

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST AFTER THE LAST SURVIVORS ARE GONE

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I want to address two issues as far as teaching the Holocaust once the last survivors are not here. First I believe that the survivors will always be with us...of course I am not saying physically, but the numerous filmed testimonies as well as the many documentaries that are available on dvd and cdroom will allow teachers to bring the stories of survivors into their classrooms. This is not so strange has there have been teachers throughout the country if not the world that have had to rely on these sources because of the lack of survivors in their area.

Second: There are a number of excellent movies dealing with the subject of the Holocaust; some based on actual stories some not. Just like the testimonies of survivors, teachers need to be selective as far as how they use these films...keeping in mind the ages of their students, and they should have clear learning objectives that they want their students to take away from these films.

I would like to now address the idea of using the Holocaust in relationship to the problem of bullying. It would be a mistake to trivialize the Holocaust as a major example of bullying. The Holocaust was not devised and carried out by a group of town thugs...it was a state sanctioned action against a group of people...carried out by not only armed units, but devised and organized by highly intelligent and educated individuals! Keep in mind that on January 20, 1942 at the Wannsee Conference some 9 out of the 15 Nazi leaders who were present held at least one doctorate! When one looks at the Holocaust of course one focuses on the numbers that were the victims; as well as those who were the perpetrators; the greatest tragedy and the one that makes for an excellent teaching moment is to bring up the fact of the numbers of bystanders...those who saw but did little or nothing.

Another concern that we must have in the years to come is that the subject of the Holocaust is not compared to more current genocides. We must avoid allowing students to think that one genocide is more tragic than another. Any form of genocide is a tragedy and proves, unfortunately, that the human race has not learned the lessons from history. Every occurrence of genocide must be viewed and studied in the context of when it took place.

So what should the teachers in the future when the survivors are no longer present, stress to their students?

- 1. Be every aware of the dangers of tyrants rising to power.**
- 2. Remember that there are many forms of resistance**
- 3. And finally, in the words to be found at the end of the museum at Dachau "...Practice more humanity."**