

The Holocaust's "Other Victims"

Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust, also targeted for being "different" in some way. Students will work in groups to read excerpts from *The Other Victims: First-Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis*, which highlights the experiences of additional groups deemed undesirable by Hitler, including Gypsies, African-Germans, Jehovah's Witnesses, Poles, political prisoners, and more. Students will then connect the themes present in the persecution of these groups to occurrences within their own school and community, gaining an understanding of the danger of intolerance.

Grade

9

North Carolina Essential Standards for World History

- WH.1.2- Use historical comprehension...
- WH.1.3- Use Historical analysis and interpretation...
- WH.1.4- Use historical research...
- WH.8.1- Evaluate global wars in terms of how they challenged political and economic power structures and gave rise to new balances of power (e.g., Spanish American War, WWI, WWII, Vietnam War, Colonial Wars in Africa, Persian Gulf War, etc.).
- WH.8.2- Explain how international crisis has impacted international politics (e.g., Berlin Blockade, Korean War, Hungarian Revolt, Cuban Missile Crisis, OPEC oil crisis, Iranian Revolt, "911", terrorism, etc.).
- WH.8.3- Explain how liberal democracy, private enterprise and human rights movements have reshaped political, economic and social life in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, the Soviet Union and the United States (e.g., U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, end of Cold War, apartheid, perestroika, glasnost, etc.).

Essential Questions

- In addition to Jews, who were the various groups of people persecuted during the Holocaust?
- In what ways did Hitler and the Nazis restrict the rights of Gypsies, Poles, Blacks, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other "non-Aryan" people?
- In what ways did groups persecuted by the Nazis work to maintain their identity and/or resist persecution?
- In what ways are themes that were present during the Holocaust still at play in our society today?

Materials:

- *The Other Victims: First-Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis* by Ina R. Friedman, excerpts attached
- Group Instructions & Discussion Questions for The Other Victims, attached
- Group Scenarios, attached

Duration

60-90 minutes

Teacher Preparation

It is important that a class discussing the themes present in this lesson have a foundation of respect and responsible communication; for suggested activities on building such a classroom community, see the "Activities" section of Carolina K-12's Database of K-12 Resources (search "Classroom Management/Setting Expectations.")

Student Preparation

Students should have a basic understanding of the events of the Holocaust (see Carolina K-12's lesson "Introduction to the Holocaust") as well as causes of the Holocaust (see Carolina K-12's lesson "Hate, Anti-Semitism, & Propaganda in the Holocaust") located in the Database of K-12 Resources.

Procedure

Non-Jewish Victims of the Holocaust

1. As a warm-up, ask students to consider the victims of the Holocaust. As a class, complete the first two columns of a KWL chart on the board or overhead. (In the first column, "K", students will call out things they already know regarding the victims of the Holocaust. In the second column, "W", students will call out questions that they want to know the answer to. Students will return to the third column, "L," at the end of the lesson to reflect on what they learned.)
2. Once student answers have been recorded, praise students for their hard work on the chart and review their responses. It is possible that student responses did not focus on non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust. If this is the case, point this out to students and explain that in today's lesson, they will be exploring the "other victims," people who were not Jewish but were still persecuted in the Holocaust for being "different."
3. Review the definition of the Holocaust by sharing information such as: "The Holocaust is generally regarded as the systematic slaughter of not only 6 million Jews, (two-thirds of the total European Jewish population), the primary victims, but also 5 million others, approximately 11 million *individuals* wiped off the Earth by the Nazi Regime and its collaborators." (Source: <http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1677.html>)
4. Discuss with students that when many people study the Holocaust, they focus on the mass killings of Jewish people, which is certainly crucial to learn about. However, some people do not know about the "other" non-Jewish people (an estimated 5 million +) who were also persecuted and/or killed during this atrocity for also being labeled as "different." Draw student attention to the following list (have this displayed at the front of the room):
 - Romani (composed of Sinti and Roma tribes); referred to as Gypsies
 - Blacks
 - Slavs
 - Russian POW's
 - Disabled
 - Jehovah Witness
 - Homosexuals
 - Political prisoners.
5. Ask students to discuss why they think these groups were targeted during the Holocaust. After discussing, tell students that this lesson focuses on giving a voice to the "others" on this list who are often forgotten.

Jigsaw: *The Other Victims: First-Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis*

6. Divide students into six cooperative groups and assign each group one of the six attached excerpts from the book *The Other Victims: First-Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis* by Ina R. Friedman. If possible, print the various excerpts on six different colors of paper – this will make the excerpts easier to decipher as well as make the transition to the second group easier. (Teachers should feel free to use alternate excerpts from the book. Teachers can also break students up into more or less groups than the recommended six; just ensure each group initially works on a different excerpt.) Pass out the attached "Group Instructions & Discussion Questions for "The Other Victims." Teachers should assign one student in each group to be the "Facilitator." This student will be responsible for keeping the group on track and facilitating the discussion of the reading.

