

The background of the entire poster is a stylized American flag. The top portion is blue with white stars of various sizes. The bottom portion is red and white vertical stripes. Overlaid on the stripes are several white silhouettes of human hands raised in the air, some with fingers spread, some with palms facing forward, and some with fingers pointing upwards. The hands are positioned at various heights and angles, creating a sense of collective action or protest.

**A HISTORY TO BE RECKONED WITH**

# **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST**

**A FILM BY KEN BURNS, LYNN NOVICK & SARAH BOTSTEIN**



**ENGAGEMENT &  
DISCUSSION GUIDE  
FOR EDUCATORS**

**#USandTheHolocaustPBS**

**[pbs.org/holocaust](http://pbs.org/holocaust)**

**[pbslearningmedia.org/holocaust](http://pbslearningmedia.org/holocaust)**

“History cannot be looked at in isolation. While we rightly celebrate American ideals of democracy and our history as a nation of immigrants, **we must also grapple with the fact that American institutions and policies, like segregation and the brutal treatment of indigenous populations, were influential in Hitler’s Germany.** And it cannot be denied that, although we accepted more refugees than any other sovereign nation, America could have done so much more to help the millions of desperate people fleeing Nazi persecution.”

—KEN BURNS



Man drinking from a “colored” water cooler in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. July 1939.

PHOTO COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Bags are searched by inspectors from the United States Department of Agriculture at the border between Juarez, Mexico and El Paso, Texas. June 1937.

PHOTO COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

“Exploring this history and putting the pieces together of what we knew and what we did has been a revelation. During the Second World War, millions of Americans fought and sacrificed to defeat fascism, but even after we began to understand the scope and scale of what was happening to the Jewish people of Europe, our response was inadequate and deeply flawed. **This is a story with enormous relevance today as we are still dealing with questions about immigration, refugees and who should be welcomed into the United States.**”

—LYNN NOVICK

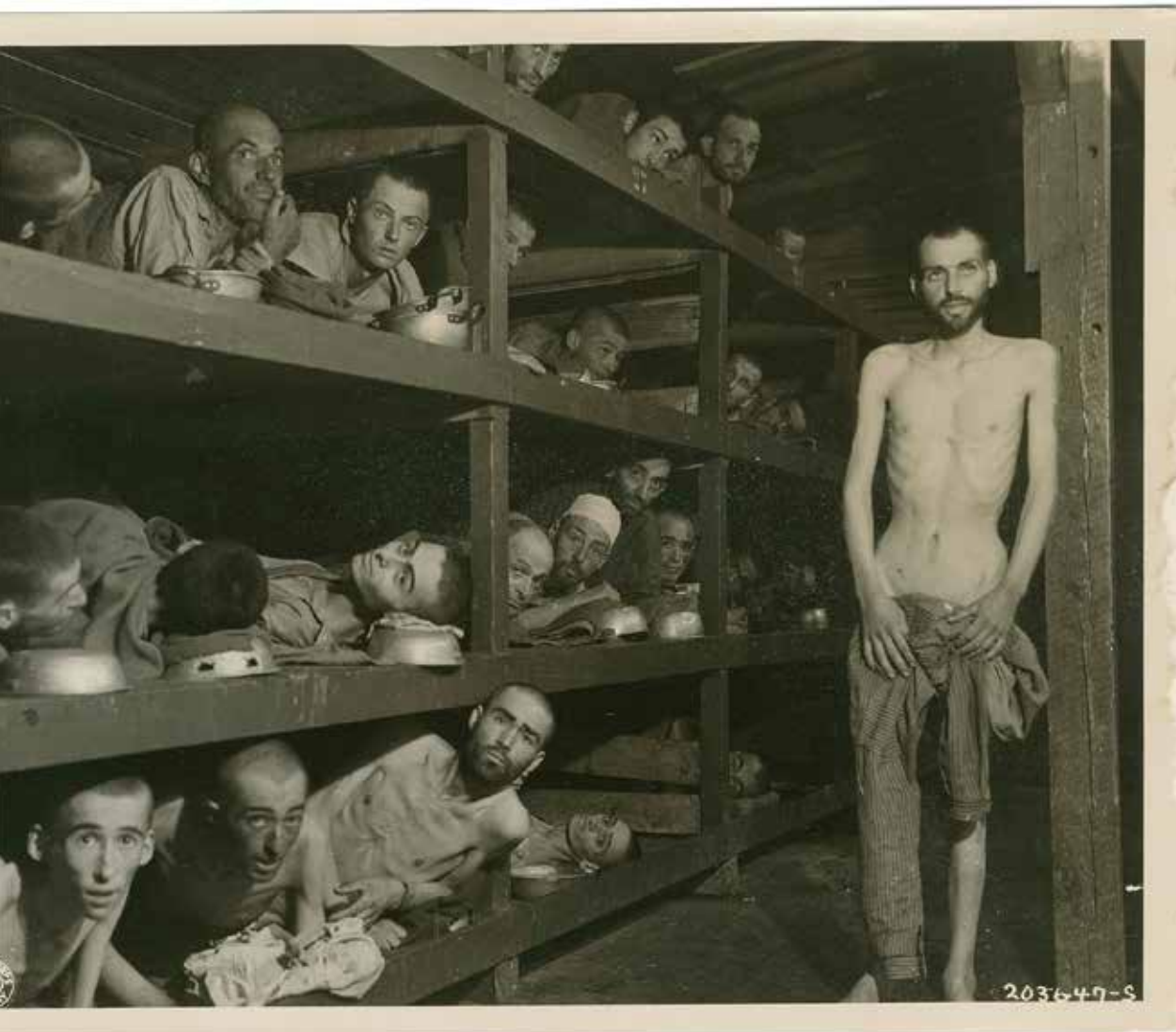


Group portrait of Jewish children outside the Chateau des Morelles children’s home, Brout-Vernet (Allier) France. Circa 1942.

PHOTO COURTESY USHMM

“**At the center of our narrative is the moving and inspiring first-hand testimony of witnesses who were children in the 1930s.** They share wrenching memories of the persecution, violence and flight that they and their families experienced as they escaped Nazi Europe and somehow made it to America. Their survival attests to the truth of the remark made by journalist Dorothy Thompson that ‘for thousands and thousands of people a piece of paper with a stamp on it is the difference between life and death.’”

—SARAH BOTSTEIN



**“This is not a war  
between nations—  
but humanity’s  
struggle for the  
right to exist.”**

**—JOSEPH A. WYANT,  
WWII AMERICAN GI**

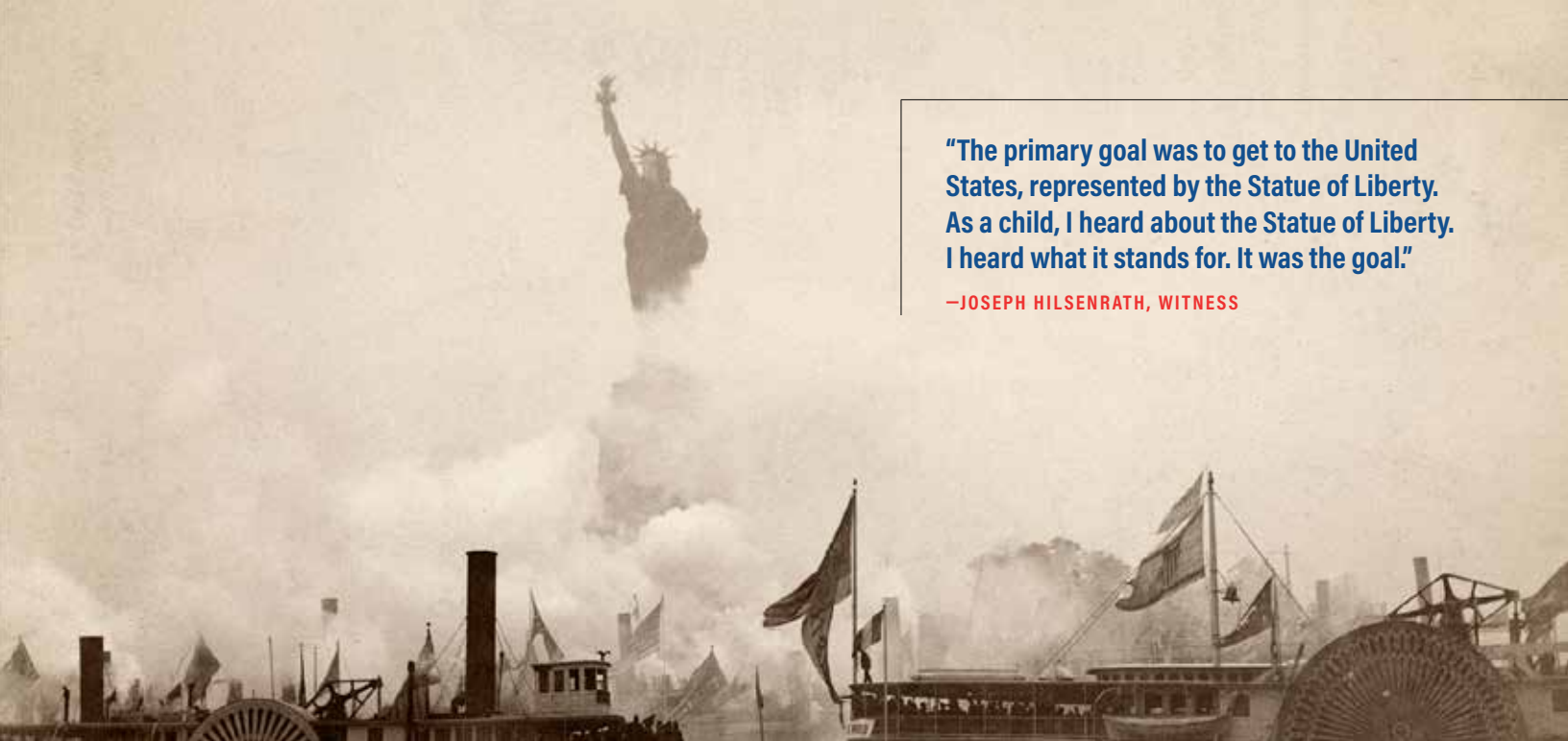
**Former prisoners  
of Buchenwald  
concentration camp  
are pictured in the  
wooden bunks where  
they slept. Elie Wiesel  
is pictured in the  
second row of bunks,  
seventh from the left,  
next to the vertical  
beam.**

PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL  
ARCHIVES AND RECORDS  
ADMINISTRATION

**THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST**, is a documentary directed and produced by Ken Burns, Lynn Novick and Sarah Botstein, that explores America’s response to one of the greatest humanitarian crises of the twentieth century.

Inspired in part by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s *Americans and the Holocaust* exhibition and supported by its historical resources, the film examines the rise of Hitler and Nazism in Germany in the context of global antisemitism and racism, the eugenics movement, and discriminatory race laws in the American south. The series, written by Geoffrey C. Ward, sheds light on what the U.S. government and American people knew and did not know as the catastrophe unfolded in Europe.

Combining the first-person accounts of Holocaust witnesses and survivors and interviews with leading historians and writers, **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** dispels competing myths that Americans either were ignorant of the unspeakable persecution that Jews and other targeted minorities faced in Europe or that they looked on with callous indifference. The film tackles a range of questions that remain essential to our society today, including how racism influences policies related to immigration and refugees as well as how governments and people respond to the rise of authoritarian states that manipulate history and facts to consolidate power.



**“The primary goal was to get to the United States, represented by the Statue of Liberty. As a child, I heard about the Statue of Liberty. I heard what it stands for. It was the goal.”**

**—JOSEPH HILSEN RATH, WITNESS**

**The Statue of Liberty seen in the New York Harbor on a foggy day. Circa 1886.**

PHOTO COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

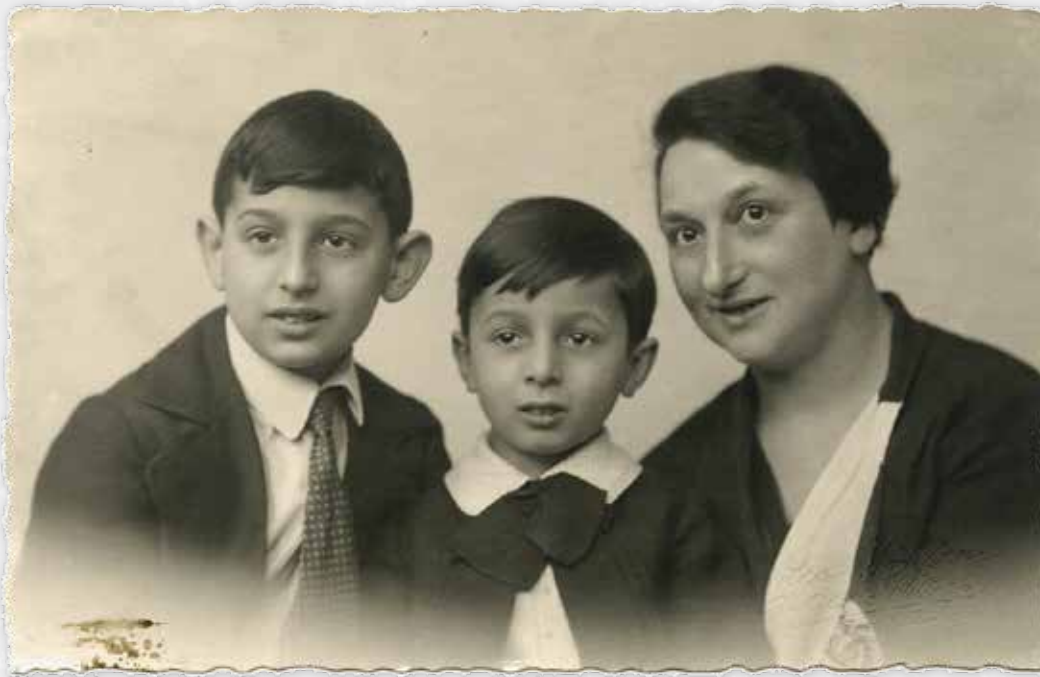
## USING THIS GUIDE

**THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** is accompanied by educational materials for middle and high school classrooms. The lessons and activities provide opportunities for classrooms to consider the United States and its response to the Holocaust. Lesson topics cover the impacts of Nazi ideology; U.S. immigration law in the period of 1924-1941; U.S. media coverage of the Holocaust and its role in shaping what America knew; the varying symbolism of the Statue of Liberty; an examination of how people make choices during times of crisis; and an inquiry inviting students to consider if U.S. public opinion influenced U.S. response to the Holocaust.

We invite you and your students to have conversations in your classrooms and wider community—from the perspectives of history, media literacy, civic engagement, and more. This guide is filled with tools to help you plan for teaching about the Holocaust, plan screening events for your students, and spark discussion. We hope it will support a deeper understanding into the complex issues presented in **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST**.

## SERIES DESCRIPTION

**THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** is a three-part, six hour film series directed by Ken Burns, Lynn Novick and Sarah Botstein, that examines America’s response to one of the greatest humanitarian crises of the twentieth century. Americans consider themselves a “nation of immigrants,” but as the catastrophe of the Holocaust unfolded in Europe, the United States proved unwilling to open its doors to more than a fraction of the hundreds of thousands of desperate people seeking refuge. Through riveting first hand testimony of witnesses and survivors who as children endured persecution, violence and flight as their families tried to escape Hitler, this series delves deeply into the tragic human consequences of public indifference, bureaucratic red tape and restrictive quota laws in America. Did the nation fail to live up to its ideals? This is a history to be reckoned with.



Günther “Guy” Stern (left) with his brother, Werner, and mother, Hedwig Stern (née Silberberg).

PHOTO COURTESY GUY STERN

“How did America treat its potential refugees? The refugees, they lost their lives because those doors, the golden door was not wide open.”

—GUY STERN, WITNESS

## EPISODE DESCRIPTIONS

### **EPISODE ONE: “The Golden Door” (Beginnings—1938)**

After decades of maintaining open borders, a xenophobic backlash prompts Congress to pass laws restricting immigration. Meanwhile, in Germany, Hitler and the Nazis begin their persecution of Jewish people, causing many to try to flee to neighboring countries or America. Franklin Roosevelt and other world leaders are concerned by the growing refugee crisis but fail to coordinate a response.

### **EPISODE TWO: “Yearning to Breathe Free” (1938—1942)**

As World War II begins, Americans are united in their disapproval of Nazi brutality but divided on whether to act. Some individuals and organizations work tirelessly to help refugees escape. Meanwhile, Charles Lindbergh and isolationists battle with Roosevelt to try to keep America out of the war. Germany invades the Soviet Union and secretly begins the mass murder of European Jews.

### **EPISODE THREE: “The Homeless, Tempest-Tossed” (1942—)**

A group of dedicated government officials fights red tape in order to finance and support rescue operations. As the Allied soldiers advance, uncovering mass graves and liberating German concentration camps, the public sees for the first time the sheer scale of the Holocaust and begins to reckon with its reverberations.

# MEET THE FILMMAKERS

**THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** is directed by Ken Burns, Lynn Novick & Sarah Botstein, written by Geoffrey C. Ward, produced by Burns, Novick, Botstein and Mike Welt and edited by Tricia Reidy and Charles E. Horton.



## KEN BURNS

Ken Burns has been making documentary films for over forty years. Since the Academy Award nominated **BROOKLYN BRIDGE** in 1981, Ken has gone on to direct and produce some of the most acclaimed historical documentaries ever made, including **THE CIVIL WAR**, **BASEBALL**, **JAZZ**, **THE WAR**, **THE NATIONAL PARKS: AMERICA'S BEST IDEA**, **THE ROOSEVELTS: AN INTIMATE HISTORY**, **JACKIE ROBINSON**, **THE VIETNAM WAR**, **COUNTRY MUSIC**, **ERNEST HEMINGWAY**, **MUHAMMAD ALI** and **BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**.

Future film projects include **THE AMERICAN BUFFALO**, **LEONARDO DA VINCI**, **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**, **EMANCIPATION TO EXODUS**, and **LBJ & THE GREAT SOCIETY**, among others.

Ken's films have been honored with dozens of major awards, including sixteen Emmy Awards, two Grammy Awards and two Oscar nominations; and in September of 2008, at the News & Documentary Emmy Awards, Ken was honored by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences with a Lifetime Achievement Award.



