# Beyond the Yellow Star:

## Human Rights Abuses in Nazi Germany

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# who we are

Woven Teaching is the **human rights education** practice of Woven Foundation. Through a combination of original programming and grantmaking, Woven Teaching advances the foundation's focus on long term change towards a widespread acceptance of basic human rights for all.

Our programmatic work is dedicated to supporting classroom teachers with practical help for ethical and effective instruction. We believe that by weaving human rights education into the curriculum, educators can create socially responsible global citizens.

Woven Teaching envisions a world in which every student's education includes:

- A sense of historical perspective;
- The development of critical thinking skills;
- A feeling of global citizenship;
- The ability to identify bigotry–understanding its negative effects on both individuals and society–and the analytical tools to combat it.

## Contact


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# introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), one of the United Nations' founding documents, asserts that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights." The declaration contains thirty articles outlining fundamental rights inherent to every person around the globe. But how can students claim those rights if they do not know what they are?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights emerged from the rubble of World War II and the Holocaust. This lesson is designed both to introduce students to international human rights standards and to ground the UDHR in the history of the Holocaust. The following activities allow students to explore this important document and the atrocities that may have inspired the protections contained within it.

Although its articles are not legally binding, the UDHR serves as a moral compass for the international community. With this in mind, students will look at the historical context of the UDHR and have an opportunity to envision a future in which human rights are granted and protected for all people. We hope this lesson is a useful step in your students' journeys to demand and protect human rights for all.

# Lesson Overview

## SUBJECT
History / Social Studies

## CONTENT LEVEL
Ages 14-18 (Grades 9-12)

## TIME
2.5 Hours

## DESCRIPTION
This lesson takes approximately 2.5 hours to complete. Educators should make adjustments as needed to meet the needs of their students. The lesson includes:

- 4 Activities
  - » All-class video viewing and discussion
  - » Review of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and discussion
  - » Small group case study analysis and presentation
  - » Individual research project on a contemporary human rights issue
- Student Handouts
- Resources for Further Learning

## GUIDING QUESTIONS
- Why did the United Nations develop the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)?
- What human rights are agreed upon by the international community?
- How did Nazi Germany violate human rights?
- What would the world look like if every individual's human rights were respected and protected?

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES
At the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Define 'human rights'
- Describe the rights enshrined in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Explain the various ways that Nazi Germany violated the human rights of different groups of people

## MATERIALS
- **Google Slides deck** (optional)
- Poster board or large paper
- Markers, colored pencils, etc.
- Student Handouts (also available via **Google Docs**)
  - » **What Are Human Rights?**
  - » **UDHR – Student Version**
  - » **Human Rights Abuses in Nazi Germany**

## COMMON CORE STANDARDS
Anchor Standards
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10

Speaking and Listening
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4

Literacy in History/Social Studies
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

# Considerations for Teaching Ethically and Effectively

- Center learning on students.
- Integrate human rights and history.
- Avoid comparisons of pain; there is no hierarchy of suffering and each genocide is unique and tragic.
- Acknowledge the sensitive nature of the topic. Plan for a variety of emotional responses from your students.
- Complicate thinking and avoid oversimplification by avoiding stereotypes and asking students to be precise with their language.
- Avoid simulation or role play activities which encourage students to imagine that they were directly involved in genocide.
- Remind students that genocide is a process that can be stopped; it is not inescapable. Genocide occurs because of the decisions and actions of individuals and institutions.
- Emphasize personal agency. Encourage students to consider both the actions taken and not taken by people before, during, and after the genocide.
- Promote student activism and action.
- Allow time to process the material. Provide space for reflection.
- Graphic text or images can trigger trauma and may be degrading to victims, so be sure to question whether the educational outcomes are served by using certain materials. Preview all materials before sharing with students.
- Support students to work critically with source material, particularly on the internet. Recommend authoritative sources with factual, archival content.
- Support your students in making connections between historical events and contemporary issues.

# Tips for Distance Learning

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, classrooms around the world have shifted to distance learning. For millions of students and educators, this continues to be a challenging time.

Although *Beyond the Yellow Star* was created for use in a traditional classroom setting, here are some adaptations you might consider for remote learning:

- Online interaction tools such as **Google Classroom**, **Zoom**, etc. can be used to facilitate class discussions.
- Students can work individually or in groups to create a **Padlet** page, a **Google Slides** deck, or another virtual visual tool in place of the poster project.
- After reading their assigned case study, challenge students to find and watch a testimony on **iWitness**, the USC Shoah Foundation's collection of video interviews from genocide survivors and witnesses. Using keyword searches or the site's indexing, students may be able to find testimony of people who experienced the human rights abuses they read about in their case studies.
- Handouts can be printed and included in paper packets, and group projects can be done individually using supplies that one might have at home (e.g., instead of creating a poster, students could draw a flyer using a regular piece of paper).
- In place of an all-class discussion to debrief, encourage students to reflect on the lesson and the feelings it may have brought up with a short writing exercise, such as a journal entry.

