



LESSON PLAN: HOW DO GENOCIDES DESTROY?

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, students are confronted with the escalation of hate, which when left unchecked, can lead to the conflagration of genocide. Students are to consider the power of the media and propaganda to ignite pre-existing hatreds, dehumanize the victims, and encourage average citizens and neighbors to turn against their fellow persons. Teachers should exercise caution in examining the hate speech that was used to persuade and mobilize the masses so as not to cause harm nor foster similar hatreds in their students. Finally, students confront the horrors of genocide and how, even amidst extreme persecution, victims struggle to maintain their humanity.

PART ONE: THE ESCALATION OF HATE

1 Students are informed that they will learn about the escalation of hate, the impact that leaders of governments have on inciting genocide, the power of the media to carry that message, and the fertile ground that makes the public receptive to these messages of hate. In pairs or small groups, students read the handout, [Dangerous Policies of Genocidal Regimes](#), and answer the questions that follow.

2 Students watch the video, [Words that Kill](#), which talks about the power of propaganda and the radio to incite genocide in Nazi Germany and Rwanda. Next, the class discusses the following questions:

- What did you expect to see in the video? What surprised you?
- What were some of the techniques those in power used to make the radio a powerful tool to spread propaganda?
- How can repeating messages of hate, occurring every day and in every place, affect the beliefs of individuals, groups, and nations?
- What are some of the important lessons about propaganda, the power of media, and the role of hate speech to incite genocide that are found in this video?

3 Students examine the images in the [Examples of Propaganda](#) handout. In pairs, students discuss the following questions:

- What do you see in each image? What is the propagandist trying to make viewers feel?
- Why is the concept of a parasite or something that can make us sick a common propaganda technique? How does that stoke fear in a population?
- How did propaganda messages like these and stereotypes used by the perpetrators dehumanize their victims? What might have been the effects of such dehumanization for both individuals and victim communities?

4 Students watch the testimonies of [Marion Pritchard \(bio\)](#), [Freddy Mutanguha \(bio\)](#), and [Arshag Dickranian \(bio\)](#). As they watch the clips, students take notes on the [Testimony Reflections](#) handout. After viewing the clips, the class discusses the following questions:

- How was the life of Marion, a non-Jew, changed by the anti-Jewish measures the Nazis had implemented?
- What were the effects of seeing the Nazi propaganda film, *The Eternal Jew*, and what does Marion advise on the power of propaganda?

- What effect does it have when people in positions of authority (teachers, police) allow for discrimination, harassment, and violent actions against a victim group?
- How do these acts of perpetration and acceptance within society embolden others to act in similar or even more brutal ways?

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As a summative task, students write a brief journal entry reflecting on this quote from Marion: “It shows that even with people who want to resist propaganda, it still has an effect.”

PART TWO: THE CONFLAGRATION

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Students watch the testimonies of [Freddy Mutanguha \(bio\)](#), [Elise Taft \(bio\)](#), [Barbara Fischman Traub \(bio\)](#), and [Theary Seng \(bio\)](#) and are confronted with the knowledge that genocide is often perpetrated by neighbors and those once considered friends. Discuss some or all of the following questions:

- What are some of the emotions, voice intonations, and body language cues that you noticed in the clips? Why are these cues an important part of understanding and fostering empathy with the survivors?
- Based on their actions, the neighbors knew what was happening or even participated. In each scenario, describe what the neighbors were doing and the effect it had on the individuals who were targeted.
- How is genocide often a very personal and intimate experience for the victims? Does this surprise you? How does it affect your understanding of how genocides are perpetrated?