## LYNN NOVICK

Lynn Novick, co-director and producer of **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST**, has been making landmark documentary films about American life and culture for more than 30 years. She has created nearly 100 hours of acclaimed programming for PBS in collaboration with Ken Burns, including **ERNEST HEMINGWAY**, **THE VIETNAM WAR**, **BASEBALL**, **JAZZ**, **FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT**, **THE WAR**, and **PROHIBITION**—these landmark series have garnered 19 Emmy nominations. One of the most respected documentary filmmakers and story tellers in America, Novick herself has received Emmy, Peabody and Alfred I. duPont Columbia Awards.

**COLLEGE BEHIND BARS**, Novick's debut as solo director, premiered at the New York Film Festival and aired on PBS in 2019. Novick's next project as solo director and writer is a multi-part PBS series on the history of crime and punishment in America, slated for release in 2026.



Page from Fritzi Geiringer's (Eva Geiringer's mother) passport stamped with a red "J" for "Jude." The "J" stamp was used to identify Jewish citizens.

PHOTO COURTESY EVA SCHLOSS

ALVIN BEGAN WONG



## SARAH BOTSTEIN

Sarah Botstein has for more than two decades produced some of the most popular and acclaimed documentaries on PBS. Her work with directors Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, includes HEMINGWAY, COLLEGE BEHIND BARS, THE VIETNAM WAR, PROHIBITION, THE WAR and JAZZ (2001).

THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST is Botstein's directorial debut. Currently, she is producing an epic six-part, 12-hour series AMERICAN REVOLUTION and a six-to-eight hour series on Lyndon Johnson's life and presidency.

In addition to the television broadcasts, Botstein works on digital and education initiatives, in collaboration with PBS Learning Media and WETA-TV. She helps to oversee content for Ken Burns UNUM, a web-based platform and mini series which utilizes scenes from Florentine Films body of work to highlight historical themes relevant to our time.

# INTERVIEWS AND ON-CAMERA WITNESSES

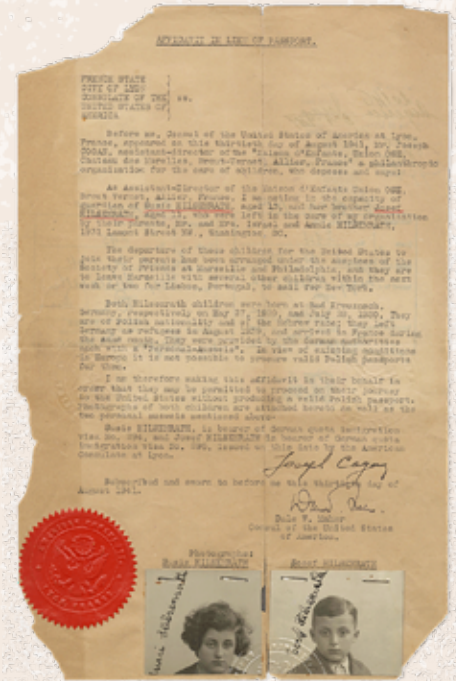
THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST features interviews with some of the country's leading scholars on the period, including Daniel Greene, Rebecca Erbelding, Peter Hayes, Deborah Lipstadt, Daniel Mendelsohn, Daniel Okrent, Nell Irvin Painter, Mae Ngai and Timothy Snyder. On-camera witnesses include Susan Hilsenrath Warsinger, Eva Schloss (née Geiringer), Joseph Hilsenrath, Marlene Mendelsohn, Sol Messinger and Guy Stern.



**Paula, Sam and Sol Messinger aboard the MS St. Louis. May 1939.**  
PHOTO COURTESY SOL MESSINGER



**Eva Schloss (née Geiringer) with her brother, Heinz, and mother, Elfriede, in Amsterdam. 1940.**  
PHOTO COURTESY EVA SCHLOSS



**Affidavit in lieu of passport for Susi and Joseph Hilsenrath.**  
PHOTO COURTESY UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM COLLECTION, GIFT OF SUSAN WARSINGER

# GLOSSARY

The following selection of terms may be helpful when creating activities and facilitating classroom conversations. This was authored by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. For a full glossary, please visit [USHMM's website](https://www.ushmm.org/learn/glossary).

**Antisemitism:** hostility toward or hatred of Jews as a religious or ethnic group, often accompanied by social, economic, or political discrimination.

**Concentration camp:** Throughout German-occupied Europe, the Nazis established camps to detain and, if necessary, kill so-called enemies of the state, including Jews, Gypsies, political and religious opponents, members of national resistance movements, homosexuals, and others. Imprisonment in a concentration camp was of unlimited duration, was not linked to a specific act, and was not subject to any judicial review. In addition to concentration camps, the Nazi regime ran several other kinds of camps including labor camps, transit camps, prisoner-of-war camps, and killing centers.

**"Final Solution":** the Nazi plan to annihilate the European Jews.

**Gestapo:** the German Secret State Police, which was under SS control. It was responsible for investigating political crimes and opposition activities.

**Ghetto:** a confined area of a city in which members of a minority group are compelled to live.

**Holocaust:** The Holocaust was the state-sponsored systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims. Six million were murdered.

**Killing centers:** The Nazis established killing centers for efficient mass murder. Unlike concentration camps, which served primarily as detention and labor centers, killing centers (also referred to as "extermination camps" or "death camps") were almost exclusively "death factories." German SS and police murdered nearly 2,700,000 Jews in the killing centers either by asphyxiation with poison gas or by shooting.

**Kristallnacht:** usually referred to as the "Night of Broken Glass." It is the name given to the violent anti-Jewish pogrom of November 9 and 10, 1938. Instigated primarily by Nazi party officials and the SA (Nazi Storm Troopers), the pogrom occurred throughout Germany, annexed Austria, and the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia.

**SS:** German abbreviation for Schutzstaffel (literally, protection squads). A paramilitary formation of the Nazi party initially created to serve as bodyguards to Hitler and other Nazi leaders. It later took charge of political intelligence gathering, the German police and the central security apparatus, the concentration camps, and the systematic mass murder of Jews and other victims.



Jewish people in the Warsaw ghetto in Poland. June–August 1941.

PHOTO COURTESY USHMM

# FILM WEBSITE AND EDUCATION COLLECTION

- [pbs.org/holocaust](https://pbs.org/holocaust)
- [pbslearningmedia.org/holocaust](https://pbslearningmedia.org/holocaust)

## CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The goal of this guide is to help teachers facilitate classroom conversations around **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST**, by helping students understand the complexities of this history and promote dialogue. This guide will help you engage your classrooms and help you prepare thoughtful discussions and assignments, utilizing resources from PBS LearningMedia, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and other national organizations.

**THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** features a fascinating array of historical figures that includes Franklin D. Roosevelt, Charles Lindbergh, Dorothy Thompson, Rabbi Stephen Wise, and Henry Ford, as well as Anne Frank and her family, who applied for, but failed, to obtain visas to the U.S. before they went into hiding.

The film also looks at American government policy ranging from Calvin Coolidge's staunch anti-immigration ideology to FDR's Lend-Lease bill and how fights over these policies took shape on the home front, including the emergence of Nazi sympathizers. Some of America's most well-known leaders, such as Lindbergh and Ford, were also vocal antisemites. Similarly, new light is shed on many of the well-known controversies surrounding the American response to the Holocaust, including the story of the more than 900 Jewish refugees aboard the MS St. Louis, who were denied entry to Cuba and the U.S. in 1939 and forced to return to an uncertain fate in Europe, and the enduring debate over whether the Allies should have bombed Auschwitz.

Ultimately, **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** offers little consolation to those who believe that the challenges posed by nativism, antisemitism, xenophobia and racism are buried deeply and permanently in the past. *"The institutions of our civilization [are] under tremendous stress,"* warns writer Daniel Mendelsohn, who shares his family's story in the film. *"The fragility of civilized behavior is the one thing you really learn, because these people, who we now see in these sepia photographs, they're no different from us. You look at your neighbors, the people at the dry cleaner, the waiters in the restaurant. That's who these people were. Don't kid yourself."*



**Nazi political rally. Sign in the back reads, "Don't buy from Jews!"**

PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION



Jewish women working in the Plaszow labor camp in Poland, 1943-1944.

PHOTO COURTESY USHMM

## GUIDELINES FOR CREATING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AROUND THE HOLOCAUST

Classroom engagement should strive to provoke new inquiry and reflection among your students, both about the history of the Holocaust and our roles and responsibilities as a nation today.

For additional guidance on exploring the history of the Holocaust, please refer to the work of our national education partner, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Their [Guidelines for Teaching about the Holocaust](#) provide structure and an approach to classroom teaching.

### ■ KEY CONCEPTS FROM THE FILM

To support your teaching efforts, here are some of the key concepts that are explored in **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST**:

#### ► **Americans Had Information**

Americans could read, see, and hear news about Nazi persecution and murder of European Jews in their newspapers and magazines, on the radio, and in newsreels, as well as information about events of World War II as these events were unfolding. Prominent American journalist Dorothy Thompson urged her fellow Americans to pay attention to the threat that Nazi Germany posed to democracy and to Europe's Jews in the 1930s and 40s. This media helped shape how Americans understood the world and these atrocities.