The Holocaust and genocide are difficult subjects to teach in any capacity and are particularly difficult in remote learning situations. When teaching these topics, we urge educators to make extra time for one-on-one check-ins by video or phone (as district policy allows) to ensure students have a way of processing this emotionally challenging material.

Additionally, if assigning a project that requires online research, it is extremely important to remind students about checking their sources for accurate and truthful information. Unfortunately, the internet is filled with sites created by Holocaust deniers, white nationalists, and others seeking to spread misinformation and hate. Prepare your students by directing them to reliable news sources and sites. Some examples are provided on the Resources list (see Appendix, **p. 16**).

If you implemented *Beyond the Yellow Star* in a distance learning plan, we'd love to hear from you! Contact Woven Teaching at **info@woventeaching.org** and let us know how you adapted this lesson for your students.

# activities

## ❶ Anticipatory Set

Students will watch and reflect on a short film about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**Time:** 10 Minutes

**Materials**

- **Google Slides deck** (optional)
- Notebooks or journals
- Video: "**What are the universal human rights?**" (TED-Ed, 4:46)
- Student Handout: What Are Human Rights? (**Handout A**) – Optional

**Procedure**

1. Post the agenda for the class period. Begin by explaining that students will learn about the development of modern human rights in the wake of the Holocaust. To do this, students will examine the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany and its collaborators that may have influenced the creation of this document.

2. Post the following question: *What is one right that all human beings should have?*

   You may wish to also include examples such as the right to free speech, the right to freedom from hunger, the right to rest from work, etc. Ask students to consider the question and write down their response, including why they think that particular right is important.

3. After a few minutes of writing and reflection, do a quick whip around the room, asking students to share their responses. Make note of student responses on the board and let them know that you will refer back to them after watching a short film.

   *Note: If your classroom is not equipped with technology or you are implementing this lesson in a distance learning plan with limited technology, students should read "What Are Human Rights?" (**Handout A**) in place of viewing the short film.*

4. Before watching the film, check for understanding about the film's vocabulary. *Do all students understand the meaning of the words: inalienable, universal, interdependent, indivisible? What do these words tell us about the concept of human rights?*

5. Watch "**What are the universal human rights?**", then discuss the following questions:
   - Why did the United Nations believe that a Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was needed? *Possible responses: Devastation caused by World War II, persecution of Jews, Roma, and others during the Holocaust, etc.*
   - Do you agree or disagree with the criticisms of the UDHR mentioned in the film? Why or why not?


# 2 Exploring the UDHR

Students will read an abbreviated version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and discuss the importance of human rights.

**Time:** 20 Minutes

**Materials**

- **Google Slides deck** (optional)
- Student Handout: Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Student Version (**Handout B**)

**Procedure**

1. Distribute one copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Student Version to each student (**Handout B**).
2. Ask for volunteers to read the articles aloud. Encourage students to annotate the document as they go, marking or highlighting articles that are important to them or that they have questions about.
3. Discuss the following questions:
    - What questions do you have about these 30 articles?
    - What rights of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights surprised you? Are there any rights that you disagree with or think are missing from the UDHR?
    - Which of these rights are civil/political rights? Which are social/economic rights? Do you think that one type of right is more important than the other?
    - How do the rights listed in the UDHR align with the rights we brainstormed at the beginning of class?
    - Do you think the world needs a document like the UDHR? Why or why not?

# ❸ Human Rights Abuses in Nazi Germany

Students will work in small groups to learn about human rights abuses in Nazi Germany. Then, they will consider how these Nazi crimes may have influenced which rights were later included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**Time:** 60 Minutes

**Materials**

- **Google Slides deck** (optional)
- Markers, colored pencils, etc.
- Poster board or large paper
- Student Handouts: Human Rights Abuses in Nazi Germany (**Handout C**)
  - » **Case Study #1: Killing of Persons with Disabilities**
  - » **Case Study #2: Resistance of the White Rose**
  - » **Case Study #3: Sterilization of Roma Women**
  - » **Case Study #4: Mass Arrests During *Kristallnacht***
  - » **Case Study #5: Jews & Others Stripped of Citizenship**
  - » **Case Study #6: Forced Labor**
  - » **Case Study #7: Destruction of Trade Unions**
  - » **Case Study #8: Life and Death in the Lodz Ghetto**

**Procedure**

1. Divide the class into small groups of four to five students. Assign each group a case study of a Nazi program or system (**Handout C**). If possible, each group should be given a different case study.

2. Ask each group to take a few minutes and silently read their case study. When they are done, ask students to discuss how the Nazis violated human rights in their case study. Then, they should determine as a group which article of the UDHR may have been inspired by the violations described in their cases.