4. Tell students that the excerpt provided to their group discusses one of the non-Jewish groups that were targeted during the Holocaust, and that it also includes a first person testimonial from a member of that group. (Note: The attached excerpt “No Blacks Allowed” does not have a first person account.) Explain to students that they are to carefully read their excerpt as a group following the instructions provided. They should then answer the discussion questions provided in as much detail as possible. Let students know that each of them must individually have a comprehensive understanding of their group’s excerpt, since in the second step of this jigsaw activity they will each be teaching a different group of students about their excerpt and the group of people it discusses.
5. Give groups approximately 15-20 minutes to work together on their excerpt. After all groups are finished, ask the students to “jigsaw,” so that new groups are re-formed with one person representing each excerpt in every group. (If the six excerpts were copied on different colors of paper, each new group will have at least one person with each color of paper.) Once students are settled in their new groups, have each member take 3-4 minutes to teach their new group members about the people described in their excerpt. Students should take notes as they learn from their classmates.
6. After each student in the new groupings has taught their group members about their excerpt, debrief as a class:
 - What impact did the Holocaust have on the various groups you all discussed today?
 - Why do you think these particular groups were selected for persecution?
 - What were some of the most shocking ways the Nazi’s restricted the unalienable rights of these groups?
 - Of everything you read and learned about, what experience do you think would have been most difficult to deal with and why?
 - What were some things that motivated survivors to live from one day to the next?
 - We know that the testimonies you read today were of Holocaust survivors - how do you imagine experiencing the Holocaust affected the remainder of their lives? How might their children and families be affected by the survivor’s experiences?
 - In what ways did people from these groups resist Hitler and the Nazi’s unjust treatment? Given the circumstances, do you think you would you have behaved similarly? Why or why not? (Allow students to ponder this question, but also remind them how difficult it is for us truly to know what we would have done since the circumstances these brave people survived are virtually unimaginable.)

Themes from the Holocaust in Society Today

7. After discussing the last question, tell students that although we can’t truly know what it was like to be a person persecuted during the Holocaust, it is likely that many of us will experience some type of persecution in our lifetimes since hate, racism, prejudice, anti-Semitism, etc. is still at play in society today. Remind students that the Holocaust began with words; verbal attacks and propaganda against fellow citizens labeled as “different.” These words, when not contradicted by bystanders, grew in power and resulted in violence and death (see Carolina K-12’s lesson “The Crime of the Bystander in the Holocaust” to explore this theme in further detail.) Ask students to discuss the ways the themes present in the Holocaust, such as the themes present in the excerpts they just read, are still at play in society (even their own school) today.
8. To enrich this conversation, tell students that they will be creating and performing skits. Provide each group with one of the attached scenarios. (Teachers can have students stay in their second jigsaw groups for completing this). Students should read the scenario and create a 2-3 minute skit based upon the information provided. Warn students that the scenarios deal with controversial situations, and that they should be respectful and sensitive in how they present their skit. The goal in these performances is not to be entertaining or humorous; the goal is to present a realistic portrayal of the scenario provided.

- **Optional:** If your students perform better when specific roles are provided, consider having groups assign the following roles among themselves while working on their skit:
 - Director- the student who is in charge of keeping the group productive and ensuring the skit being created stays realistic and on track
 - Writer- the student who writes the dialogue for the skit
 - Choreographer- the student who arranges how and where in the room the skit will be performed, such as where students should stand, how they should move, etc.
 - Actors- the students who perform the skit (all students should be present in the final skit, even if they do not speak lines)
9. Teachers should circulate among the groups to ensure students are on track and that the skits being prepared are appropriate. Once students are ready to perform, go over class expectations for being a respectful audience member and performer and then allow groups to perform. After each scene, discuss:
- **Scenario 1, The Cafeteria:**
 - After witnessing this scenario, how did it make you feel?
 - How would you describe the students in this scene? Were they being responsible citizens? Explain.
 - How do you imagine Billy felt, not only sitting alone but also being made fun of?
 - Why do you think the other students chose to tease him?
 - Does this type of thing, or similar occurrences, happen in our school? Explain.
 - What other more positive choices could have been made in this scene?
 - **Option:** During any of the discussions after each scene, upon this question ask the student who raises his/her hand with an answer to hold their answer, and rather than explain it, act it out. Teachers should instruct the actors to replay the scene as closely to their first performance as possible. Tell the student who raised his/her hand to yell “freeze” at the moment they feel something could have been done differently. The student should then tap one of the actors on the shoulder and take that actors place; at this point the student should try out his/her choice and see how the scene changes. (Teachers should let the actors know what to expect, and explain to them that since someone is trying a different choice, they must respond to that choice rather than just replay the scene in the exact same way.)
 - If you were to see this actually happen, would you do anything differently? Why or why not?
 - How might the themes present in this scene relate to the themes we have discussed when studying the Holocaust? (Discuss with students themes present, such as alienation, targeting those who are viewed as weak or different, refusing to stand up for fellow students/citizens when they are persecuted, etc.)
 - **Scenario 2, New Girl**
 - After witnessing this scenario, how did it make you feel?
 - How would you describe the students in this scene? Were they being responsible citizens? Explain.
 - Why was Seena targeted?
 - Have you or someone you know ever experienced religious persecution, or been harassed because of a particular belief or cultural trait? Explain.
 - Imagine our government decides to pass a law mandating one religion as our national religion that everyone must follow. Anyone caught practicing any other religion will be fined or jailed. How would this make you feel and why? Would you continue following your own beliefs or accept the government’s decision?
 - If you were to witness a scene like this, what would you do and why?
 - Discuss the concept of “civic duty” with students and further discuss whether they feel it is their civic duty to assist when someone is being persecuted in this way. Why or why not?
 - How might the themes present in this scene relate to the themes we have discussed when studying the Holocaust? (Discuss with students themes present, such as religious & cultural persecution, Hitler’s laws against Jews, intolerance, targeting those who are viewed as different, etc.)
 - **Scenario 3, Gangs**

