ensuring development projects enhance natural habitats and species instead of taking away from them. This policy means that developments should deliver a 10% net gain to biodiversity – this can come in the form of creating biodiversity on site, or off site, or as a last resort, donating money to create more biodiversity through other organizations. 10% may not seem like a significant figure, but if there is approximately 425,000 hectares of space with planning permission in the UK, that would create 42,500 hectares of extra enriched space, on top of offsetting any losses to biodiversity that occur from actions such as cutting down trees or filling in ponds. The policy is a good method of balancing preservation of habitat and ecosystems with the growing need for structures such as homes in the UK; offsetting projects such as urban rewilding, habitat enrichment and creating 'green corridors' in cities (stretches of green land amongst developed spaces to create a reprieve for local wildlife and potentially improve air quality and reduce flood risks) will all contribute towards the UK's current goal of being carbon neutral by 2050. Biodiversity preservation has never been more important, with approximately 3 species going extinct every hour. This new policy is an important step forwards for preserving biodiversity in the UK from a similar fate.

International News

John Hutchings

Chinese ambassador summoned by UK Foreign Office as three people face spy charges

UK foreign Office officials condemned a “recent behavior patten” by China, including cyber attacks, in a meeting with Chinese Ambassador Zheng Zeguang. In the UK, three men were charged with offences under the National Security Act. The UK was called by Hong Kong to provide “full details” of the charges. China, under which Hong Kong operates as a special administrative region, refuted all allegations that the city’s intelligence agency was involved. The Foreign Office said they told Mr. Zheng that the “recent pattern of behavior directed by China against the UK, including cyber-attacks, reports of espionage links and the issuing of bounties” was “unacceptable”. The allegations were described as “groundless and slanderous” by the Chinese embassy in a statement. It had said it had complained to the UK government about “wrongful behaviour,” including “unwarranted accusation” towards the Hong Kong government. Chi Leung Wai, 38, Matthew Trickett, 37, and Chung Biu Yuen, 63, have been accused of agreeing to undertake information gathering, surveillance and acts of deception that were likely to materially assist a foreign intelligence service between the 20th of December 2023 and 2nd of May 2024.

Education News

Isaac Eccles

Which school year is the most challenging?

As we near the end of the school year, it is important we reflect on our achievements and think about the year ahead. However, have you ever thought about what the most difficult year (academically and mentally) is throughout your education? One popular theory could be that these are the years with the biggest change, such as reception which is the first year of schooling, or maybe year seven. This is because the difference between primary and secondary school can feel massive, and a significant milestone in life. Another theory could be that it is the year that has the most stressful exams. This would include year 6, 11, and 13 with SATs, GCSEs and A-Levels. Although children also sit exams in year two, it's often suggested students are too young to understand their significance and this same argument could be used to suggest that reception is similarly not as difficult.

In order to try to find an answer, I have conducted a survey of people from years 7 to 13. My survey found that of a group of 10 people, five said that year 11 is the hardest year because of GCSEs. As well as this, four people said that year 9 is the hardest year because this is when students must choose their GCSE options, and one person said that year 13 is the hardest year because of A-Level examinations, which you get half the amount of time to prepare for. This is an interesting set of results because no one interviewed suggested a year that they had already been through. This could mean that people overestimate how difficult something will be. From this, we can learn that exams and changes in particular are not as bad as we expect, and that we should not worry as much about the outcomes of them.

Environmental News

Rachel Ballantyne

EU nature restoration law

The European Union has, in recent years, been increasingly climate focused, passing laws that ban the production of non-biodegradable glitter and preventing greenwashing, for example. But recently, on the 17th of June, shortly after England passed a similar ruling, another step forward was made with the nature restoration law. It has been a point of debate, for months at a stalemate, but after the surprise agreement from Austrian Environmental Minister Leonore Gewessler, it has passed. The law is a broad rule for the EU to improve upon its biodiversity, giving goals such as 20% of degraded ecosystems needing to be improved upon by just 2030, 60% of degraded land fixed by 2040, and 90% of degraded land improved by 2050. Improving biodiversity will have a myriad of impacts on the environment; considering the fact that an estimated 19% of European species are at risk of extinction, goals such as reversing pollinator species decline by 2030 and increasing urban green spaces by 2040 and 2050 will be first and foremost in our aim to stop extinction for certain species. But further than that, increasing green spaces can increase the presence of carbon sinks, which help absorb significant amounts of greenhouse gases. What's more, moves like urban greening can help with the impacts climate change is currently having by helping reduce flooding, water pollution and droughts. This decision by the EU will therefore hopefully have a long list of positive knock on effects!