### ▶ **Americans Faced Many Competing Priorities**

Despite this information, public opinion polls show that most Americans did not want to accept more immigrants—particularly Jewish refugees—into the country. Racism and antisemitism at home, isolationism after World War I, conditions during the Great Depression, fears of communism and spies, and eventually the outbreak of World War II, all limited Americans' sympathy for the plight of endangered Jews. Also, even though Americans learned about atrocities, many were skeptical of the reports.

### ▶ **Americans Debated**

Americans debated their country's role in the world. They argued over immigration policy, over whether the United States should remain isolated or intervene in World War II, and over whether the United States should make a concerted effort to rescue Jews, or focus solely on trying to win the war as soon as possible.

### ▶ **Americans Responded**

Some Americans reacted when they learned about the Nazi threat to European Jews. They took action as individuals, members of institutions, rescue organizations, or as government officials. Their efforts were shaped by the time period and the resources that were available.

### ▶ **Americans Focused on Winning the War**

The United States and other Allied forces prioritized military victory over humanitarian aid during World War II. Although the United States might have been able to do more to aid the victims of Nazi Germany and its collaborators, largescale rescue was impossible by the time the United States entered the war.



**Franklin Roosevelt poses for the press at the White House. Circa 1940.**

PHOTO COURTESY FDR LIBRARY

## ■ STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING STUDENTS WITH THE TOPIC

### ▶ An American Story

Emphasizing that the Holocaust is an American story, and that it was a local story in your town newspaper. News about the Nazi persecution was available throughout the period in newspapers across the United States. Exploring news coverage of events in the 1930s and 1940s can also reveal the other issues on the minds of citizens of your community during the time on local, regional, and national levels. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's [History Unfolded: US Newspapers and the Holocaust Project](#) can be used as a jumping off point for engaging classroom activities. This project includes a database of newspaper articles featuring contemporary coverage of Holocaust-related events that students can find in, and contribute to, newspapers in their own area.

### ▶ Personal Narratives

Engaging with personal stories. The film includes the stories of refugees seeking to flee Nazism, as well as the Americans who took steps to aid them in the complex and difficult immigration process. Personal stories illustrate what actions were and are possible to provide aid in a range of ways in times of crisis.

### ▶ Exploring Public Opinion from the 1930s and 1940s

Exploring [public opinion](#) in the 1930s and 1940s, and the debates going on throughout American society. Americans disapproved of the treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany, but that did not translate into support for actions on their behalf. Americans had competing priorities, including recovery from the Great Depression and debating whether to enter World War II. A good resource to support classroom engagement activities can be found at: [exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/topics/public-opinion](http://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/topics/public-opinion).

### ▶ Different Perspectives & Experiences from this Period

Encountering diverse perspectives from the time period. The film includes stories of women, African Americans, Japanese Americans, the Jewish community, journalists, and individual citizens to show the range of experiences during this era.



Japanese families in Woodland, California wait for train at railroad station to take them to an internment camp. May 20, 1942.

PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION



**Dr. Joseph Tenenbaum, Fiorello LaGuardia, and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise stand in front of a crowd during a United Jewish War Effort event. Circa 1943.**

PHOTO COURTESY USHMM

## BUILDING STRONG CLASSROOM PARTNERSHIPS

Use **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** as an opportunity to build new, or strengthen existing, partnerships with your local public media station and to extend impact in your classroom to impact in your local community.

Lesson plans for **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** were developed by PBS LearningMedia with historical and archival support from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. PBS has also collaborated with Florentine Films, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and Echoes and Reflections to produce a self-paced professional development module for educators.

### ■ NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

WETA, the producing public media station for **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST**, has established strong national partnerships across the U.S. and around the world to support this project. These organizations may offer additional resources for you and your students around topics and themes related to the Holocaust.

In addition to the organizations below, another great resource is the Association of Holocaust Organizations (AHO), which represents more than 370 organizations around the world. To find an AHO member organization near you, utilize their search engine at the bottom of their [membership webpage](#). The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has a [list of Holocaust education centers](#) they work with nationwide. Organizations within these networks may be able to provide speakers, guidance, and other resources for classroom engagement.

## ■ HISTORICAL & CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

### **American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS)** ■ [ajhs.org](http://ajhs.org)

The oldest ethnic, cultural archive in the United States. AJHS seeks to foster awareness and appreciation of American Jewish heritage and to serve as a national scholarly resource for research through the collection, preservation and dissemination of materials relating to American Jewish history.

### **Black German Cultural Society** ■ [afrogermans.us](http://afrogermans.us)

Serving as a resource and networking organization as well as a forum to facilitate awareness, discussions, and reflection of important issues that impact Black Germans, Post WWII Afro-Germans, and their descendants.

### **Black German Heritage and Research**

#### **Association** ■ [bghra.org](http://bghra.org)

Documents and supports the activities of Black Germans internationally, and promotes scholarship relating to the historic and contemporary presence of Black people in Germany and Black Germans in the United States.

### **Jewish Community Center of North America** ■ [jcca.org](http://jcca.org)

Advancing and enriching North American Jewish life. With 1.5 million people walking through the doors of JCCs (Jewish Community Centers and Jewish Community Camps) each week, the JCC Movement represents the largest platform of Jewish engagement on the continent.

### **The Jewish**

#### **Federation of North America** ■ [jewishfederations.org](http://jewishfederations.org)

Representing 146 independent federations and a network of 300 smaller communities across the continent with a mission to protect and enhance the well-being of Jews worldwide through meaningful contributions to the community.

### **USC Shoah Foundation** ■ [sfi.usc.edu](http://sfi.usc.edu)

A nonprofit organization that is dedicated to making audio-visual interviews with survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides, a compelling voice for education and action.

### **PBS Books** ■ [pbsbooks.org](http://pbsbooks.org)

Builds and enhances working relationships between libraries and their local PBS stations. Libraries are great partners to share information. PBS Books helps to amplify local station content to its library partners and beyond.



**Rabbi Stephen Wise addresses a crowd at a rally outside Madison Square Garden.**

PHOTO COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

## ■ EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

### **Association of Holocaust Organizations** ■ [ahoinfo.org](http://ahoinfo.org)

The Association of Holocaust Organizations serves as an international network of organizations and individuals for the advancement of Holocaust education, remembrance and research. This site includes a searchable list of Holocaust organizations, websites, contacts, and resources, searchable by state and country.

### **Anne Frank Center** ■ [annefrank.com](http://annefrank.com)

Building on the legacy of Anne Frank through education and the arts. The Anne Frank Center seeks to educate young people and communities in the US about the dangers of intolerance, antisemitism, racism, and discrimination, and to inspire every generation to build a world based on mutual respect.

### **Center for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Crimes Against Humanity** ■ [chgcuh.org](http://chgcuh.org)

A graduate center affiliated with The City University of New York serving as a hub for a vibrant community of scholars. The Center is a forum for innovative research, graduate student mentoring, and public programming.

### **Cohen Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies** ■ [keene.edu/academics/cchgs](http://keene.edu/academics/cchgs)

A research and resource center located at Keene State College and is one of the oldest Holocaust Centers in the United States.

### **Echoes and Reflections** ■ [echoesandreflections.org](http://echoesandreflections.org)

Dedicated to reshaping the way that teachers and students understand, process, and navigate the world through the events of the Holocaust. The Holocaust is more than a historical event; it's part of the larger human story. They partner with educators to help them introduce students to the complex themes of the Holocaust and to understand its lasting effect on the world.

### **Educators Institute for Human Rights** ■ [eihr.org](http://eihr.org)

Cultivating partnerships among educators globally to create materials and deliver training based on best practices in Holocaust and human rights education.

### **Facing History and Ourselves** ■ [facinghistory.org](http://facinghistory.org)

Providing lessons of history to support teachers and challenge students to stand up to bigotry and hate.

### **Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust** ■ [mjhnyc.org](http://mjhnyc.org)

A public history institution committed to the mission of educating diverse visitors about Jewish life before, during, and after the Holocaust.

### **The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** ■ [ushmm.org](http://ushmm.org)

A living memorial to the Holocaust, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum inspires citizens and leaders worldwide to confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity. Federal support guarantees the Museum's permanent place on the National Mall, and its far-reaching educational programs and global impact are made possible by generous donors. Educational materials directly related to the film's themes can be found [here](#).

## ■ YOUTH-RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

### **B'nai B'rith Youth Organization** ■ [bbyo.org](http://bbyo.org)

The leading pluralistic Jewish teen movement aspiring to involve more Jewish teens in more meaningful Jewish experiences. BBYO welcomes Jewish teens of all backgrounds, denominational affiliation, gender, race, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status, including those with a range of intellectual, emotional, and physical abilities.

### **Interfaith America** ■ [interfaithamerica.org](http://interfaithamerica.org)

A national non-profit working towards an America where people of different faiths, worldviews, and traditions can bridge differences and find common values to build a shared life together.

### **NFTY** ■ [nfty.org](http://nfty.org)

NFTY—Reform Jewish Youth Movement is a movement that builds strong, welcoming, inspired communities through teen-powered engagement, all rooted in Reform Judaism.