- What was taking place in this scene? What were the guys trying to get Jeff to do? How were they going about convincing him? Did you notice anything about their strategy and/or the information they shared? (Question students until they point out that the gang members did not share any of the negative aspects regarding gang membership.)
- Why do you think the gang members were only sharing the perks? What would some of the negative aspects of gang membership be? (violence, possibility of going to jail, etc.)
- When we share only partial information with the goal of convincing someone to do something, what is this called? (propaganda)
- How does the propaganda in this scene relate to the propaganda we discussed that was used in the Holocaust? (Hitler presented one-sided information, or untrue information, to convince the German people to follow his will.)
- Even with all of the negative aspects, why do some young people choose to join gangs? (Discuss “gang mentality”, fear, ignorance, etc.)
- In what ways were the Nazis a “gang?”
- **Scenario 4, To Shop or Not to Shop**
 - After witnessing this scenario, how did it make you feel? (If any students have an indifferent response, further inquire: How would you feel if the store owner were your parent or best friend?)
 - How would you characterize Derrick based on this scene?
 - Why do you think Derrick said the things he said? Where might he have learned such hate/prejudice/stereotypes? (Society, media, ignorance, family, etc.)
 - Do you think his friends should have done anything differently? Explain.
 - Option: Teachers may want to have a student act out his/her suggestion of alternate choices, as described in scenario 1.)
 - What do you feel was the connecting theme between this scenario and the themes of the Holocaust? (Hate, prejudice, intolerance, stereotyping, bystanders who do not speak out against all of the afore mentioned themes)
- **Scenario 5, But I Think It’s Cool**
 - What do you think about what happened in this scene?
 - Did Jasmine and Troy understand the negative symbolism of the shirt when they purchased it? (No.)
 - Once they learned from their friends what the swastika symbolized, how did they respond?
 - Why is it disrespectful for Jasmine and Troy to continue wearing the shirt, particularly after they understood the significance of the swastika? (Encourage the class to discuss the ideas of freedom of speech and expression, while also understanding the concept of “hate symbols” and the affect it can have on a community. Also facilitate students understanding regarding being respectful to the history behind certain symbols.)
 - Did Jasmine and Troy’s friends do the right thing? Would you confront your own friend if they were wearing a symbol associated with hate or intolerance? Explain.
 - What do you feel was the connecting theme between this scenario and the themes of the Holocaust? (Ignorance, apathy towards history, denial)

10. As a culminating discussion, encourage students to reflect on the ways the themes that were present in the Holocaust are still present in society today. Either as a closing written reflection or homework assignment, have students respond to:

- Why is intolerance, and apathy towards intolerance, dangerous?

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance: www.tolerance.org
- Anti-Defamation League Education Site: http://www.adl.org/main_Education/default.htm

Bubili: A Young Gypsy's Fight for Survival

Persons under protective arrest, Jews, Gypsies, and Russians . . . would be delivered by the Ministry of Justice to the S. S. to be worked to death. — Order issued by Heinrich Himmler, September 18, 1942

Even though they are the descendants of ancient tribes from Northern India, the Romani were called Gypsies by Europeans. The Europeans thought they had migrated from Egypt because of their dark skin and did not seem to realize that the Romani were composed of several tribes, the largest being the Sinti and Roma. Grouped into one category, "Gypsies," they were persecuted throughout the centuries. In this, the Germans were no exception.

Of all Hitler's intended victims, only Gypsies and Jews were to be exterminated completely. No member of these groups, from infants to grandparents, was to be permitted to live. To justify their complete destruction, the Nazis labeled them socially "inferior," "racially impure," and "criminals." German scientists were ordered to conduct sham medical experiments to prove the Gypsies' inadequacy by measuring their skulls. Other medical experiments were created to demonstrate falsely that Romani blood was different from so-called normal blood. These absurd claims were hailed by the Germans who wanted to believe in their own superiority.

Testimony from Bubili, a young Gypsy

I cried when the prison barber clipped my hair and threw the locks into my lap. "A souvenir, Gypsy." At sixteen, I was very vain. My black wavy hair had reached to the nape of my neck. How could the Germans do this to me, Bubili, an Austrian Sinti? The barber put his hand on my shoulder to keep me from rising. "I'm not finished." With a dull razor, he shaved the rest of my head, my chest, my whole body. When he finished, my whole body ached. I stared at those standing next to me. My father, my uncles, and my cousins were unrecognizable, plucked birds from some strange planet.

And I? Without my hair, I was no longer Bubili. I was a piece of wood.

No, worse. Even a piece of wood could be used for something. We were trash, something to be thrown away. Why did the Germans have to strip us of our humanity?

The commandant and the S.S. men came into the room. They poked us as though we were cattle. "These Gypsy men are strong. Not like the Jews and the others who come here half starved. Why not send them to the army? Let them learn to fight for us."

"Orders are orders," the commandant said. "Treat them like the rest of the scum."

"Line up. Faces to the sun." The whole square was filled with prisoners in striped uniforms. Many of them wore yellow stars on their shirts. The others had different colored triangles on their uniforms.

We stood on the assembly place, the sun beating down on us from early morning until three in the afternoon. If someone dropped, we were not allowed to pick him up. Then an S.S. man with a whip drove us into a building.

"Sit down," the guard said. He held a board with my name and number 34016 across my chest. The photographer snapped my picture. With his foot, the photographer pushed a lever that punched a nail

into my rear. Like a trained monkey, I jumped through the small window leading to the property room. Why couldn't they just tell us to get up instead of punching us with a nail?

In the property room, the guards shouted at us, "Take off all your clothes. Put everything else in the two baskets— your jewelry, your papers, your money." We stood there naked as the guards led us toward the showers. It was after the shower I lost my hair. I wondered what more could the Nazis do to us?