   *Note: The case studies may describe many ways that the Nazis violated rights, but the group should choose the primary way rights were violated in their case.*

3. After the group has determined which human right was violated, ask them to create a poster to illustrate that right. Posters should contain a combination of drawings and words, and must highlight three things:

   A. The right that was violated (which article?);
   B. How the Nazis or their collaborators violated that right;
   C. What the world will look and feel like when that right is respected for everyone.

   Remind students that each member of the group is expected to participate.

   *Note: We suggest asking the students to refrain from drawing swastikas on their posters. Hate symbols, like slurs, are meant to insult and intimidate and are not appropriate for school.*

4. When everyone has finished, each group will present their poster to the class. Presentations should be no longer than 3 minutes and should include information on both the Nazi violation of the right and what the group envisions for the future.

5. After students have completed their presentations, discuss the following questions as a class:
    - How does studying the actions of the Nazi Party help us understand the creation of the UDHR?
      *Possible response: The UN wanted to make sure that in the future, no one would repeat what the Nazis did.*
    - What is one thing you learned from this lesson that you would like to know more about?
      *Note: If your students have internet access outside of school, you may wish to assign a short research project based on their answer.*
    - Why is learning about human rights, in the past and in the present, important?
    - What can you do to help make your group's vision for the future a reality? Be as specific as possible.

## *ACTIVITY 3 ANSWER KEY*

| Case Study | UDHR Article |
|---|---|
| **Case Study #1:** Killing of Persons with Disabilities | **Article 3:** Right to life, liberty, and safety |
| **Case Study #2:** Resistance of the White Rose | **Article 19:** Right to freedom of expression |
| **Case Study #3:** Sterilization of Roma Women | **Article 16:** Right to have a family |
| **Case Study #4:** Mass Arrests During *Kristallnacht* | **Article 9:** Right to freedom from arbitrary imprisonment |
| **Case Study #5:** Jews & Others Stripped of Citizenship | **Article 15:** Right to a nationality/citizenship |
| **Case Study #6:** Forced Labor | **Article 4:** Right to freedom from forced labor |
| **Case Study #7:** Destruction of Trade Unions | **Article 23:** Right to join a union |
| **Case Study #8:** Life and Death in the Lodz Ghetto | **Article 25:** Right to an adequate standard of living |

# ❹ Human Rights Abuses in Today's World

Students will choose one right mentioned in the UDHR and conduct research about both violations and protections for that right.

**Time:** 60 Minutes

**Materials**

- **Google Slides deck** (optional)
- Student Handout: Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Student Version (**Handout B**)
- Computers or smartphones with internet access

**Procedure**

1. Begin by explaining that in the last activity, students examined human rights abuses in Nazi Germany. Many of these same rights are being violated in today's world (albeit in different ways or to different extremes).

2. Ask students to spend a few moments reviewing the UDHR (**Handout B**), then think of an example of human rights abuses in the world today: stories they have learned about in the news or things they have witnessed in their own community. Students should discuss in partners, as a group, or on a class message board, if teaching remotely.

3. After discussing with their peers, students should choose one right mentioned in the UDHR and research violations of the article in today's world as well as how people are fighting to protect that right. Teachers should provide an example using an article that resonates with them.

   *Example: Article 11 (right to be considered innocent until proven guilty): On any given day in the United States, hundreds of thousands of people are incarcerated while awaiting trial, imprisoned without having been convicted of a crime. Activists and organizations (such as The National Bail Out) throughout the country are working to end the cash bail system.*

4. Students will create a project based on this research. Assignments may vary, depending on students' strengths or interests, areas in need of improvement, or amount of time available. Suggested assignments include: a paper, a short film, a presentation slide deck, or a social media campaign. Their project should address the following questions:

   A. What right is being violated?
   B. How is this right being violated?
   C. Whose human rights are being violated? Is a certain group being targeted?
   D. What is one government, NGO (non-governmental organization), or community organization that is working to end this type of abuse? What kind of work is it doing?
   E. Is there something that people in your community can do to help stop this abuse from happening?

   Student projects should also include citations formatted in whichever style has been approved by the educator.

5. Students will share their research with their peers at a future class session.

# appendix

# Resources

**Echoes & Reflections**
**echoesandreflections.org**

Echoes & Reflections offers comprehensive lesson plans on the Holocaust and antisemitism. It is a project of the Anti-Defamation League, the USC Shoah Foundation, and Yad Vashem.

**Facing History and Ourselves**
**facinghistory.org**

Facing History and Ourselves offers teaching materials on hate and bigotry. Their materials cover topics such as: genocide, democracy, immigration, and justice.

**IWitness**
**iwitness.usc.edu**

A project of the USC Shoah Foundation, IWitness allows educators to bring video testimony into the classroom. IWitness testimony is available for the Holocaust, the genocides in Rwanda and Guatemala, and more.