### **PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Labs** ■ [studentreportinglabs.org](http://studentreportinglabs.org)

An award-winning youth media organization connecting class-rooms and after school programs to the PBS NewsHour and local PBS stations. Now operating in 170 middle and high schools, SRL trains teenagers across the country to produce stories that highlight the achievements, challenges, and reality of today's youth. Through their work with a growing community of educators and new StoryMaker platform, SRL fosters the next generation of media creators by inspiring students to find their voice and engage in their communities.

## ■ NGOs

### **Anti-Defamation League** ■ [adl.org](http://adl.org)

A global leader in exposing extremism, delivering anti-bias education and fighting hate online, ADL's ultimate goal is a world in which no group or individual suffers from bias, discrimination or hate.

### **Federation of State Humanities Councils** ■ [statehumanities.org](http://statehumanities.org)

The national association of the state and jurisdictional humanities councils. Their purpose is to provide leadership, advocacy, and information to help members advance programs that engage millions of citizens across diverse populations in community and civic life.

### **Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society** ■ [hias.org](http://hias.org)

HIAS is a non-profit organization that has provided humanitarian aid and assistance to refugees since 1881.

### **Welcoming America** ■ [welcomingamerica.org](http://welcomingamerica.org)

A non-profit, nonpartisan organization that leads a movement for more inclusive communities.

## INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

### **International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance** ■ [holocaustremembrance.com](https://www.holocaustremembrance.com)

Uniting governments and experts to strengthen, advance, and promote Holocaust education, remembrance, and research worldwide and to uphold the commitments of the 2000 Stockholm Declaration and the 2020 Ministerial Declaration.

### **International Rescue Committee** ■ [rescue.org](https://www.rescue.org)

The international rescue committee responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises. Founded by Albert Einstein in 1933, the organization is active in more than 40 countries and 28 U.S. Cities

### **The Women's Refugee Commission** ■ [womensrefugeecommission.org](https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org)

WRC catalyzes transformative change to protect and empower women, children, and youth displaced by conflict and crisis.



**Prisoners during roll call at Buchenwald concentration camp, Germany. Circa 1938.**

PHOTO COURTESY USHMM

# CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Creating meaningful and engaging classroom activities around **THE U.S AND THE HOLOCAUST** may include collaboration with historical, civic, arts, cultural, and humanities organizations in your community. Activities may explore the American response to the Holocaust, as well as connections to global humanitarian crises. For a look at some of the key themes explored in this film, please see [page 9](#).

## Potential Activities May Include:

- Film screening and discussion in your classroom or in your school auditorium that features a local or national subject matter expert.
- Civic engagement workshops with other classrooms, schools, or organizations that seek to further explore citizenship and civic responsibility and combat antisemitism.
- Arranging for a survivor presentation. Visit [ushmm.org/remember/holocaust-survivors/hear-from-a-survivor/guidelines](http://ushmm.org/remember/holocaust-survivors/hear-from-a-survivor/guidelines) for more information. Guidelines for hosting speakers, including veterans and “home front” speakers (home front is the informal term for the civilian populace of the United States during World War II which was actively engaged in supporting the war effort) can be found here: [ala.org/tools/programming/USHolocaustMuseum/sitesupportnotebook/programmingresources](http://ala.org/tools/programming/USHolocaustMuseum/sitesupportnotebook/programmingresources).
- Local storytelling:
  - Classrooms may partner with local public media production and content creators who can provide a local lens to explore stories in your community.
  - Student Reporting Labs: Work with your local PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Lab on an event about the impact of journalism in sharing global stories at home, and keeping Americans informed of issues abroad.
  - Collect and share untold stories from your community, which could include actual survivor stories or memorabilia, World War II veterans and “home front” speakers.
- Educator trainings may utilize materials from PBS LearningMedia.
- Participation in [International Holocaust Remembrance Day](#) on January 27—the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- [Americans and the Holocaust Traveling Exhibition](#) will tour more than 50 public libraries through November 2023. Your school may explore partnerships with other organizations that are hosting the exhibit in your area.
- Volunteer days to support [USHMM’s World Memory Project](#)
- Engaging classrooms in the [USHMM’s History Unfolded journalism](#) project, an online project to gather local newspaper coverage of Holocaust-related events in the 1930s and 1940s.
- Engage classrooms around [Every Name Counts](#), an initiative of the Arolsen Archives that seeks to build a digital memorial to the victims of Nazi persecution.
- Art exhibits and performing art programs that explore the stories, struggles and themes around **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST**.

## Addressing Holocaust Denial and Distortion

To prepare yourself for any public-facing or classroom activity, familiarize yourself with the definitions of Holocaust denial and distortion and what forms they can take. Please review USHMM materials on Holocaust denial can be found [here](#), including a short [explainer video](#) with Deborah Lipstadt. For more information, see the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s [working definitions for Holocaust denial and distortion](#) and [toolkit to counter distortion](#).



“How can we learn from the past?  
Where did we go wrong?  
How can we not go wrong the next time?”

—DEBORAH LIPSTADT, HISTORIAN

A German policeman checks the identification papers of Jewish people in the Krakow ghetto in Poland. Circa 1941.

PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL ARCHIVES IN KRAKOW

# LESSON PLANS

To support educators, *THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST* is accompanied by educational materials for middle and high school classrooms on [PBS LearningMedia](#). These materials include clips from the film as well as other resources that connect to its core themes.

- **Lesson Plan 1**—The Catastrophic Impacts of Nazi Ideology
- **Lesson Plan 2**—The Power of Media in Shaping Americans’ Beliefs and Actions During the Holocaust
- **Lesson Plan 3**—Holocaust Photography and Film as Historical Evidence
- **Lesson Plan 4**—The Diversity of Response: Perspective, Choice, and Strategy During the Holocaust
- **Lesson Plan 5**—Inquiry Design Model: Did Public Opinion influence the U.S response to the Holocaust?
- **Lesson Plan 6**—U.S. Immigration Policy and the Experiences of Jewish Refugees During the Holocaust
- **Lesson Plan 7**—Analyzing the Symbolism of the Statue of Liberty



# THE CATASTROPHIC IMPACTS OF NAZI IDEOLOGY

## Grades 9-12

Written by Niles Mattier, Associate Manager of Teacher Services, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY

### About the Lesson

Students will examine how Nazi ideology promoted eugenics and antisemitism to understand the harmful impacts of Nazi ideology during the Holocaust. Students will analyze two primary sources from the time which further demonstrate eugenics and propaganda at work. After, students will watch select video clips from **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** and record notes. Students will reflect and discuss what they have seen and watched with their classmates before completing an exit ticket to demonstrate they have achieved the objective.

The first two video clips show how eugenics promoted the false and harmful idea that Jews are inferior. The second clip shows propaganda and rhetoric used by Hitler to try to convey to people that Jews were the enemy of Germany. The final two clips show that this harmful Nazi ideology led to the mass killing of Jewish people in concentration camps throughout Europe. After U.S. soldiers saw the atrocities committed by the Nazis, international efforts were made to protect human rights and prevent future wars and genocide.

### Associated Video

- **Pseudoscience of Eugenics Spreads Antisemitism.** The pseudoscience of eugenics was used to spread antisemitism. Eugenics began in Britain and was used in both Europe and the United States as a way to convince people that certain “races” were biologically inferior.
- **Antisemitic Propaganda and Rhetoric.** Adolf Hitler spread antisemitism with speeches full of racist rhetoric accompanied by racist propaganda. Nazi-led racial antisemitism led to extreme violence against Jews, forcing many to flee Germany.
- **The Nazis Begin the Genocide.** The Nazis began using gas to murder millions of European Jews. Nazi doctors had previously used gas to kill people with intellectual and physical disabilities. The pseudoscience of eugenics taught that these people were supposedly inferior.
- **American Troops Uncover the Atrocities.** American troops began to liberate concentration camps and were horrified at what they found. Survivors were emaciated and Americans witnessed the bodies of scores of victims.

#### Support Materials for Teachers

- Lesson Overview
- Vocabulary List

#### Support Materials for Students

- Background Reading
- Primary Source Analysis
- Video Clips Note Catcher
- Post-Viewing Discussion
- Exit Ticket: Extended Response



## THE POWER OF MEDIA IN SHAPING AMERICANS' BELIEFS AND ACTIONS DURING THE HOLOCAUST

**Grades 6-8, 9-12**

Written by Mary Kate Lonergan, Teacher, Fayetteville-Manlius Central School District, Manlius, NY

### About the Lesson

Examine how the media we consume shapes our beliefs, opinions, and actions both historically and in modern contexts in this media literacy centered lesson. Students will examine how Americans accessed information and news about World War II and the Holocaust during the 1930s and 1940s. During and after viewing clips from **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** and additional sources, students will consider what Americans might have known about the events of the Holocaust based on how the events were reported. Students will reflect on how groups and individuals of the time used the press and the media to inform and persuade the public while they assess the impact of the media messaging.

Educators can choose between two activities that connect historical context about media messaging during the Holocaust with today's media landscape.

1. Students can confront and combat antisemitism and intolerance in today's media environment, *or*:
2. Students can connect key historic examples of journalists and Americans using the press/media to influence public policy on a civic issue with a more modern instance of this. Students can respond and act by creating media messages of their own to inform and persuade peers.



**Tenant farmer reading newspaper. Creek County, Oklahoma. February 1940.**

PHOTO COURTESY  
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Young Jewish girl during deportation to Westerbork transit camp, Amsterdam. May 25, 1943.