The prisoners in charge of the clothing laughed as they threw it at us. If you were tall, you got striped pants that were too short. If you were short, you got striped pants that were too long. I would not look any more ridiculous. I "found" thread and shortened my pants.

The shoes were even worse. Only the kapos, the prisoners in charge of other prisoners, and the block "elders" had leather shoes. The rest of us were thrown wooden clogs. The wooden shoes hurt and bruised my feet. I had to figure out how to get a pair of leather shoes.

It was summer, and we were taken out to help the farmers bring in crops. At the risk of my life, I smuggled potatoes in my shirt into camp. The big commodity was schnapps (whiskey). By bartering, I got schnapps, which someone had stolen from the S.S. The schnapps I traded for leather shoes. We Romani have always been concerned about our hair, our teeth, and our shoes.

Inside Dachau, the prisoners were a mixed lot. The triangle on his uniform marked each man. Gypsies had brown triangles; political prisoners, red. The greens were the most feared. They were criminals who had been sent to Dachau. Often they were the block elders or worked in the administration. Jehovah's Witnesses wore purple triangles; homosexuals, pink. The Jews had two yellow triangles arranged into a Jewish star.

In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland and World War II began. Many of us were shipped to Buchenwald. Little did I know that I would consider Dachau heaven compared to Buchenwald. In Buchenwald, everything had to be done on the run. "Schnell, schnell (faster, faster)," the guards shouted as we struggled to haul trees or dig trenches. Blows fell on our backs and necks. One of my uncles could not move quickly enough. An S.S. man bludgeoned him to death.

Every night, I fell asleep with a pain in my heart. I kept saying to myself, "I am Bubili. I will outlive those bastards. I will one day give testimony." I prayed for the luck that would help me to stay alive.

No Blacks Allowed

After World War I, Allied troops occupied the Rhineland. The French sent in units from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, the Cameroons, and Senegal. They were either black or Arab. The presence of these dark-skinned soldiers was bitterly resented by the Germans. Even before Hitler, Germans were very color-conscious. Though Germany had had colonies in Africa prior to World War I, there were taboos against Germans marrying black women. The introduction of black troops after World War I became known as the "Black Disgrace." Vicious cartoons condemning the "*neger*" circulated in the newspapers.

Some of the black soldiers married German women and had families. Others fathered illegitimate children. All of the children became known as the "Rhineland Bastards."

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote that he would eliminate all traces of this "insult" (half-black-half-German children) to the German nation.

Though black entertainers were popular in Germany before Hitler came to power, they were boycotted when the Nazis took over. A book entitled *Degenerate Music: An Accounting* was published in 1938. The cover shows a black musician with a Jewish star in his lapel.

Hitler's hatred of blacks extended to black athletes. When Jesse Owens, the American track star, won three gold medals at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, Hitler refused to be present when the medals were presented.

Though there were relatively few blacks in Germany, Hitler discriminated between black and white prisoners of war. Black soldiers captured during World War II were separated from their units and shot.

When the Germans tried to remove a black lieutenant from Martinique from his French comrades, his superior officer objected. "He is not black," the colonel explained to the Germans. "He is an officer."

Instead of shooting him, the Germans placed the man in a prisoner of war camp according to the Geneva conventions. The lieutenant knew he was one of the lucky ones. A short time later, he managed to escape.

If Hitler had been successful in Africa, large numbers of black troops would have been shot.

Historians are just beginning to examine the Nazi files on blacks. Much of the information has yet to be obtained and made available to the public. To date, the few existent publications are available only in German.

The Underground Medical School in Poland

Kill without pity or mercy all men, women, and children of Polish descent or language.

Only in this way can we obtain the living space we need.

— Adolf Hitler

For centuries Germany coveted the fertile fields of Poland. In Mein Kampf, Hitler openly stated his intention to occupy all Eastern European nations in order to provide lebensraum (living room) for the German empire he planned to create. To justify his invasion of Poland, Hitler declared all Slavic peoples — Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Latvians, Czechs, Estonians, and Russians — untermenschen (subhuman).

The regular German army, in its invasion of Poland, had orders to kill as many civilians as possible. In addition, there was a second German army whose job was not to take territory but to kill. These killing squads, the Einsatzgruppen, were made up of members of the security section of the S.S. and the Gestapo. The Einsatzgruppen followed directly behind the regular troops. Once a town was taken, the Einsatzgruppen rounded up Jews, Gypsies, and any Poles who had at least a high school education. Those seized were either shot or put in mobile vans and gassed.

In their determination to destroy any potential leaders, the Germans rounded up officials, teachers, lawyers, doctors, merchants, and priests. In the city of Bydgoszcz, Boy Scouts ages twelve to sixteen were shot.

The only Poles exempt from the death threat were blue-eyed, blond-haired children. Over two hundred thousand children were torn from their parents and sent to special homes in Germany. They were given new names and raised as Nazis. The dark-haired Polish children were to be taught only "simple arithmetic, writing one's own name; the lesson that it is a divine commandment to be obedient to the Germans . . . I do not think reading is required," said Heinrich Himmler, head of the S.S.

While elementary schools were permitted, the Germans closed Poland's high schools and universities. Anyone caught teaching a high school or college subject was executed. Poland, a country that had been invaded many times, had had a long history of resistance to foreign authorities. When it was forbidden to teach the Polish language or Polish history and customs, Polish teachers organized secret classes. During the Nazi invasion, Polish youth attended classes in attics, basements, barns, churches, and private homes. In addition to high schools, three secret medical schools were established.