**United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM)**
**ushmm.org**

USHMM is the United States' official memorial to the Holocaust. Its website hosts a variety of useful materials for teaching about the Holocaust and other genocides, including a Holocaust encyclopedia.

**Stand Up for Human Rights (United Nations)**
**standup4humanrights.org**

Created in 2018 for the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this site highlights ways that everyone can take action in their communities to protect human rights.

# Image Credits

- Cover and page 5: A Nazi rally in Nuremberg, 1935 (Getty Images)
- Page 10: Created by Woven Teaching; original images via Flickr (L to R: Nithi Anand, maiaibing2000, Rod Waddington, Wen Cheng Liu)
- Page 15: Member of the League of German Girls in Vienna, Austria, March 1938 (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

# Handout: What Are Human Rights?

### What is a right?

A right is an entitlement to do something or to be protected from something. Rights are different from privileges, which are special benefits granted to a specific person or group of people.


*Eleanor Roosevelt, one of the authors of the UDHR, holds a Spanish translation of the document, November 1949 (Wikimedia Commons)*

### What are human rights?

Human rights are basic rights and freedoms which every single human being is entitled to, regardless of the person's race, religion, birthplace, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics. This means that they are universal–they apply to everyone. Human rights are also inalienable, meaning that they cannot be taken away.

### The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Throughout history, different cultures have developed ideas about justice and human rights, but it was not until 1948 that these ideas were adopted by the international community.

In the wake of World War II and the Holocaust, the international community struggled to figure out how it could prevent such atrocities from happening again. At the end of the war, a new organization, the United Nations, gathered experts from around the world to draft a document outlining the basic human rights.

Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) contains 30 articles. Its core principle is that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The document contains positive freedoms (the freedom to do something, such as the freedom to get married) and negative freedoms (the right to be free from something, such as the right to be free from slavery or servitude). The document contains both civil/political rights and social, economic, and cultural rights.

The UDHR does not say that one type of right is more important than the other. Instead, it says that they are all interdependent and that one type of right cannot exist without the others.

### Criticism of the UDHR

Since 1948, people around the world have used the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a tool to fight for their rights; however, the UDHR has also faced much criticism. Some critiques include:

- Although it laid the foundation for modern human rights law, the UDHR itself is not legally binding. Human rights laws do exist, but they do not always stop always human rights abuses from occurring. While the United Nations monitors and investigates human rights abuses, it cannot force a government to change its policies.
- The document was written under the leadership of the United States at the beginning of the

Cold War. As a result, critics argue that it is biased toward Western values and ignores cultural differences that exist between societies.

- The UDHR privileges the rights of the individual over collective groups such as tribes, communities, or religious groups. By definition, genocide is the mass killing of people with certain characteristics or identities, so by not focusing on group rights, critics argue that the UDHR does not help to prevent this type of violence in the future.

Even with these limitations, the UDHR was an important step in outlining the rights of each person around the globe. It was the first document of its kind and continues to guide international law and values. At its core is the belief in the inherent dignity of each individual and the prevention of discrimination.

The document has been translated into 500 languages and in 1999 became the most translated document in history.

## CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

Civil and political rights restrict the government from interfering with an individual or their freedom. Examples:

- Freedom of speech
- Right to a fair trial

## SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Social, economic, and cultural rights require the government to provide support or protections. Examples:

- Right to education
- Right to medical care

# Handout: Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Student Version

| | |
|---|---|
| **Article 1** | All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights. |
| **Article 2** | These rights belong to everyone. You should never be discriminated against. |
| **Article 3** | You have the right to life, liberty, and safety. |
| **Article 4** | No one can hold you in slavery. |
| **Article 5** | No one can torture you or treat you in a cruel or degrading way. |
| **Article 6** | Everyone has rights, no matter where they are. |
| **Article 7** | Laws should be applied the same way for everyone. |
| **Article 8** | You have the right to seek justice and remedy (repair) if your rights are not respected. |
| **Article 9** | You cannot be imprisoned or thrown out of a country without a good reason. |
| **Article 10** | You have the right to a fair and public trial. |
| **Article 11** | You have the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. |
| **Article 12** | You have a right to privacy. No one can enter your home, read your mail, or bother you without good reason. |
| **Article 13** | You have the right to move and travel within your country and internationally. |
| **Article 14** | You have the right to seek protection from another country (asylum) if your country treats you poorly. |
| **Article 15** | You have the right to be a citizen of a country (have a nationality). |
| **Article 16** | Every consenting adult has the right to get married and have a family. |
| **Article 17** | You have the right to own property. |
| **Article 18** | You have the right to practice any religion. |
| **Article 19** | You have the right to express your opinion. |
| **Article 20** | You have the right to gather with others and protest publicly. |
| **Article 21** | You have the right to participate in the government of your country (e.g., vote). |
| **Article 22** | You have the right to have your basic needs met (e.g., through social security programs). |
| **Article 23** | You have the right to work, to receive equal pay for equal work, and to join a union. |
| **Article 24** | You have the right to rest from work. |
| **Article 25** | You have the right to an adequate standard of living, including housing, food, and medical care. |
| **Article 26** | You have the right to an education. |
| **Article 27** | No one can stop you from participating in your community's cultural life. |
| **Article 28** | Everyone must respect the social order that allows these rights to exist. |
| **Article 29** | Everyone must respect the rights of others. |
| **Article 30** | No one can take any of the rights in this declaration away from you. |

