

THE POWER OF HOLOCAUST EDUCATION



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.

WHY TEACH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST?

In recent years, there has been a significant spike in hate-fueled violence and rhetoric against different groups on both a national and global scale. Additionally, there continues to be a rise in school-based antisemitic incidents, including the appropriation of swastikas, Nazi salutes, antisemitic jokes or taunts, and other displays of images from the Holocaust. This reality, coupled with the distancing memory of the Holocaust and the dwindling population of living survivors, makes it a critical time to teach the lessons of this history.¹

Through a thoughtful and sound study of the Holocaust, students gain the ability to understand the potential dangers and consequences of unchecked hate and can grow into responsible citizens to recognize and prevent future acts of injustice. A 2020 national survey, commissioned by Echoes & Reflections, shows that Holocaust education in high school reflects gains not only in historical knowledge but also manifests in cultivating more empathetic, tolerant, and engaged students.² Holocaust education supports students to develop the skills needed to examine the effects of stereotyping, indifference, and bigotry.

THE CHALLENGING CONDITIONS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST:

An increasing number of states have enacted legislation to recommend or require Holocaust instruction, elevating the need for educators to acquire the skills and confidence to teach this complex subject with meaning and impact. However, creating quality learning may present challenges for educators, who most often receive little or no training on instruction and are faced with limited instructional time along with a range of curricular priorities and diverse learner needs.

Educators today face many challenges in teaching about the Holocaust. Additionally, they also face increasing demands on their time which create limited opportunities for professional development. A report from the Gates Foundation finds that the majority of teachers also find that their schools do not provide enough support for professional development opportunities, such as reimbursing tuition, paying for travel expenses, or granting paid time off to attend PD events. **Educators want and need support to develop their practice.**⁴

A COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION OF THE HOLOCAUST PROVIDES STUDENTS WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO:

- **Increase knowledge** of the content and context of the history of the Holocaust;
- **Foster empathy** for the victims of the Holocaust and other genocides;
- **Engage in critical thinking** to support thoughtful reflection on a range of societal issues, such as the abuse of power, impact of propaganda, and the failure of individuals, institutions, governments to take a stand against injustice;
- **Make relevant and contemporary connections** to confront the consequences of what can happen when hate, antisemitism, and extreme prejudice thrive in society; and
- **Compel action by** examining the role and responsibility of individuals in a democratic society and the cost of remaining silent in the face of bigotry and hate.

¹ Conference, C. (2020). FIRST-EVER 50-STATE SURVEY ON HOLOCAUST KNOWLEDGE OF AMERICAN MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z REVEALS SHOCKING RESULTS |. Copyright ©Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference). All Rights Reserved. <http://www.claimscon.org/millennial-study/>

² Echoes & Reflections. (2020, September). Echoes & Reflections U.S. College Survey. https://echoesandreflections.org/wp-content/themes/twentyxixteenechoes/fileview.php?source=1&file_nm=2020/09/College-Survey-Summary-Article-September-2020-a.pdf

³ Eckmann, M., Stevick, D. and Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, J., 2017. Research In Teaching And Learning About The Holocaust A Dialogue Beyond Borders. 3rd ed. [PDF] Berlin: buchdruckerei.de, p.193. https://holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/research_in_teaching_and_learning_about_the_holocaust_web.pdf

⁴ <https://www.epi.org/publication/teacher-shortage-professional-development-and-learning-communities/>

ECHOES & REFLECTIONS: AN ANSWER TO THE CHALLENGE

Echoes & Reflections is dedicated to supporting middle and high school educators across subject areas to teach their students about the Holocaust with confidence and impact. Founded in 2005 as a partnership of three world leaders in education, ADL, USC Shoah Foundation, and Yad Vashem, Echoes & Reflections has become a trusted source in education providing a range of professional development programs and content to support effective teaching—at no cost to educators.

Echoes & Reflections provides pedagogically sound training and classroom-ready resources to help teachers introduce students to the complex themes of the Holocaust and to understand its lasting effect on the world.

OUR CONTENT IS:

- **Standards-based and aligns** with state and national educational standards.
- **Interdisciplinary with resources that support** subjects of history, social studies, language arts, the humanities, and more.
- **Personalized with** carefully aligned video testimonies and personal stories from survivors, liberators, and other witnesses.
- **Enriched with multimedia assets including,** primary and secondary sources like documents, visual history testimony, artwork, poetry, diaries, and maps.
- **Customizable** to be used individually or as part of a larger course of study.
- **Inquiry-based** to support students' sharing of ideas and asking questions of themselves and others.

“I took Echoes & Reflections Holocaust professional development this summer and it has made such a difference with my instruction and the students' learning. Students have been engaged, willingly participating in the discussions, and comprehension is at an all-time high.”

—TEACHER FROM BUENA PARK, CA

For more information about Echoes & Reflections programs and activities, visit echoesandreflections.org.

A joint program of ADL, USC Shoah Foundation, and Yad Vashem