The largest was disguised as a school for sanitary personnel. Dr. Jan Zaorski, a prominent doctor and professor, convinced the German authorities to allow him to set up a school to train sanitary workers. The Germans, who feared epidemics and water pollution, agreed. With former professors from the University of Warsaw, Dr. Zaorski conducted classes in anatomy, physiology, and other medical subjects. Laboratories were set up, and corpses found on the streets were used for dissection in basements. Between 1940 and the Polish Uprising in 1944, over nineteen hundred students secretly studied medicine. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of these students survived the war.

Zbigniew Zawadzki was one of the few among the nineteen hundred students of the University of Warsaw Medical School who lived to recount the story of his education under fire:

Testimony from Zbigniew Zawadzki (excerpts)

Just before dawn, the sirens jolted me out of bed. Across the street, the Church of the Redemption burst into flames. The ground shook as German dive bombers scored one direct hit after another on schools and government buildings.

"It's war," I shouted, as I grabbed my clothes. "Come on, let's drop off our applications. As soon as we lick the Germans, school will start." I dashed down the steps. My two friends followed.

Still buttoning my shirt, I ran toward the University of Warsaw. A woman carrying a child in each arm pleaded with two other children to hold tightly to her skirt as she struggled through the frantic crowd toward the air raid shelter. It was September 1, 1939, and the accumulated heat of summer hung over the motionless air.

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September 3, France and England declared war on Germany. The war would soon be over, and medical school would start in a few weeks.

My optimism was shattered when I turned on the radio. "All men of fighting age are to leave the city and head east. Warsaw will be defended to the last bastion. Long live Poland!" It didn't make sense. Why were we ordered to leave if we were supposed to defend the city?

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For a year, I worked in the village as a farmhand. In the early summer of 1941, we noticed hundreds of German tanks and thousands of soldiers moving toward the Russian border. The soldiers looked arrogant and very sure of themselves. On June 22, 1941, the Germans invaded Russia, their former ally.

A few weeks later, I received a message through the underground from a former high school classmate. "Warsaw University has established a secret medical school. Join me, and I'll share everything I have with you."

Study to become a doctor? The Germans said that Poles weren't to be educated. We were to be slaves for our German masters.

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"Zbigniew," the farmer said as he put his arm around me, "you are blessed with an education. Poland needs every doctor it can get." He started to fill burlap bags with potatoes, wheat, rye, and buckwheat. "This will help you to stay alive." His horse-drawn cart took us to the Vistula River where I boarded a boat for Warsaw. As I stood on the stern and watched the wake, I wondered. How was it possible for an underground medical school to exist?

The school existed by subterfuge. The "medical" school was not a medical school in the eyes of the Germans. It was the Docent Jan Zaorski's School for Sanitary Personnel.

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Food became more and more scarce. The Germans stripped Polish farms of hams, cabbages, potatoes — anything to feed the German troops. The pressure built up as I tried to study, get enough to eat, and work with the underground. One day I was informed that a big action was being planned to attack Pawiak prison and liberate members of the Resistance. The action was to take place a few days before the most important exam in medical school. If you passed, you went on to your clinical work. If you failed, you had to repeat a whole year. I got permission not to take part in any actions for five

days. With a kilo of potatoes and some fat, the only things that we could scrounge up for food, my friend and I holed up in a laboratory.

From: *The Other Victims: First-Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis* by Ina R. Friedman

Elisabeth's Family: Twelve Jehovah's Witnesses Faithful Unto Death

National Socialism is a form of conversion . . . Once we hold power Christianity will be overcome . . . and a new Germany without the Pope and the Bible will be established.

— Adolf Hitler

Why did the Nazis call Jehovah's Witnesses a "degenerate race"? They were white and the descendants of generations of Germans. Many had blue eyes and blond hair. Like Hitler, who professed to be Catholic, they were Christians. They believed in the Bible and the Second Coming of Christ.

Jehovah's Witnesses refused to serve in the German army or navy. Wars between nations did not concern them. The only authority they recognized was Jehovah God, as they called him. The only battle they would fight was on Judgment Day in the war between good and evil. In wars between countries, they refused to take sides.

Jehovah's Witnesses were so firm in their belief that only God should rule the world that they urged other Germans not to fight. The Nazis considered this the action of traitors. The Nazi creed was that every German should be prepared to fight and die for Hitler.

The Witnesses enraged the Nazis further when they refused to salute the flag or to use "Heil Hitler" as a greeting. According to the Witnesses, this would be the same as bowing down to idols.

When the Nazis gained power in 1933, they put Jehovah's Witnesses on a list of groups "dangerous" to the Nazi government. These groups were banned from holding meetings. Jehovah's Witnesses, like the other banned groups, were prohibited from distributing their newspapers and magazines. They weren't allowed to pray, study, sing hymns, or socialize in Kingdom Hall (their meeting place). They were forbidden to gather in private homes.

By 1939 Jehovah's Witnesses had to wear a purple arm band to distinguish themselves from other Germans. Out of the over 25,000 Jehovah's Witnesses who lived in Germany, 6,019 were imprisoned.

The prisoners looked upon their incarceration as something to be endured in their loyalty to Jehovah God.

Elisabeth, the youngest daughter of the Kusserow family, recounts her family's nightmare under the Nazis.

Testimony of Elisabeth Kusserow, Jehovah's Witness

We were Jehovah's Witnesses. Our parents, Franz and Hilda Kusserow, had taught their eleven children to hide the books and pamphlets of the International Society of Bible Students if anyone spotted the men from the Gestapo coming toward the house. Anyone found with literature from our Watchtower Society could be arrested.