# Handout: Human Rights Abuses in Nazi Germany

**Case Study #1: Killing of Persons with Disabilities**

## SUMMARY

**Eugenics** is the idea that in order to have a healthy population, only people with 'desirable' traits should reproduce. A belief in eugenics was central to Nazi **ideology**. As a result, the government of **Nazi** Germany considered people with mental and physical disabilities to be "life unworthy of life"–a financial drain on the German state and a genetic threat to the health of the nation. For that reason, the Nazis murdered people with disabilities. Both children and adults with disabilities were deprived of their right to life in Nazi Germany.

This murderous program was known as the "**Euthanasia**" Program or *Aktion T4*, named for the address of the program's main office at *Tiergartenstrasse* 4 in Berlin.

In October 1939, public health authorities–supported by the Nazi regime–encouraged parents to send their children with disabilities to special clinics. Instead of treating the young patients, the medical staff killed the children by intentional overdosing of medication or starvation. The program, authorized by Adolf Hitler, soon expanded to include adults.

People targeted for death included: those with epilepsy or Down Syndrome, those with mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, and those with physical disabilities.

By January 1940, authorities developed a system to transport patients to secret killing centers by bus or train. Once there, T4 functionaries murdered victims using carbon monoxide, a poisonous gas. Afterward, victims' families would receive an urn filled with ashes and a false notice that their loved one died of natural causes.

The first killings of the "euthanasia" program predated other Nazi genocide policies by nearly two years. For this reason, many people consider T4 to be a rehearsal for later atrocities. Up to 250,000 people were murdered as a result of the T4 program.

Children at the Schönbrunn Psychiatric Hospital, 1934. *Courtesy of the German Federal Archives.*

## VOCABULARY

**eugenics:** the study of or belief in the possibility of improving a human population through selective breeding (e.g., preventing people with diseases, disabilities, or other so-called "negative" characteristics from reproducing)

**euthanasia:** the painless killing of a patient suffering from an incurable disease or condition. The Nazis used "euthanasia" as a code word for murder.

**ideology:** a system of ideas, beliefs, or values

**Nazi:** a member or supporter of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party). The Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, ruled Germany from 1933-1945. Nazi is short for *Nationalsozialist*, the German word for 'National Socialist.'

## LEARN MORE

United States Holocaust History Museum. "Euthanasia Program." Holocaust Encyclopedia. **https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/euthanasia-program**.

# Handout: Human Rights Abuses in Nazi Germany

**Case Study #2: Resistance of the White Rose**

## SUMMARY

The White Rose is one of the most well-known German resistance movements of the **Nazi** era. Founded in the fall of 1942 by students at the University of Munich, the White Rose was one of a small number of groups that publicly expressed their opposition to Nazi genocide.

The core members of the White Rose were students Hans Scholl and his sister Sophie, Alexander Schmorell, Willi Graf, Christoph Probst, and professor Kurt Huber. Several of them had become disillusioned with the Nazi regime after they were forced to serve in the German army. While serving on the Eastern Front, they learned about mass murder in Poland, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere. Upon their return to Germany, they were determined to take action and use their voice to make change.

With the help of a small network of people, the White Rose secretly wrote and distributed six **leaflets** that called for active opposition to the **regime**. The leaflets shed light on many of Nazi Germany's crimes, including the genocide of Europe's Jewish population. They also argued that it was the moral duty of the German population to take a stand against the Nazi government.

This type of dissent was not tolerated in Nazi Germany. In February 1943, Hans and Sophie Scholl tried to secretly distribute leaflets at the University of Munich campus; however, a janitor saw them and denounced them to the **Gestapo**. In a subsequent search of Hans's apartment, the Gestapo found a clue which led them to Christoph Probst. The Scholl siblings, along with Probst, were convicted of treason and executed by guillotine four days later.

The trio remained defiant even in the face of death. In the seconds before his execution, Hans Scholl cried out, "*Es lebe die Freiheit!*"–Long live freedom!

Left to right: White Rose members Hans Scholl, Sophie Scholl, and Christoph Probst in 1942. *Courtesy of DenkStätte Weisse Rose.*

## VOCABULARY

**leaflet:** a printed sheet of paper containing information, usually distributed for free

**Gestapo:** secret political police force in Nazi Germany. The Gestapo eliminated opposition to the regime. Gestapo is short for *Geheime Staatspolizei*, meaning 'secret state police' in German.

