

RATIONALE:

In its curriculum guide for grades 9-12, the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust and Genocide Education asks the question, "What does the mandate require?" The answers direct us to teach tolerance, encourage a depth of conscience in our pupils, and provide a focus of personal responsibility against prejudice of any sort. The Commission also asks us to assure that students grasp the consequences of ignoring those who hate. The sum of those ideals leads us to prepare a response to people or organizations that would question the authenticity of the Holocaust.

This quick reference guideline for dealing with questions about Holocaust denial supports the classroom teacher's approach to applying the lessons of the Holocaust and other genocides while meeting the New Jersey core curriculum standards for social studies. It should hopefully promote spontaneous discussion fueled by the facts of settled history surrounding the occurrence of the Holocaust. Folded into lessons designed to teach tolerance, recognize prejudice, or preclude bigotry, it should help students synthesize historical facts and interpretations to reach personal conclusions about significant historical events (6.3.13).

HELPFUL WEBSITES:

A Brief History of Holocaust Denial:
<http://frank.mtsu.edu/~baustin/denhist.htm>

How the Holocaust History Project Addresses Holocaust-denial:
www.holocaust-history.org/denial/

Lesson Plans Focused on Holocaust Denial:http://www1.yadvashem.org/education/lessonplan/english/antisemitism_workshop/antisemitism-wkshop.pdf

The Skeptic's Dictionary:
<http://skepdic.com/holocaustdenial.html>

The Techniques of Holocaust Denial:
www.nizkor.org/features/techniques-of-denial/

The Anti-Defamation League:
<http://www.adl.org/holocaust/origins.asp>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:www.ushmm.org/research/library/weblinks/?content=holocaust_denial

New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education:
www.state.nj.us/njied/holocaust

Email: holocaust@doe.state.nj.us

A RESPONSE RESOURCE FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS:

FIELDING COMMON QUESTIONS RELATED TO HOLOCAUST DENIAL, THE VERACITY OF HOLOCAUST HISTORY, AND THE ORIGIN OF & MOTIVATION BEHIND THE DENIER MOVEMENT.



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COMMON QUESTIONS & SUGGESTED REPLIES:

- 1) Q:** What is Holocaust denial?
A: Holocaust denial is an attempt to dismiss the record of Nazi oppression and violence carried out against minorities in Europe from 1933-45 including the deaths of 6 million Jewish people.
- 2) Q:** Is there any proof that the Holocaust actually occurred?
A: Yes. The prosecution evidence of atrocities and genocide was so strong (at the Nuremberg Trials) that no one could ever stand before the court and argue that such horrors never happened. Nazi leaders Hermann Goering and Rudolf Hoess testified under oath about the persecution of European Jewry, and both Nazi & US photographers took pictures of victims for the record.
- 3) Q:** Why would anyone try to deny the fact that the Holocaust took place?
A: The denial of Holocaust history is a form of anti-Semitism and grows from religious prejudice not factual research. In his book, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote, "in the big lie, there is always a certain force of credibility".
- 4) Q:** Is there formal evidence of Nazi death camps?
A: Yes. After the liberation of Europe at the end of WW II, Allied forces found and took pictures of camp buildings, crematoria, ovens, and dead bodies. Nazi soldiers and SS officers left personal and institutional pictures behind that prove the existence of both labor & death camps. In some cases, camp ruins are still stranding.
- 5) Q:** Is there proof that the Nazis murdered Jews in gas chambers?
A: Yes. There are blueprints of gas chambers, orders for the deadly Zyklon B gas, and pictures of dead bodies. There is also first hand testimony from perpetrator witnesses who described specific instances of murder by gas, and from liberators who saw the evidence.
- 6) Q:** What is historical revision?
A: Historical revision, as a scholarly exercise, is the assessment of why and how factual events that are recorded in history are further explained. Their actual occurrence is not questioned. Legitimate historians have literally no debate about the fact that the Holocaust took place.
- 7) Q:** How did Holocaust denial get its start?
A: The evolution of Holocaust denial began in the years following WW II with former Nazi party members who attempted to minimize the evidence of Nazi inhumanity. A more organized effort emerged in the US from 1979 into the late 1990s centered on anti-Semitic politics and the effort to minimize the record of Jewish suffering in WW II.
- 8) Q:** Is Holocaust denial against the law?
A: Not in the USA, where 1st amendment rights guarantee freedom of speech, even if that speech is offensive. In some European countries, such as Germany, in Canada and in Israel, laws make the denial of genocide in general and/or the Holocaust in particular a crime.
- 9) Q:** How do we know whom to believe on questions of Holocaust denial?
A: Always go back to the primary documents. The Nazis themselves kept extensive records of their efforts to eliminate Jews, Roma & Sinti (Gypsies), homosexuals, the disabled, and political opponents from lands under their control. Minutes from once secret meetings are now available in print and from credible online sources. Heinrich Himmler (Reich Leader of the SS and Chief of German Police) spoke specifically about "the extermination of the Jewish people", in a speech to SS Generals in 1943. Students can also read testimony of former Nazi leaders taken under oath.
- 10) Q:** Why is Holocaust denial spreading in some countries?
A: Governments in some countries see Holocaust denial as helping to limit the growth of support for the State of Israel. Others see it as a form of contemporary anti-Semitism.