In 1936, the Nazis tried to get Jehovah's Witnesses to renounce their faith. When the Gestapo knocked on our door, one of them waved a piece of paper in Father's face and shouted, "Franz Kusserow, you must sign this document promising never to have anything to do with the International Society of Bible Students. If you don't, you will be sent to prison."

The whole family stood, dumbfounded. Promise not to be Jehovah's Witnesses? Hitler was truly Satan.

Father read aloud the first paragraph. "I have recognized that the International Society of Bible Students spreads a false doctrine and pursues goals entirely hostile to the state under the cover of religious activity." Father shook his head. "This is ridiculous. I can't sign."

The S.S. man, who was about the same age as my oldest brother, became angry. "Stubborn fool!"

The S.S. man turned to Mother. "And you? If you don't, your children will be without parents."

Mother removed her apron and placed it over the chair. "No, I cannot sign. Annemarie" — Mother turned to my oldest sister — "take care of the children."

The agent shoved my parents outside and into the car. After a few days the Nazis released Mother from prison. They kept Father. Why was it a crime to be a Jehovah's Witness? Mother couldn't understand why they released her, because she still refused to sign the paper. Mother and my oldest brother, Wilhelm, made sure we followed Father's schedule and always did our chores. But how we missed Father and his talks about the Bible! What a joyful reunion we had when he was released a year later.

Every day, the teacher reprimanded me for not saluting the Nazi flag. The big black swastika on the red banner flew over the schoolhouse and hung on a pole in every classroom. My stomach churned as I tried to think of how I could avoid saluting it or saying "Heil Hitler." My parents had taught me to salute only Jehovah God. To salute a flag or a person was the same as worshiping idols. I wouldn't sing the horrible Nazi songs, either. I kept my lips together.

The teacher always watched me. "So, Elisabeth, you do not want to join in praise of our leader. Come to the front of the classroom." She turned to the others. "Children, Elisabeth thinks it is all right to insult our leader. Tell us why, Elisabeth."

"Acts 4:12 of the New Testament says, 'There is no salvation in anyone else except Jesus Christ.'"

"Imagine, Elisabeth Kusserow believes in that ridiculous New Testament."

The children laughed. I couldn't understand why. All of them went to church. On the way home from school, they pushed me and threw my books to the ground.

Our troubles grew. It wasn't just the terror of going to school. The Nazis cut off Father's pension from World War I because he still refused to say "Heil Hitler."

In the spring of 1939, the principal came into my class. "Elisabeth, since you refuse to salute our flag and say 'Heil Hitler,' it is obvious that your parents are neglecting your spiritual and moral development. I have taken it upon myself to obtain a court order to remove you and your two younger brothers from your home. The three of you will be sent to a place where you will get proper instruction."

From: The Other Victims: First-Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis by Ina R. Friedman

Franziska: A Silent Protest against Sterilization

Hitler did not invent the theory of the Master Race, but he put these theories into practice. He started by eliminating the "foreign elements" in Germany, the Jews and Gypsies, and by preventing "defective elements" from having children.

German scientists and educators participated eagerly in Hitler's program, particularly those at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics. Eugenics is the study of how hereditary traits can be altered and "improved." The scientists welcomed Hitler's attempts to establish the superiority of the German people. It was profitable for the Institute. They were kept busy identifying and eliminating inferior non-Germans (Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, and so on) and German "defectives," the physically and mentally handicapped.

The cooperative efforts between science and politics began with the "identification" of inferior people. Jewish schoolchildren's skulls were measured in classrooms to demonstrate their inferiority. From there the "scientific" methods progressed to sterilization to euthanasia (mercy killing) and finally to mass murder.

Everything was done legally. First a law was passed to remove the "undesirable" elements from public service. Jews lost their jobs as teachers, civil servants, and doctors in hospitals. This decree was followed in July 1933 by the "Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Defects." It required that persons who were hereditarily blind, deaf, physically or mentally handicapped, or were alcoholic be sterilized.

A health tribunal was established to decide who would be sterilized. Those called before the tribunal could not examine the documents used against them. Most did not have lawyers for their defense.

Teachers in schools for the deaf, who were themselves hearing, turned over the names of their deaf pupils to the Nazi authorities. From 1934 to 1939, between 350,000 and 400,000 people lost their ability to have children in this unjust and unscientific program.

With the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, the Nazis decided that sterilization was an inefficient way to eliminate the mentally handicapped. These "useless eaters" had not only to be fed but housed. With support from the scientists, Hitler directed that a program of "mercy killing" be initiated. In a short time, 75,000 mentally ill and retarded individuals were put to death. The S.S. provided the gassing equipment and the trained personnel. The euthanasia of the mentally ill continued until late 1941. By then the personnel trained in mass killing were needed in the newly established extermination centers. The Nazis then reduced the rations of food and fuel to mental institutions so the inmates either starved or froze to death.

Today, there are still people who preach the superiority of the white race and the inferiority of Jews, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. The Nazi progressed from name-calling, to expulsion from jobs, sterilization, euthanasia, and finally mass murder. Each law, each action affected an individual.

Franziska (Fanny) Schwarz was deaf. When she was sixteen, the Nazis knocked at her door.

Testimony of Fanny Schwarz

I never saw anything wrong with being deaf. My younger sister, Theresa, and most of my friends were deaf. Though my parents were hard of hearing, my younger brother, Theo, had normal hearing. My father was one of six brothers. Four of them were hearing. When they came to visit, every hand was busy sharing news of the deaf community or giving advice.

When I was fourteen, Hitler took over Germany. Theo, my eleven-year-old hearing brother, liked to go to the Munich Stadium to the rallies. Once Theo came home all excited because he had shaken Hitler's hand. My favorite uncle, Karl, who could hear, got mad.