**Nazi:** a member or supporter of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party). The Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, ruled Germany from 1933-1945. Nazi is short for *Nationalsozialist*, the German word for 'National Socialist.'

**regime:** a particular government, especially an authoritarian one

## LEARN MORE

United States Holocaust History Museum. "White Rose." Holocaust Encyclopedia. **https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/white-rose**.

# Handout: Human Rights Abuses in Nazi Germany

**Case Study #3: Sterilization of Roma Women**

## SUMMARY

The **Roma** and Sinti, also known as "gypsies," are Europe's largest minority group. They initially migrated to Europe from northern India during the 15th century. Roma have a long history of persecution in Europe; before, during, and after the Holocaust, mainstream European societies have viewed Romani peoples as outsiders. Negative stereotypes of Roma communities persist into the present, and Roma continue to be stereotyped as criminals, liars, and thieves.

When the **Nazi** Party came to power in 1933, it intensified existing persecution of the Roma, who were gradually forced out of all spheres of public life. The Nazis' treatment of the Roma parallels its treatment of the Jewish population.

Similar to their negative beliefs about Jews, Nazis believed Roma to be "racially inferior" to Germans and thus targeted the group for extermination. They were confined in their homes, sent to live in ghettos, and eventually deported to **extermination camps**.

Because of its racist ideas about the "impurity" of Roma bloodlines, the Nazi regime was desperate to prevent births within the group. As early as July 1933, Roma women were forcibly sterilized–a medical procedure which prevents a person from having children.

During the war, the number of women who were forcibly sterilized skyrocketed. At Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück, and other concentration and extermination camps, women were injected with acidic chemicals (without anesthetic) which damaged their reproductive organs. This left them unable to produce children and have a family. Many died in agony during and after the procedure.

It is unknown how many Romani women were subjected to sterilization under Nazi rule. Similarly, the exact number of Romani victims of the Holocaust is unknown, but scholars believe 25 to 50 percent of all European Roma were murdered by Nazi Germany.

A group of Roma in the 1930s. *Courtesy of Kore Yoors via the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.*

## VOCABULARY

**extermination camp:** a facility established primarily for the purpose of murdering large numbers of people. These sites are also known as killing centers.

**Nazi:** a member or supporter of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party). The Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, ruled Germany from 1933-1945. Nazi is short for *Nationalsozialist*, the German word for 'National Socialist.'

**Roma:** a collective term for the group of people who migrated to Europe from northern India in the 1400s. Sinti is the term for Roma from western and central Europe. The Roma are also known as "gypsies," but this is a derogatory word.

## LEARN MORE

United States Holocaust History Museum. "Genocide of European Roma (Gypsies), 1939-1945." Holocaust Encyclopedia. **https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/genocide-of-european-roma-gypsies-1939-1945**.

# Handout: Human Rights Abuses in Nazi Germany

**Case Study #4: Mass Arrests and Imprisonment During *Kristallnacht***

## SUMMARY

On the night of November 9-10, 1938, a widespread **pogrom** against Jews broke out across Germany, Austria, and parts of Czechoslovakia. Known as *Kristallnacht* ("Crystal Night" or "the Night of Broken Glass"), this night marked a turning point in **Nazi** Germany: in addition to the **antisemitic** laws and speech that had existed for years, open violence against Jews was considered acceptable and encouraged after *Kristallnacht*.

Nazi officials claimed that the violence was a public response to the death of Ernst vom Rath, a German diplomat who had been shot two days earlier by a Jewish teenager, Herschel Grynszpan.

But the violence was not spontaneous. At a meeting on the evening of November 9, Nazi Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels stated that the Nazi Party would not officially lead demonstrations against the Jewish population, but that any "spontaneous" outbreak of violence would not be stopped. Nazi Party leaders understood Goebbels to mean that they should incite violence in their communities.

Overnight, mobs burned down hundreds of synagogues, destroyed thousands of Jewish homes, schools, and businesses, and murdered 91 Jewish people. The government, the police, and the fire departments stood by and did nothing to stop the violence and destruction.

That night, more than 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and deported to **concentration camps**. The men had not committed any crimes, so these arrests were arbitrary and unwarranted. *Kristallnacht* marked the first time that Nazi Germany imprisoned people on a mass scale simply because they were Jewish.

Many of the men arrested that night died in the camps, though most were released on the condition that they leave Germany. While some were able to move out of the country, others were later re-arrested, imprisoned, and killed in concentration or extermination camps.

Nazi guards force Jews who were arrested during Kristallnacht to march through town. *Courtesy of Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz.*

## VOCABULARY

**antisemitism:** hostility or prejudice toward Jewish people

**concentration camp:** a place where a large number of people are imprisoned, usually without trial. The Nazis and their collaborators operated 20,000 concentration camps throughout Europe.

**Nazi:** a member or supporter of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party). The Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, ruled Germany from 1933-1945. Nazi is short for *Nationalsozialist*, the German word for 'National Socialist.'