PHOTO COURTESY NIOD

This lesson is adaptable and can be used in full or activities can be completed independently.

### Associated Video

- **Henry Ford's Antisemitic Publications.** Automobile pioneer Henry Ford published a popular weekly paper spreading disparaging antisemitic propaganda and disseminating disproven conspiracy theories.
- **Journalist Dorothy Thompson Criticizes Nazi Germany.** American journalists faced difficulty in reporting about events in Nazi Germany. After being banned from Germany, journalist Dorothy Thompson condemned rampant and increasingly violent antisemitism German Jews experienced in her weekly column.
- **The Riegner Telegram, the Press, & America's Response.** In 1942, Gerhart Riegner, who worked for the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland, informed the U.S. State Department that he had information that Nazi Germany was planning to murder millions of European Jews. The State Department tried to block the message, but it reached Rabbi Stephen Wise.
- **Allied Reports of Nazi Atrocities and a Change in U.S. Policy.** As Allied forces liberated Europe, they encountered the horrors of the Holocaust. Americans began to understand the gravity of the crime. At the same time, the U.S. temporarily allowed in more Jewish refugees, though they were held at the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter in Oswego, New York.
- **The Auschwitz Report Is Published in the American Press.** Three escapees shared eyewitness accounts of their time at Auschwitz, writing a report that eventually reached U.S. officials. The Auschwitz Report, as the survivors' testimony came to be known, was released to the public by the War Refugee Board.

#### Support Materials for Teachers

- Teaching Tips for Using this Resource
- Background Reading

#### Support Materials for Students

- Discussion Questions
- Media Analysis Chart
- Graphic Organizers (3)
- Key Vocabulary



## HOLOCAUST PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILM AS HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

Grades 9-12

Written by Rebecca Erbelding, historian, educator, curator, and archivist at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

### About the Lesson

Students will engage in a discussion about photography as historical evidence. While viewing five short film clips, compiled into a reel, they will answer specific questions reflecting on the creation and use of the footage and what the presence (or absence) of visual imagery tells us about the Holocaust. After viewing each clip, students will choose a word to summarize what they have seen. Students will use these words in their assessment activity, either reflecting on a quotation, designing their own Holocaust memorial, or exploring how photography is used to document atrocities occurring today.

Essential question: How can photography and film act as evidence of the Holocaust?

### Associated Video

- **Photography Reel.** This 10 minute reel compiles key instances of photo documentation from the film: The Bland family captures footage of a Jewish community in Poland; Sol Messinger describes the arrest and deportation of his father and thousands of other Polish Jews in 1938, noting the importance of documentation; A Lithuanian teenager writes a postcard in 1941, ensuring his memory; Prisoners at Auschwitz-Birkenau bravely photograph their surroundings; American troops document the newly-liberated concentration camps.

#### Support Materials for Teachers

- Teaching Tips for Using this Resource
- Background Reading
- Photography Analysis Activities
- Holocaust Photography and Film as Historical Evidence (Answer Key)

#### Support Materials for Students

- Holocaust Photography and Film as Historical Evidence Note Catcher



**Joseph Hilsenrath on the left with his mother, Anni. Susi Hilsenrath on the right with her father, Israel in Bad Kreuznach, Germany.**

PHOTO COURTESY UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM COLLECTION, GIFT OF SUSAN WARSINGER



## THE DIVERSITY OF RESPONSE: PERSPECTIVE, CHOICE, AND STRATEGY DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Grades 6-8, 9-12

Written by Victoria Patch Williams, Teacher/Professor/Entrepreneur, Maryland

### About the Lesson

Looking back at history, it is easy to think we know what we would have believed or done, especially during an event as horrific as the Holocaust. This lesson aims to complicate that assumption and to explore the varying strategies and tactics people believed to be most effective in securing the needs and safety of themselves and loved ones. Even when Americans agreed on the atrocity of mass killings of Jewish people, they disagreed on the course of action to take in response. Students will be guided by the essential question: "What motives and pressures guide how people form opinions and make decisions during a time of crisis?"

Students will begin by brainstorming common human motivations and needs. They will connect their brainstorms to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Next, students will watch the six selected clips from **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** and complete an accompanying graphic organizer. After a guided discussion, students will connect their learning to their own lives by thinking of a personal example or issue, when they may have agreed on the "what" but disagreed on the "how" of solving a particular issue. Students will then apply the same thinking to their example to foster empathy and understanding.

### Associated Video

- **"The Golden Door Was Not Wide Open."** Historians and experts discuss the tension between humanitarian ideals and living up to them, specifically in the context of American response to the Holocaust. The United States was not inviting or accessible to significant numbers of refugees during this time.
- **Immigration and Antisemitism.** Americans' attitudes towards immigration were deeply influenced by prejudice and fear.
- **When to Speak Up?** Everyday Americans and prominent U.S. leaders – including Rabbi Stephen Wise and President Franklin D. Roosevelt – considered how to respond to the suffering of German Jews.
- **Kristallnacht and Aftermath.** After the horrifying events of Kristallnacht, everyday Americans and FDR reconsidered their stance and strategies regarding the Holocaust.
- **New Perspectives.** Almost five years after Kristallnacht, European Jews were being killed in massive numbers. In the U.S., Rabbi Wise continued to advocate for social justice and faced opposition from a more militant Jewish group.
- **Henry Morgenthau Moves.** After years of a more passive stance, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau changed tactics and pushed FDR to establish the War Refugee Board.

#### Support Materials for Teachers

- Lesson Activities
- Background Reading

#### Support Materials for Students

- Graphic Organizer



View this lesson on  
[PBS LearningMedia](#)

## INQUIRY DESIGN MODEL: DID PUBLIC OPINION INFLUENCE THE U.S. RESPONSE TO THE HOLOCAUST?

Grades 6-8, 9-12

### About the Lesson

By examining various sources, students will analyze whether or not U.S. public opinion had an impact on the U.S. government's response to the Holocaust. Based on their analyses, students will construct a claim in which they defend their argument.

The [Inquiry Design Model](#) (IDM) is a distinctive approach to creating curriculum and instructional materials that honors teachers' knowledge and expertise, avoids overprescription, and focuses on the main elements of the instructional design process as envisioned in the Inquiry Arc of the [College, Career, and Civic Life \(C3\) Framework for Social Studies State Standards \(2013\)](#). Unique to the IDM is the blueprint, a one-page representation of the questions, tasks, and sources that define a curricular inquiry.

### Associated Video

- **When to Speak Up?** Everyday Americans and prominent U.S. leaders—including Rabbi Stephen Wise and President Franklin D. Roosevelt—considered how to respond to the suffering of German Jews.
- **New Perspectives.** Almost five years after Kristallnacht, European Jews were being killed in massive numbers. In the U.S., Rabbi Wise continued to advocate for social justice and faced opposition from a more militant Jewish group.
- **1938 / 1944 Media Government Response.** Despite the horrifying events of Kristallnacht, U.S. Public Polls revealed that 7 out of 10 Americans did not support letting Jewish exiles from Germany into the U.S. By 1944, the War Refugee Board was assembled, dramatically changing U.S. policy.



Franklin Roosevelt in Washington D.C.  
 November 9, 1943.

PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

### Support Materials for Teachers

- What is a Blueprint? | Inquiry Design Model
- Facilitating this Inquiry
- IDM Blueprint | Did Public Opinion influence the U.S. response to the Holocaust?

### Support Materials for Students

- Supporting Question 1: What Information Did Americans Have Access to during the Holocaust? (Graphic Organizer)
- Supporting Question 2: What Was American Public Opinion throughout the Holocaust? (Graphic Organizer)



# U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY AND THE EXPERIENCES OF JEWISH REFUGEES DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Grades 6–8, 9–12

Written by Joe Nappi, Teacher, Monmouth Regional High School, Tinton Fall, NJ

## About the Lesson

Through case studies of Jewish refugees who attempted to escape Nazi persecution by emigrating to the United States during the Holocaust, students will learn about America's restrictive immigration laws in the 1920s, the difficulties European Jewish refugees faced in trying to navigate those laws in the 1930s and 1940s, and how the experience impacted these individuals. Students will examine how the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 (in effect from 1924–1965) affected three families trying to escape Nazi persecution in Europe. In a lesson extension, students have the option to learn about the contemporary global refugee crisis and consider the similarities and differences between the refugee crisis in the 1930s and 1940s and the crisis the world faces today.

## Associated Video

- **Hilsenrath Family (Part 1).** As the Hilsenrath family worked to find an avenue for escape from Nazi persecution, they faced perilous options and made the decision to separate, for safety.
- **Hilsenrath Family (Part 2).** Susan and Joseph Hilsenrath reflect on their journey to the U.S. Susan recalls her dream of coming to America and the siblings' journey from Lisbon. Joseph remembers seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time as their boat pulled into harbor.
- **Jäger Family (Part 1).** As the Nazi assault of eastern Europe closed in on his home, Shmiel Jäger, fearing for the safety of his daughters, reached out to relatives in the U.S. in an attempt to save his family.
- **Frank Family.** This reel depicts the Frank family's life in Germany, foiled efforts to escape Nazi Germany by immigrating to the U.S., and experience hiding from Nazi persecution in Amsterdam.
- **The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924.** In 1924, Calvin Coolidge signed an immigration law that limited the number of immigrants arriving in the U.S. through a national origins quota system. It was designed to restrict immigration by so-called "racially undesirable" groups to the U.S.

