

Through Their Eyes - Original Project Documents

Created by Sandra Lessig

Volunteer, Holocaust Museum Houston

Curriculum Outline
(Three 2 hour sessions at a minimum)

Why do participants need a curriculum? Those of us in the second and third generation have either heard too much, too little or just fragments of our parents' stories over the years. Even if we are familiar with our parents' experiences, we may not have sufficient historical background. In hindsight, we may not have asked for information we now wish we had. In order to represent our parents' stories with integrity, we must prepare ourselves emotionally and arm ourselves with historically accurate information that will enable us to communicate to audiences with confidence. At the very least, this will be a review for those who are already well informed.

Preparation for Session One:

Prior to first session, watch parent's video once through and read pages 2 through 29 in "Tell Them We Remember"

Session One

Rationale for this program

Introduce ourselves

To create a model for the future

How "we" would be used; in what settings, for what length of time; what would be expected of us

Introspection and writing

What is each person's memory of the first time he/she became aware of what happened to his/her parent(s)? How has this knowledge affected and changed me? What is my motivation in telling my parent's story? How did I feel watching the video?

Emphasize the commitment of time & emotional energy! There will be pain.

Looking at life before

For your parent's life

For Jews in general in Western & Eastern Europe; For example, someone who grew up under Hitler rise to power will have a different historical overview than someone whose life wasn't impacted until Poland was invaded & he was deported.

Hand out of partial list of timeline of anti-Semitic laws & compare to laws passed in Nazi Germany

Assignment: to complete your writing & read in pages 30 through 61 in "Tell Them We Remember"

Session Two

Share briefly on each story/writing assignment

Ask, “What is going to change about me through this project?”

Your reactions to readings

Overview of war years

Hand outs

Assignment: watch the video of your parent; if possible view with him/her

Note the aspects you feel are *most vital* if you had to edit it down to 20 minutes

Find any family photos & if none available, check the USMHM website for photos that might be pertinent to your family’s story; read pages 64 through 87 in “Tell Them We Remember

Session Three

Feedback on assignment

“What questions am I afraid I may be asked?” (both personal & historical)

Life at the end of the war; afterwards for your family

Speaking tips, how to schedule speaking assignments;

Assignment: Develop action plan. “What do I do next?” read “How to Begin:

Suggestions for creating Through Their Eyes”

Mentoring partners: ask each participant to pair up to encourage and help each other

Suggested: view sample presentation either at the beginning or end of the training.

Don’t be surprised if your training turns into four or five sessions because this will depend on the level of information and pace of each person being trained.

The Holocaust

The Holocaust was the systematic, state-organized persecution and murder of nearly 6,000,000 Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. Two-thirds of Europe’s Jews and one-third of the world’s Jewish population were slaughtered in the Holocaust. More than half of the dead came from Poland, where the Nazi annihilation effort was 90% successful. The Holocaust hit Jewish children especially hard. While the Nazis were in power, from 1933 to 1945, they murdered up to 1.5 million children, the overwhelming majority of them Jewish. Of the European Jewish children alive in 1939, only 11percent survived.

All Jews were victims but not all victims were Jews. Others targeted included: anyone with a physical or mental handicap, Gypsies or Roma and Sinti, nomadic people who

traveled throughout Europe, homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses because they wouldn't give the Nazi salute since they felt it placed Hitler over God.

Suggested reading for participants:

"After Such Knowledge" by Eva Hoffman

"Nothing Makes You Free: Writings by Descendants of Jewish Holocaust Survivors" by Melvin Jules Bukiet

"Second Generation Voices: Reflections by Children of Holocaust Survivors and Perpetrators" by Alan L. Berger and Naomi Berger

"Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust" by Dina Ward and Naomi Goldblum

Background and texts:

"War and Genocide" by Doris Bergen

"Tell Them We Remember" by Susan D. Bachrach

Suggested films to watch for overall background information:

"The Last Days"

"Genocide"

A Few Suggested reading for students:

"Number the Stars" by Lois Lowry j 5th & 6th graders

"The Book Thief" by Markos Zusak high school and adult

"The Devil's Arithmetic" by Jane Yolen middle school

"Night" by Elie Wiesel high school and adult

Speaker's Tips

Practice your presentation several times, especially in front of someone who will make critical suggestions

Keep the age and background of your audience in mind; not all of what you may have to say may be suited for all ages

Write out your script noting video pauses in your parent's testimony

Print script out in large print so you can see it in dim light without glasses

Begin with a pause, look your audience over & gather them together as you begin

Make eye contact with the audience (you can look at their foreheads if necessary)

Pretend you're confident even if you're not; don't apologize

Remember that you know more than they do; you're not an historian

If you don't know the answer to a question, you can always say you'll find out & let the teacher know later

Be sincere; remember enthusiasm can be felt by an audience

Put animation in your voice, facial expressions and gestures

Use your own words but don't recite or read your script without looking up; you must pause for effect at some spots and remember to take your time without rushing

If you feel yourself stumble, lose your place or get stuck, don't apologize, don't stop; just keep going

Relax and breathe

Don't be afraid to let yourself show the emotion you feel as you speak

Modulate your voice to help establish the mood you want. Sometimes lowering your voice is more effective in establishing a mood than raising it

Avoid saying, "um" and "you know" or other nervous habits

Dress in a professional manner

Relax and be yourself! You will develop your own style; one that you are comfortable with

Remember that you want to make your parent come alive so the audience lives the story with him or her so they know and feel their emotions and yours. Breathe life into your story so your listeners are almost as moved as if your mother or father was there telling the story.