**pogrom:** an organized massacre against an ethnic or religious group (usually refers to violence against Jews)

## LEARN MORE

United States Holocaust History Museum. "Kristallnacht." Holocaust Encyclopedia. **https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/kristallnacht**.

# Handout: Human Rights Abuses in Nazi Germany

**Case Study #5: Jews and Others Stripped of Citizenship**

## SUMMARY

When the **Nazi** Party came to power in 1933, it quickly initiated a series of laws that chipped away at the rights of Jews and other groups. In September 1935, Nazi Germany enacted the Nuremberg Laws, a set of racist and **antisemitic** laws. The Nuremberg Laws had two major components:

1. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, which forbade intermarriage and sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews. By 1939, there were approximately 30,000 intermarried couples remaining in Germany, with 1 in 10 Jewish people married to a non-Jew.
2. The Reich Citizenship Law, which stated that only people of "German blood" could be citizens, therefore stripping Jews of their citizenship.

In November 1935, the Reich Citizenship Law was expanded to strip **Roma** and Black people of their German citizenship. By taking away the citizenship of Jews and others, the Nazi regime also took away many of their political rights. This had the effect of widening the gap between people with "German blood" and people whom the Nazis believed were "racially inferior."

As a result of their loss of citizenship, Jews and others lost their voting rights and were unable to hold public office. They were also banned from working for the government in any capacity; those who already worked for the government were fired.

By taking away their citizenship, the Nazi leadership effectively made Jews and others **stateless**. In countries around the world, citizenship carries many protections. In most cases, citizenship protects people from being deported from their home country and enables people to benefit from social services such as food assistance and other forms of support.

Without citizenship, Jews and others were pushed even farther to the outskirts of society. Increasingly marginalized, Jews, Roma, and others found few allies in German society who would be willing to protect them from further harm.


A Jewish man and his Christian girlfriend were forced to carry humiliating signs to discourage relationships between Jews and non-Jews (1933). *Courtesy of AKG Images.*

## VOCABULARY

**antisemitism:** hostility or prejudice toward Jewish people

**Nazi:** a member or supporter of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party). The Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, ruled Germany from 1933-1945. Nazi is short for *Nationalsozialist*, the German word for 'National Socialist.'

**Roma:** a collective term for the group of people who migrated to Europe from northern India in the 1400s. Sinti is the term for Roma from western and central Europe. The Roma are also known as "gypsies," but this is a derogatory word.

**stateless:** a status which means that a person does not have citizenship in any country

## LEARN MORE

United States Holocaust History Museum. "The Nuremberg Race Laws." Holocaust Encyclopedia. **https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-nuremberg-race-laws**.

# Handout: Human Rights Abuses in Nazi Germany

**Case Study #6: Forced Labor**

## SUMMARY

The belief that labor should be mandatory for certain "social outsiders" was widespread in Europe and the U.S. before the **Nazi** Party came to power in 1933. Many in Germany and abroad thought that societies could only function properly if all citizens were productive. Soon after the Nazis gained power in Germany, they pushed this idea to deadly extremes.

The Nazis opened their first **concentration camp**, Dachau, in 1933. This camp was created for political prisoners: Communists, socialists, trade unionists, and others. The camp system gradually grew to include Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, gay men, Poles, so-called "asocials" (e.g., homeless people, sex workers, etc.), and others. Much of the slave labor under Nazi Germany occurred in the camp system.

In order to get the most productive labor out of its prisoners, the Nazi leadership opened many concentration camps near work sites such as mines, quarries, and factories. Some of this labor was done under the supervision of the ***Schutzstaffel* (SS)** or other government authorities, but work was also done under the supervision of civilian businesses. More than 2,000 German companies, including BMW and Deutsche Bank, used forced labor to increase their profits during the Nazi era.

From the beginning of Nazi rule, camp prisoners were subject to forced labor; however, this work was different from the compulsory labor of the past. Not only were the Nazis forcing prisoners to work for free, but they were also trying to harm, humiliate, and kill them in the process. This was eventually solidified in the Nazis' practice of *Vernichtung durch Arbeit*–extermination through labor. As part of this program, Nazis withheld food, rest, medical care, and proper equipment from forced laborers. As a result, many died of starvation, illness, and injury. They were literally worked to death.

From 1933-1945, over twenty million people performed forced labor under German rule.

Women performing forced labor at Plaszow concentration camp in Poland. *Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.*

## VOCABULARY

**concentration camp:** a place where a large number of people are imprisoned, usually without trial. The Nazis and their collaborators operated 20,000 concentration camps throughout Europe.

**Nazi:** a member or supporter of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party). The Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, ruled Germany from 1933-1945. Nazi is short for *Nationalsozialist*, the German word for 'National Socialist.'

