

Objectives: After having an understanding of what the Holocaust was, students will learn about the spread of Holocaust Denial and the effect on the Jewish Community and the Survivor community. Older students are able to put the Holocaust into a historical perspective and look at its effect on the world, particularly ways it has fueled the antisemitic fire.

Outcome: Students will be able to recognize Holocaust denial when they come across it in the world, and make an effort to recognize the evilness and create a safer world where the truth is accessible to everyone.

The Lesson: Confronting Holocaust Denial and Distortion

Introduction / Background information on the topic: used to set up the lesson but also help instructor teach it

- **Key points:** information/content that should be provided
 - **Supplemental information:** at the discretion of the educator. Can be things such as primary and secondary texts, images, audio or video recordings, etc.
- Holocaust Denial: discourse and propaganda that deny the historical reality and the extent of the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis and their accomplices during World War II, known as the Holocaust or the Shoah. Holocaust denial refers specifically to any attempt to claim that the Holocaust/Shoah did not take place
 - Deniers say that the idea of the Holocaust is propaganda created by the Jews to gain sympathy from the world and climb higher up on the social and economic ladder
 - Usually spread by extremist right wing racist groups that not only target the Jewish people, but most minorities in general
- Holocaust Distortion: skewing the realities of the Holocaust to make it seem less extreme and brutal, despite proven fact and testimony of the Holocaust
 - 10 forms of Holocaust Distortion - later on in the lesson
 - Spread by all parts of the political spectrum, across religious and ethnic groups

Pre-lesson reflections: can be used to get the students ready to learn about the topic

1. What do you know about Holocaust denial and distortion?
 - a. Where does it come from?
 - b. Why do people think it is okay?
 - c. How does Holocaust denial and distortion connect to historical antisemitism?
2. What are some examples you know of the narrative of genocides or persecutions being skewed as time goes on?
 - a. Why do you think this happens?
 - i. Scapegoating, Hate, Misinformation, Lack of proper education
3. What do you think is the difference between denial and distortion?

Whole-group activity:

Part 1: Lecture and discussion on the 10 forms of Holocaust Distortion

- The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance have identified ten main forms of Holocaust distortion that are vibrant in societies across the globe
 - Intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the Holocaust or its elements, including the roles played by collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany
 - Gross minimization of the numbers of victims
 - Blaming Jews for the Holocaust
 - Casting the Holocaust as a positive historical event
 - Attempting to blur responsibility for the crimes of the Holocaust
 - Accusing Jews of “using” the Holocaust for some manner of gain.
 - Use of the term “Holocaust” to refer to events or concepts that are not related to the genocide of European and North African Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators.
 - State-sponsored manipulation of Holocaust history to sow political discord within or outside a country's borders.
 - Trivializing or honoring the historical legacies of people or organizations complicit in the crimes of the Holocaust.
 - Using imagery and language associated with the Holocaust for political, ideological, or commercial purposes unrelated to this history in online and offline forums.
- Discussion:
 - Why is Holocaust Distortion in some ways even more dangerous than Holocaust denial?
 - It is harder to identify the motives behind distortion - does it stem from antisemitism or simply just ignorance?
 - Why is it so important to learn about the real facts of any historical event?
 - How do events become more distorted over time?
 - How do you think the rise of social media plays into Holocaust distortion and ignorance?
 - Have you ever heard someone distort the events of the Holocaust? Where did you hear it?
 - Social media, news channel, even the elected representatives of the USA
- Many people hear societal hateful issues with the structure of our modern world and like to think that those problems don't apply to the United States, because how could they apply to a nation built on diversity and tolerance. However, it is so important to recognize the vibrant antisemitism and holocaust distortion that exists in the US, even in our own Congress.
 - Ex: In May of 2021, Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene in an interview on a conservative podcast, compared Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's decision to require members of the House to wear masks on the chamber floor to Jews being sent to gas chambers in the Holocaust.

Part 2: Video and Reflection

- As a class, watch this short film by the IHRA on Holocaust Distortion
 - [Holocaust Distortion: A Growing Threat](#) (12 minutes) → watch with subtitles
1. Why has the pandemic exacerbated Holocaust distortion?
 2. How have certain governments around the world used the Holocaust to spread more hate?
 3. Why is Holocaust distortion harder to recognize? Why does that make it dangerous?
 4. Why is it wrong to use the yellow star as the picture of their anti-Covid movement?
 5. Why do these people use the Holocaust as a way to further their own political gain? What does it do for them?
 6. What does Holocaust distortion do to the victims and the survivors?
 7. Why is using the word “holocaust” to draw attention to your cause so harmful?
 8. How has holocaust distortion spread on social media? In what forms?
 9. Why is it bad to honor different known perpetrators of the Holocaust?
 - a. The problem with separating people’s actions from the fact that they were Holocaust collaborators - Example of Shukhevych
 10. Why are learning the lessons of the Holocaust so important?