He shouted at my brother and signed at the same time. "Hitler is a disgrace to Germany. Don't waste your time and hearing listening to him."

For me, the trouble started in 1935. I came home from the convent and found Mother crying. "What's the matter?" I sighed.

She handed me the letter that read, "Frau Schwarz and her daughter Franziska are to come to the health office to arrange for their sterilization. Heil Hitler." I couldn't make out the signature at the bottom.

The whole family got upset. Uncle Karl started to sputter, as he always did when he was excited. "We'll protest. The Nazis can't do this to Franziska. She's perfectly healthy. I'll appeal to the administrative court ask them to overturn the order."

The day of the hearing, my mother, my father, and all my uncles accompanied me to court. "She's only sixteen years." Uncle Karl talked and signed at the same time so I could understand. "Deafness is not always inherited. I'm her uncle, and I can hear perfectly well. As for her mother, she is going through the menopause. Though she is a good Catholic, she promises not to have any more children."

The two men on the judges' bench whispered to each other. They frowned and shook their heads. After a few minutes, the one with the big nose and bald head stood up. "Petition denied for the minor, Franziska Schwarz. Since the mother promises not to have any more children, she will not have to be sterilized."

I screamed all the way to the hospital. The nurse locked me in a room with two other deaf teenagers. The three of us cried all night. When the nurse came to give us tranquilizers, I tried to fight her off. She held me down and gave me the injection. In the morning, I woke up in a room full of beds. My stomach hurt. I touched the bandages and started to cry. The nurse who brought me water was crying, too. "I'm sorry, there's nothing I could do to help you. With Hitler, you have to be quiet." Her finger pointed to the portrait of Hitler hanging over the bed. She tapped her temple with her finger, to indicate, "He's crazy."

From: *The Other Victims: First-Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis* by Ina R. Friedman

Dirk: Kidnapped for Forced Labor

The outbreak of World War II caused a great shortage of labor in Germany. Most of the able-bodied men were either in the military services or in various government agencies like the Gestapo. Hitler had decided he did not want German women working in the factories. They were to stay home and raise children. Where was Germany to find the manpower to raise food and turn out guns and tanks?

Political prisoners, prisoners of war, and captured resistance fighters were forced to work in the war factories. The Russian prisoners of war were treated particularly badly. In the first few months of the Russian campaign, the Germans captured almost four million Russian prisoners. Hitler feared they would "infect" his people with communism and did not want to use them as laborers. They were herded into huge camps and allowed to die of disease and starvation. By early 1942, only about one million of the original four million Russian prisoners of war were still alive. By that time, German factories needed more and more workers, and Hitler permitted the use of Russian prisoners. The Russians were frequently selected at random and hanged to warn the other prisoners against attempting acts of sabotage.

All of the slave laborers suffered from lack of adequate food or water. Most died from hunger or disease. Their living conditions were terrible. At one work camp set up by the Krupp munitions firms, the prisoners slept in dog kennels.

As the war progressed, the supply of slave laborers taken from the concentration camps was not enough to meet the needs of the war industry. Germany first tried to recruit workers from the occupied countries. Skilled workers in Poland, Holland, Belgium, France, and elsewhere were asked to volunteer for labor in Germany. They were given false promises of good food and housing to entice them. Few volunteered.

The Germans then turned to forced recruitment. Soldiers marched into factories in occupied countries and took men from their workbenches. Men walking down the street or coming out of church would be seized and shipped off to Germany. By September 1944, millions of forced laborers from occupied countries were working in Germany. This included half a million Polish women who had been rounded up and sent to work as house slaves for German housewives.

In Russia, children from ten to fourteen years of age were rounded up by the German army. They were sent to German factories to work as apprentices and provide the slave labor of the future. Though German firms made enormous profits from their use of slave labor, they have never admitted their guilt. Only a few have ever made any payments to the surviving slave laborers. Many of the slave laborers died from the terrible working and living conditions. Those who did survive continue to suffer mentally and physically from their brutal treatment.

Testimony from Dirk, a young Dutchman

My name is Dirk. I was sixteen and just finishing my three years at a trade school. In June 1940, I would begin my apprenticeship as a tool-and-die maker. I dreamed of going to America when I finished. Now this stupid war.

In July 1942, two German soldiers entered the shop where I worked. I kept my head down, not daring to look up from the lathe. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw them walk toward my bench. "Du (you)," they said, seizing my arm. I looked around. Nine other boys had been pulled from their lathes.

"Schnell, schnell (faster, faster)" the soldiers shouted as they marched us toward the dock. Crowds gathered. A neighbor ran to get my mother. She thrust bread and cheese into my hands just as the boat cast off.

The boat docked in Rotterdam. The soldiers marched us to the railway station and shoved us into wooden boxcars. I heard the bolt slam. Would I ever see my parents? My country? A slop bucket stood at one end of the windowless car. In a few hours, it overflowed. After two days, the stench from urine and feces clawed at my throat. I huddled against the wall, weak and nauseated.

At the factory, the guard shoved me in front of a work-bench. "Albeit (work)." He pointed to the blueprints for steam expanders for large pipes. S.S. guards patrolled the aisles, their whips lashing out at the workers. I stared at the blueprints, my head woozy from hunger. I was a stocky Dutchman, used to milk and cheese and butter. Fools, I wanted to shout. Feed a man properly, and you'll get twice as much work. The guard kicked the man next to me. "Schnell, schnell."