### Support Materials for Teachers

- Teaching Tips for Using this Resource
- Background Reading
- Lesson Activities
- Optional Extension Activity
- Handout Answer Keys

### Support Materials for Students

- The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924: Note Catcher
- The Jewish Refugee Crisis and U.S. Quota Restrictions
- Unpacking the Steps Needed to Emigrate to the U.S. from Germany During the 1930s
- Case Study #1: The Hilsenrath Family
- Case Study #2: The Frank Family
- Case Study #3: The Jäger Family
- Family Photos: Image Bank
- Case Studies Debrief Notes Sheet
- A Self-Guided Introduction to the Global Refugee Crisis
- Introduction to the Global Refugee Crisis—Information Guide



Immigrants seated on long benches at Ellis Island.

PHOTO COURTESY NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

## LESSON PLAN 7

# ANALYZING THE SYMBOLISM OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY



[View this lesson on PBS LearningMedia](#)

**Grades 6–8, 9–12**

Written by Nicole Korsen, Teacher, Dominion High School, Sterling, VA

## About the Lesson

When boats enter the New York Harbor, the Statue of Liberty is immediately visible. For those fleeing persecution during the years before, during, and after the Holocaust, this American symbol of freedom represented the promise of safety and a better life. A bronze plaque at the base of the statue confirms that hope with the words of Jewish-American Emma Lazarus. Her poem, “The New Colossus” welcomes the “tired, poor, and huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” However, a second poem by Thomas Aldridge, “Unguarded Gates” was equally known during the same time and complicates this message of unconditional welcome.

By reflecting on these poems alongside select documentary clips from **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST**, students will identify and understand that the symbolic meaning of the Statue of Liberty is unique to the personal circumstances of the individual encountering it.

This lesson focuses on the symbolic meaning of the Statue of Liberty as seen through various viewpoints and leading to dramatically different interpretations of the statue, and therefore the United States. In a series of clip viewing activities, students will uncover the different meanings the Statue of Liberty embodies and come to understand that the statue’s meaning is not fixed. Students will consider these meanings in their historical context and have the opportunity to draw connections to our contemporary immigration crises. To culminate, students will create media projects representing their own perceptions of the statue.

### Support Materials for Teachers

- Opening Activities
- Clip Viewing Activities
- Culminating Activity

### Support Materials for Students

- Renaming The Statue of Liberty: What Does It Stand For? (Handout Packet)

## Associated Video

- **What Kind of Country Do We Want to Be?** An excerpt from Emma Lazarus' poem "The New Colossus" is read over shots of the Statue of Liberty and images of children playing. The poem is published on a bronze plaque inside of the statue.
- **The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924.** In 1924, Calvin Coolidge signed an immigration law that limited the number of immigrants arriving in the U.S. through a national origins quota system. It was designed to restrict immigration by so-called "racially undesirable" groups to the U.S.
- **What Might Have Been.** During the 1920s, the U.S. was devastated by the Great Depression. Many Americans were anti-immigration out of fear of immigrants taking limited jobs and resources from citizens. President Hoover enforced the Immigration Act of 1924 to limit visas.
- **Hilsenrath Family (Part 2).** Susan and Joseph Hilsenrath reflect on their journey to the U.S. Susan recalls her dream of coming to America and the siblings' journey from Lisbon. Joseph remembers seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time as their boat pulled into harbor.
- **"Of Little Comfort."** In 1943, rabbis marched to the U.S. Capitol to persuade FDR to help European Jews during the Holocaust. The rabbis influenced the creation of a resolution to try to save the surviving Jews in Europe. Breckinridge Long opposed the resolution.
- **"Increased Liberty for All."** In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a bill abolishing the quota system of the Johnson-Reed Act. The bill limited immigration from the Americas and made no provisions for most refugees. LBJ signed the bill at the Statue of Liberty.



**"Before the Night of the Broken Glass, my father wanted to stay in Germany but my mother was always wanting to come to the United States because she had heard such wonderful things. . . . But after the night of the broken glass both of them wanted to get out and I think all of the Jews in Germany wanted to get out."**

**—SUSAN WARSINGER (NÉE HILSEN RATH), WITNESS**

**watch as the Ober Ramstadt synagogue is destroyed by fire the day after Kristallnacht in Ober Ramstadt, Germany. November 10, 1938.**

PHOTO COURTESY USHMM

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional educational materials, resources, professional development videos and pedagogy may be found at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's website, including: [Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust](#), [Americans' Response to the Holocaust](#), and [Americans and the Holocaust](#).

# NATIONAL EDUCATOR EVENTS

## ■ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODULE

PBS is collaborating with Florentine Films, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and Echoes and Reflections to produce a self-paced professional development module for educators. Registration and details available at [echoes.catalog.instructure.com/courses/us-the-holocaust-december-2022](https://echoes.catalog.instructure.com/courses/us-the-holocaust-december-2022)

## ■ SPEAKER SERIES:

### THE U.S AND THE HOLOCAUST | UNDERSTANDING HISTORY USING MEDIA

Join PBS LearningMedia and WETA for a three-part virtual speaker series, "The U.S. and The Holocaust: Understanding History Using Media," for an in-depth look at Holocaust education in the U.S., how media can be used as a tool to foster important classroom discussions, and how educators can help students consider the role of personal narratives and storytelling in broadening our understanding of the Holocaust. The series is presented in cooperation with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Association of Holocaust Organizations.

Registrants will receive access to all episodes and recordings. PBS will provide a certificate of attendance for each one hour virtual professional learning event. Registration and details available at [public.pbs.org/the-US-and-the-Holocaust](https://public.pbs.org/the-US-and-the-Holocaust).

#### **Episode 1—September 13, 2022: A Live Conversation with Filmmakers**

Ken Burns, Lynn Novick, and Sarah Botstein discuss the important themes the documentary addresses and the opportunities the film provides for teaching about Holocaust history, as well as American history. This event is the first in a series of programs to support integrating film content into your teaching.

#### **Episode 2—October 11, 2022: A Live Conversation about Storytelling, Personal Narratives, and the Holocaust**

Filmmaker Lynn Novick is joined by survivor Susan (Hilsenrath) Warsinger, a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer who is featured in the film, to discuss her memories and personal history and share a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the importance of survivor stories for understanding Holocaust history. Susan will also share her perspectives as a former seventh grade teacher, why she hopes educators will use the film, and what she believes students can learn from it.

#### **Episode 3—February 2023 (TBD): Lesson Showcase**

Educators will gain practical tools on how to use media as a tool to bring critical conversations about the Holocaust into the classroom. Additional details for Episode #3 coming soon.

For more information, please contact [LearningMediaContact@pbs.org](mailto:LearningMediaContact@pbs.org).



Williams County, North Dakota. October 1937.

PHOTO COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

“The Holocaust disrupts any idea that we have of good and evil, of right and wrong. This is a story in which everyone is challenged, all the time. We are challenged as Americans; we’re challenged as parents, as children. We’re challenged as neighbors and as friends to think about what we would have done, what we could have done, what we should have done. And even though the Holocaust physically took place in Europe, it is a story that Americans have to reckon with, too.”

—REBECCA ERBELDING,  
HISTORIAN

## QUESTIONS TO HELP INITIATE DISCUSSION

This section is divided into themes, to serve as a springboard for classroom discussion around the film.

### ► The U.S. and Refugees: Then vs. Today

- **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** presents a grim picture of the inaction that contributed to a greater humanitarian crisis. Since the Holocaust, how has the United States treated refugees? Have things changed?
- How has the U.S. role in the world changed since and as a result of the Holocaust?
- As we see in the film, knowledge of ongoing atrocities does not always lead to action. What conditions might motivate people to help each other? What conditions might make people turn away?
- What obligation should we, as Americans, have to welcome refugees to this country?



French partisans patrol the streets of an unidentified town during the insurrection in southern France, August 1944.

PHOTO COURTESY USHMM

### ► What Did the United States Know & When?

- Was there anything in the film that surprised you or gave you a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by Jewish refugees fleeing persecution or the United States' actions and inactions?
- What could Americans have known and when during World War II?
- What was the American public opinion in response to the Holocaust? How did this change over the duration of the war?
- What were some of the underlying factors that led to our nation's actions and inaction?
- What do you know of our community's response to the Holocaust?
- In what ways did some Americans condemn the actions of the Nazi regime? What action did some take?

### ► Antisemitic Laws & Racist Laws

- For additional support and context on racist laws and antisemitic laws, including suggestions on handling challenging comparisons and contrasts, please visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's lesson on [Racial "Science" and Law in Nazi Germany and the United States](#).
- What is the difference between the way racial laws were instituted in Germany, a totalitarian regime, versus a democracy such as the U.S.?
- Many American states outlawed interracial marriage, defining Black people as anyone with even one Black relative in their family tree (the so-called "one-drop" rule). Nazi jurists studied these laws when preparing the Nuremberg laws, which legally defined who was classified as Jewish. What were the similarities and differences between American segregationist laws and the Nuremberg laws?
- What are the foundational teachings of eugenics? How does the pseudoscience reflect or reinforce racist ideas?
- What information do people use to justify racist beliefs? How can radical beliefs, like these, be challenged and countered?

