

Stand Up! Speak Out!

SPEAK OUT FOR ME

Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak out for me.

Guide for Discussion, Reflection or Role Play

Vocabulary

Scapegoat

(noun) A person or group that is the object of irrational hostility, often singled out because they are perceived to be an easy target: they have less power and there is already bias against them;
(verb) to unfairly blame a person or group for problems they did not cause

Communists

Political party deemed enemies of the Nazi regime, falsely accused of trying to overthrow the state. When the German parliament (The Reichstag) burned down on February 27, 1933 the Nazis falsely portrayed it as evidence of a Communist effort to overthrow the state, and justified the arrest and imprisonment of Communists and other political opponents.

Freemasons

Originally guilds established by craftsmen throughout Europe, Hitler charged that Jews had infiltrated the groups and were using them to promote “religious tolerance”—a decidedly anti-Nazi concept

Roma (including Sinti), also known as "Gypsies"

Roma is a minority group that originated in the Punjab region of northern India, but were called "Gypsies" because Europeans mistakenly believed they came from Egypt. They are made up of "tribes" or "nations," including Sinti and Roma families. They speak dialects of the Romani language, based on Sanskrit, the classical language of India. Some Roma are Christian and some are Muslim. Like Jews, they were considered “racially inferior” and persecuted by the Nazis during World War II. They continue to be persecuted today.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Targeted by the Nazis because they would not recognize the authority of any government (over God’s). They also opposed war and refused to serve in the army.

Homosexuals

German gay-rights activists were worldwide leaders in efforts to reform attitudes that condemned homosexuality. The Nazis posed as moral crusaders who wanted to stamp out the "vice" of homosexuality from Germany in order to help win the racial struggle. Once they took power in 1933, the Nazis persecuted and put to death male homosexuals.

Disabled children Because children were generally too young to be deployed at forced labor—and therefore “useless eaters”—Nazis selected them, along with the elderly, ill, and disabled, for the first deportations to killing centers, or first victims led to mass graves to be shot

Socialists

Another group among the first opponents of the Nazi regime, which made them targets for persecution--Jews and non-Jews alike. Helen Keller, the US-born deaf and blind author/activist was also a suffragist and Socialist. Her books were among those burned by the Nazi regime.

Trade unionists

Train union leaders were also among the first opponents to the Nazi regime, and were targeted for persecution—Jews and non-Jews alike.

“The Nazis, who came to power in Germany in January 1933, believed that Germans were "racially superior" and that the Jews, deemed "inferior," were an alien threat to the so-called German racial community. During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also targeted other groups because of their perceived "racial inferiority": [Roma](#) (Gypsies), the disabled, and some of the Slavic peoples ([Poles](#), Russians, and others). Other groups were persecuted on political, ideological, and behavioral grounds, among them Communists, Socialists, [Jehovah's Witnesses](#), and [homosexuals](#).”

[US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Introduction to the Holocaust](#)

[Martin Niemöller](#) (1892-1984) was a prominent Protestant pastor who was as an outspoken opponent of Adolf Hitler and spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps. His famous quote condemned those Germans—particularly the leaders of Protestant churches—for being Silent Bystanders, and therefore complicit in the Nazi imprisonment, persecution, and murder of millions of people.

*First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out--
Because I was not a Socialist.
Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out--
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out--
Because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me--and there was no one left to speak for me.*

1. Explain in your own words the meaning of Reverend Niemöller's quote.
2. Research the different kinds of individuals or groups named in the song lyrics who were persecuted by the Nazis. None were safe. Any one of them could be subject to attacks on the street, arrest, and execution. Why did the Nazis consider these individuals or groups threats?
3. Consider the definition of a scapegoat: “A person or group that is the object of irrational hostility” Explain why Nazi persecution was “irrational hostility.”
4. Which of these individuals or groups are still the subject of bias and persecution today?
 - Are they subjected to bias in the US? Elsewhere in the world?
 - What are the different ways in which these biases are still expressed? Consider:
 - Access: are there barriers to housing, jobs, education
 - Safety: are they physically in danger? Psychologically in danger?
 - Rights: Are their rights limited or infringed in any way?
5. What are some of the challenges facing the US today? What groups are scapegoated because of those challenges? Which are subjected to “irrational hostility”? Find examples in the news today and in the past decade. Consider:
 - Unemployment and the state of the economy: immigrant workers
 - Fear of terrorism: Muslims, Sikhs, and others who “don't look American”
 - People who are not heterosexual: LGBT
6. What does “an American” look like?
 - Is there a “stereotypical” image of what “a real American” looks like?
 - How does that compare to the reality of what “a real American” looks like?
7. We can look at bias and bullying as a spectrum, like an arc, representing a wide range. The Nazi regime is an example of bias and bullying taken to the extreme. What's at the other end of the spectrum? Draw an arc and identify biases along it, from what you consider the least harmful at one end, to Nazi-like persecution and genocide at the other end.
 - If you don't experience a certain kind of bias, is it easier to label it one of the “least harmful”?
 - What does the spectrum of bias have to do with school bullying?
 - What can each of us do about it?