I began to work the metal. At midday, a whistle sounded. I followed everyone outside. A prisoner ladled soup from a black kettle into small bowls. I stared at the few pieces of cabbage and potatoes and the piece of meat floating in the greasy water. The meat had maggots! A kitchen worker stuck a small square of bread in my hand.

One day, I got dizzy at my workbench. I had to lie down. If I did, I would be beaten to death. To go back to the barracks, I needed a pass from the factory manager. I knocked at Mr. Mueller's door. "I feel really sick. May I have a pass, please?"

I stepped into the office. A tall, angular man whose broad face seemed to be dominated by his nose, Mr. Mueller was a civilian, not a member of the S.S. He began to speak Dutch. "Did you come of your own free will to Germany?" he asked.

"No!" What a stupid question.

What do you think of Hitler?" His blue eyes peered at mine, as though he wanted an honest answer.

My face got red. "That bastard! He should go to hell." I banged my fist on the desk.

The manager jumped up, ran to the window, looked all around and slammed it shut. "You could have gotten us both killed. Don't ever say that. My wife comes from Belgium. I can understand your feelings, but I'm one of the few Germans who can."

Name: _____

Group Instructions & Discussion Questions for “The Other Victims”

1. **Read:** Carefully read the excerpt provided to you. As you read, mark the text:
 - Circle any words that are unfamiliar to you.
 - Underline any parts of the excerpt that you think are most important or that stick out to you.
 - If you are confused by any part of the excerpt, write a question mark by that line or section. You can also write out questions on the text.
 - If anything surprises you or evokes a strong emotional response from you, you can write an exclamation mark by the line or section,
 - If a particular thought pops in your head that connects to the reading, write it in the margins.

2. **Discuss:** After you have finished the reading, your group’s Facilitator will lead your group through discussing the following question. Be sure to take detailed notes on the answers your group shares, since you will be teaching a new group of students about your excerpt in the next step of this activity.

3. **Answer:**
 - a. Which group of targeted people does your excerpt primarily address: _____

 - b. What types of injustice did this group experience under the Nazis?

 - c. Why did Hitler and the Nazis target this group of people?

 - d. In what ways did people in this group maintain their identity and/or resist persecution?

 - e. What did you find most disturbing or unfair regarding the treatment of people classified in this group?

 - f. What lessons can we learn from learning about what this group of people went through?

4. **Prepare to Teach:**

When your group has finished discussing the excerpt, each of you should form a plan of how you will teach fellow classmates about the group of people your excerpt addressed and their experiences during the Holocaust. Write out a draft summary of what you will say on the back of this sheet to teach other

students who have not read your excerpt about this important group of people. **Write your summary to share with others on notebook paper.**

5. After everyone in your group has written a draft of their summary, practice it with your group and help one another make the summary better. Was anything unclear or left out? Revise your summary so that you are prepared to do the best job possible when teaching your classmates.
6. **Jigsaw:** As you listen to your new group members share information about their excerpts and the people they learned about, take notes on each group:

a. **Gypsies:**

b. **Black Germans:**

c. **Poles:**

d. **Jehovah Witnesses:**

e. **Disabled:**

f. **Russian Prisoners of War:**

Group Scenarios

The Cafeteria

1. Every day in the cafeteria, Billy, who never bothers anyone, sits by himself. There is a group of students who sometimes yells insults at him across the cafeteria. Billy always sits silently with his eyes on his food. A group of students at another table notices this happening quite often, but they decide they don't want to get involved.



New Girl

2. Seena is a new girl in school who is dedicated to her religion. Because of this, she wears a hijab to school each day (a head covering). Throughout her first week, no one has introduced themselves to her or shown interest in being her friend. She even notices many students whispering about her. One day, a group of students confronts her, making fun of her head covering. She runs away from them in tears.



Gangs

3. Jeff has been having a difficult time. He feels like his parents and teachers don't listen to him and that his friends don't respect him. One day while at the mall, a group of guys confronts Jeff. They say they've noticed him hanging around by himself. They explain that if he is looking for something to do, they have just the thing. They try to convince Jeff to join their gang. They tell him all the great perks of being a member, from always having friends and protection, to getting paid to run errands for the members in charge. When Jeff asks what types of things he'll have to do to join or to stay in the gang, the guys avoid the question. They just keep describing all the reasons he should join and all the great things he'll get out of it if he does.



To Shop or Not to Shop

4. It's summer time and a group of teens has been playing sports in the park. Someone suggests they take a break and walk to the convenience store across the street for cold drinks. One of the teens, Derrick, protests and says no one should shop in that store, since the owner is "Middle Eastern" and thus a "terrorist." The rest of the teens say they don't know what he's talking about; they just want something cold to drink. Derrick goes on to lecture the group that they should remember what happened on September 11th, and that it's un-American to buy from anyone who isn't from America. Derrick tells his friends that if the store owner wants to run a business, it should be in Afghanistan...not in America. Derrick's friends are just thirsty, so rather than fight about it, they agree to go to another store further down the street.



But I Think It's Cool

5. Two best friends, Jasmine and Troy, show up at school on Monday morning wearing black t-shirts with swastikas on the front. Several of their other friends notice this and confront Jasmine and Troy about why they are wearing such offensive shirts. Jasmine and Troy seem to have no clue what their friends have a problem with. They explain that they were at a festival over the weekend, they found the shirts, liked the colors and the weird symbol, and decided to buy them. Their friends are amazed that Jasmine and Troy have no idea regarding the history of the symbol and they proceed to explain why the swastika is offensive. Jasmine and Troy listen, but then explain that since they can't get their money back, they are going to wear the shirts. They don't agree with anything the Nazis did, but that shouldn't mean they can't wear the shirt.