► **A Growing Refugee Crisis**

- Despite a growing refugee crisis, public opinion polls show that most Americans did not want to accept more immigrants into the country. What obstacles did Jewish refugees face attempting to immigrate to the United States?
- What role did American public opinion play in shaping the attitude of the U.S. government toward refugees? What about the media?
- How did Americans respond to Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass) in November 1938?
- What factors contributed to anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States?
- What was the nature of American antisemitism in America in the 1930's, and how did it influence governmental responses?
- **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** shows us the impact immigration policy can have on individual lives. What can we learn from the actions and decisions made by American policy makers and government officials in the 1930s and 1940s?

► **American Isolationism**

- The United States remained neutral during the first two years of World War II. Americans debated whether to join the Allied war effort. What factors contributed to American isolationism in the 1930s and early 1940s?
- What do the opinions of isolationists like Charles Lindbergh demonstrate about American debates at the time?
- How did President Franklin Roosevelt use his leadership to sway American public opinion?
- How did Eleanor Roosevelt use her position and popularity to try to sway American public opinion and influence policy to support immigration?
- How did a few dedicated groups or individuals in the United States try to help bring in Jews through assistance with U.S. visas?



**Issue of *The Dearborn Independent* published by Henry Ford, featuring the article, "The International Jew: The World's Problem," May 22, 1920.**

PHOTO COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



**"What has happened to us in this country? . . . We have always been ready to receive the unfortunates from other countries, and though this may seem a generous gesture on our part, we have profited a thousand-fold by what they have brought us."**

**—ELEANOR ROOSEVELT**

**Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt during campaign trail in Hartford, Connecticut. October 1936.**

PHOTO COURTESY FDR PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

## ▶ America at War

- What kind of information could Americans have had about the Holocaust as it was happening?
- What actions did the United States government take in response to the Holocaust? How did this change over time?
- What more, in retrospect, could the United States have done to aid Jews before and during the war?
- How did the available options for rescuing or offering aid to Jews change as the war progressed?

## ▶ Media and Hollywood

- In the 1930s, how did Hollywood and the media influence the public and the government during this time period? What happened in Hollywood after America joined the war?
- What information did the American public have on the rise and spread of Nazism before the war?
- How did American journalists cover Hitler, the persecution of Jews, during the 1930s?
- Who was Dorothy Thompson and how did she use her reporting about the rise of Hitler and the Nazis help to raise awareness in America of Nazi antisemitism?
- How was Hitler portrayed in the news? How did this impact the isolationist views in America?
- After the US government confirmed Nazi mass murder in 1942, how did the media cover the story?
- How did the media cover the liberation of concentration camps in 1945? What are the similarities and differences between that coverage, and the coverage of earlier stories of Nazi persecution and atrocities?
- How has the role of the media changed between then and now? Do you think that this change would result in different outcomes?



Marquee advertising a screening of U.S. Army Signal Corps film, "Nazi Atrocities," in New York City. May 8, 1945.

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Pedestrians and carts in Little Italy, Manhattan, New York City. Circa 1905–1910.

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## READING LIST

Want to learn more about **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** or share resources with your students? Here's a list of books to explore. Please note: books listed are appropriate for adult audiences that may include grades 9–12 and 13+. Please review book suggestions below and make recommendations based on your review as your students' educator.

There are two lists of books: one by advisors and interviewees in the film, and a second list that contains additional selected books for background information. Both lists are organized alphabetically by the authors last name.

### ■ BOOKS BY FILM ADVISORS AND INTERVIEWEES

- Richard Breitman:
  - *The Berlin Mission: The American Who Resisted Nazi Germany from Within*
  - *FDR and the Jews (with Allan Lichtman)*
  - *Official Secrets: What the Nazi Planned, What the British and American Knew*
- Debórah Dwork:
  - *Flight from the Reich: Refugee Jews, 1933–1946*
  - *Holocaust: A History (with Robert Jan van Pelt)*
- Rebecca Erbelding, *Rescue Board: The Untold Story of America's Efforts to Save the Jews of Europe*
- Daniel Greene, *Americans and the Holocaust: A Reader (with Edward Phillips)*
- Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition*

**If they to whom it was happening could scarcely believe the savagery and the sadism and the depravity of what was happening, how are the relatives in America even possibly going to imagine?**

—DANIEL MENDELSON, WRITER

- Peter Hayes:
  - *How Was It Possible?: A Holocaust Reader*
  - *Why? Explaining the Holocaust*
- Deborah Lipstadt:
  - *Beyond Belief: The American Press & the Coming of the Holocaust 1933–1945*
  - *Denial: Holocaust History on Trial*
  - *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*
- Daniel Mendelsohn, *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million*
- Susan Neiman, *Learning From the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil*
- Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*
- Daniel Okrent, *The Guarded Gate: Bigotry, Eugenics, and the Law that Kept Two Generations of Jews, Italians, and other European Immigrants Out of America*
- Nell Painter, *The History of White People*
- Eva Schloss:
  - *After Auschwitz: A Story of Heartbreak and Survival by the Stepsister of Anne Frank*
  - *Eva's Story: a Survivor's Tale by the Stepsister of Anne Frank*
- Timothy Snyder:
  - *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*
  - *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*
  - *On Tyranny*
- Guy Stern, *Invisible Ink: A Memoir*
- Doyle Stevick, *As the Witnesses Fall Silent: 21st Century Holocaust Education in Curriculum, Policy and Practice*



**Jews captured during the suppression of the Warsaw ghetto uprising are marched to a holding area prior to deportation in Warsaw, Poland. 1943.**

PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

## ■ ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND READING

- Arnie Bernstein, *Swastika Nation: Fritz Kuhn and the Rise and Fall of German-American Bund*
- David Cesarani, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933–1949*
- Adam Cohen, *Imbeciles*
- Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*
- Michael Dobbs, *The Unwanted: America, Auschwitz, and a Village Caught in Between*
- Deborah Riley Draper, *Olympic Pride, American Prejudice: The Untold Story of 18 African Americans who Defied Jim Crow and Adolf Hitler to Compete in 1936 Berlin Olympics*
- Richard J. Evans:
  - *The Coming of the Third Reich*
  - *The Third Reich in Power, 1933–1939: How the Nazis Won Over the Hearts and Minds of a Nation*
  - *The Third Reich at War*
- Charles Gallagher, *Nazis of Copley Square: The Forgotten Story of the Christian Front*
- Benjamin Carter Hett, *The Death of Democracy: Hitler's Rise to Power and the Downfall of the Weimar Republic*
- Dara Horn, *People Love Dead Jews: Reports from a Haunted Present*
- David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945*
- Richard M. Ketchum, *The Borrowed Years: 1938—1941 America On The Way to War*
- Erik Larson, *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin*
- Wendy Lower, *The Ravine: A Family, a Photograph, a Holocaust Massacre Revealed*
- Scott Miller & Sarah Ogilvie, *Refuge Denied: The St. Louis Passengers and the Holocaust*
- Melissa Müller, *Anne Frank: The Biography Updated and Expanded with New Material*
- Andrew Nagorski, *Hitlerland: American Eyewitness to the Nazi Rise to Power*
- Michael J. Neufeld & Michael Berenbaum, *The Bombing at Auschwitz: Should Allies have Attempted it?*
- Lynne Olson, *Those Angry Days: Roosevelt, Lindbergh, and America's Fight Over World War II, 1939–1941*
- Mirjam Pressler & Susan Massotty, *Anne Frank Collected Works: The Diary of A Young Girl—The Definitive Edition*
- Francine Prose, *Anne Frank: The Book, The Life, The Afterlife*
- Rosemary Sullivan, *Villa Air-Bel: World War II, Escape, and a House in Marseille*
- Volker Ulrich:
  - *Hitler: Ascent: 1889–1939*
  - *Hitler: Downfall: 1939–1945*
- Melvin I. Urofsky, *A Voice The Spoke For Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise*
- Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*
- Margaret E. Wagner, *The Library of Congress World War II Companion*
- James Q. Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law*
- Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste*
- David S. Wyman:
  - *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941–1945*
  - *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938–1941*



**Members of the Sturmabteilung or SA—  
a Nazi paramilitary organization.**

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AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

## **PRODUCTION CREDIT** *as of 7/27/22*

**THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** is a production of Florentine Films and WETA Washington, D.C. Directed by Ken Burns, Lynn Novick and Sarah Botstein. Telescript by Geoffrey C. Ward. Produced by Sarah Botstein, Lynn Novick, Ken Burns and Mike Welt. Edited by Tricia Reidy, ACE and Charles E. Horton. Co-Producer is Lucas B. Frank. Original music produced by Johnny Gandelsman. Cinematography by Buddy Squires, ASC and Wojciech Staroń, PSC. Narrated by Peter Coyote. Voices include Adam Arkin, Hope Davis, Paul Giamatti, Olivia Gilliatt, Elliott Gould, Murphy Guyer, Werner Herzog, Josh Lucas, Carolyn McCormick, Joe Morton, Liam Neeson, Matthew Rhys, Meryl Streep, Bradley Whitford, and Helena Zengel. The Executive in Charge for WETA is John F. Wilson. Executive Producer is Ken Burns.

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