***Schutzstaffel* (SS):** originally established as Hitler's personal bodyguards, the SS eventually became the organization responsible for carrying out "the Final Solution." Its members viewed themselves as the racial elite of the German state.

## LEARN MORE

United States Holocaust History Museum. "Forced Labor: In Depth." Holocaust Encyclopedia. **https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/forced-labor-in-depth**.

# Handout: Human Rights Abuses in Nazi Germany

**Case Study #7: Destruction of Trade Unions**

## SUMMARY

A trade union is an organization of workers in a certain profession. The purpose of a union is to protect the rights and interests of its workers. When the **Nazi** Party came to power in January 1933, there were more than 160 different unions in Germany. Less than six months later, there were none.

Prior to the Nazi era, workers in Germany tended to support left-wing political parties such as the Social Democrats or Communists. As a result, the Nazis viewed labor as a threat to their power and made it a top priority to bring workers under their control.

On May 2, 1933, members of the ***Sturmabteilung*** **(SA)** occupied the headquarters of many unions throughout Germany. They arrested union leaders, many of whom were sent to **concentration camps**, and confiscated all of the unions' funds. From that point forward, trade unions, strikes, and collective bargaining–all of which gave power to the working class–were banned in Nazi Germany.

To replace these unions, the Nazis created the German Labor Front (GLF), which controlled wages and working conditions throughout Germany. Unlike unions, the GLF included both workers and their employers, and generally gave much more power to the bosses.

The German Labor Front claimed to help workers, but by 1939 wages had decreased and work hours had increased. While membership in the German Labor Front was technically voluntary, individuals had a difficult time finding a job if they were not a member.

At its height, the GLF had over twenty million members. By forcing all labor into a state-run and tightly controlled organization, the German government could eliminate any potential threats to the Nazi state from the working class.

SA stormtroopers entering a union office in Berlin. *Courtesy of Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz.*

## VOCABULARY

**concentration camp:** a place where a large number of people are imprisoned, usually without trial. The Nazis and their collaborators operated 20,000 concentration camps throughout Europe.

**Nazi:** a member or supporter of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party). The Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, ruled Germany from 1933-1945. Nazi is short for *Nationalsozialist*, the German word for 'National Socialist.'

***Sturmabteilung*** **(SA):** a paramilitary organization in Nazi Germany. The SA provided security at Nazi events and intimidated anyone it believed to be an "enemy of Germany."

## LEARN MORE

United States Holocaust History Museum. "The Nazi Terror Begins." Holocaust Encyclopedia. **https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-nazi-terror-begins**.

# Handout: Human Rights Abuses in Nazi Germany

**Case Study #8: Life and Death in the Lodz Ghetto**

## SUMMARY

The purpose of a **ghetto** is to segregate part of the population from the rest of society. One of the key steps in the Nazi Party's **genocide** plan was to physically isolate Jewish people from the rest of the population by forcing them into ghettos. Beginning in 1939, **Nazi** Germany established a large network of ghettos throughout Europe, eventually operating more than 1,100 ghettos.

The Nazi era was not the first time Jewish people were forced to live in ghettos. In 1516, the city of Venice, Italy required the city's entire Jewish population to live in a small area of the city. Over the course of the next several centuries, Jewish ghettos were established in cities throughout Europe; however, none were nearly as brutal or restrictive as the ghettos established by the Nazi regime.

The Lodz Ghetto, the second largest in Europe, operated from 1940 to 1944. It was the longest-lasting ghetto under Nazi control. In May 1940, the Lodz Ghetto was sealed from the outside world with nearly 164,000 Jews living inside. The ghetto's total area was only 1.5 square miles, and living standards were very low. For example, several families were forced to live in a single apartment. Most buildings did not have running water or a sewer system, so disease spread quickly.

Living conditions inside were miserable and starvation was widespread. More than 20 percent of the ghetto's inhabitants eventually died of hunger, cold, or disease. The Lodz Ghetto also served as a labor camp. A majority of the ghetto's inhabitants worked long hours in factories making garments, shoes, and military goods for Germany.

In January 1942, German authorities began deportations from the Lodz Ghetto to Chelmno, one of six **extermination camps** operated by the Nazis. In May 1944, Nazi leadership deported the remaining 75,000 Jews from Lodz to the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center.

Deportation of Jews from the Lodz Ghetto to the Chelmno killing center. *Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.*

## VOCABULARY

**extermination camp:** a facility established primarily for the purpose of murdering large numbers of people. These sites are also known as killing centers.

**genocide:** the deliberate killing of a large group of people because of their ethnicity, religion, or other characteristics

**ghetto:** an area of a city or town that is segregated from the rest of the population

**Nazi:** a member or supporter of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party). The Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, ruled Germany from 1933-1945. Nazi is short for *Nationalsozialist*, the German word for 'National Socialist.'

## LEARN MORE

United States Holocaust History Museum. "Lodz." Holocaust Encyclopedia. **https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/lodz**.