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100 Raoul Wallenberg Pl SW, Washington, DC 20024

AMERICANS AND THE HOLOCAUST

FAMILY EXHIBITION GUIDE AND ACTIVITIES

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WILLIAM LEVINE FAMILY INSTITUTE
FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Welcome to the **AMERICANS** **AND THE HOLOCAUST** exhibition.

Today you will step back in history to learn about American responses to the Nazi threat in the 1930s and 1940s. Use this guide to focus on the history of four Americans who lived during this time. How did they respond to the persecution of Jews? What actions did they take?

Before you get started, review these key facts about Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s.

Who were the Nazis?

Members of a political party in Germany led by Adolf Hitler.

When were the Nazis in power?

The Nazis came to power in 1933. They soon established a dictatorship and remained in power until the end of World War II in 1945.

Where was Nazi Germany?

Nazi Germany was located in Central Europe. At the height of World War II, the Nazis dominated most of the European continent (all the way from France to Russia).

What did the Nazis do?

The Nazis persecuted and murdered six million Jews and targeted millions of others.

Why?

The Nazis believed that Germans were “racially superior” and that Jews, deemed “inferior,” were a threat to the so-called German racial community. These ideas were rooted in a long history of antisemitism (hatred of Jews) and racism.

Look for the four Americans highlighted in this booklet as you explore the exhibition.



Photo courtesy of: Ruth Gruber Archives,
lent by David Michaels and Celia Michaels

STORY 4: USE YOUR VOICE

Who? Ruth Gruber

What? Journalist

When? 1944

Where? Oswego, New York

Ruth Gruber was a journalist and photographer who worked for the US government. In 1944, she accompanied 1,000 mostly Jewish refugees on their journey to an American refugee camp in Oswego, New York. Ruth joined the refugees on the ship from Europe and recorded their experiences in order to

write articles about them. The refugees remained at Fort Ontario in Oswego for 18 months. Ruth visited frequently during this time, providing much-needed support and happiness in their lives.

LOOK AT THE EXHIBITION: Find the photograph of the refugee child (on the left of the fence) to see what part of the camp looked like.

DO AN ACTIVITY: Practice your skills as a journalist by interviewing a friend or family member. Use the questions below to get started:

What is your name?

Where do you live?

What do you like to do?

What is important to you?

EXTEND YOUR VISIT: Ask permission to shadow a family member or friend for a few hours. Write about what their life is like.



Photo courtesy of: THE READING EAGLE

STORY 3: HELP A FRIEND IN NEED

Who? Jane Bomberger
What? Student
When? 1938
Where? Reading, Pennsylvania

In 1935, 16-year-old Jane Bomberger became pen pals with Marianne Winter, a 14-year-old girl from Vienna, Austria. Over the next three years, the girls developed a friendship. After Nazi Germany took control of Marianne's homeland in 1938, Marianne asked

Jane for help: "Now I ask you...if it would be possible for you to get a connection with any rich man who would be able to give an affidavit?" Marianne and her family wanted to come to America, but they needed an American citizen to sponsor them. Even though they had never met Marianne or her family, the Bombergers decided to help the Winters move to America. They provided money and friendship during a dark and difficult time.

LOOK AT THE EXHIBITION: Explore the map to see how far the Winters had to travel to reach safety in America.

DO AN ACTIVITY: Think about the needs of your community. List three ways you could help a local or international family in need.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

EXTEND YOUR VISIT: Support a local organization that helps families in need.



Photo courtesy of: Library of Congress

STORY 1: TAKE A SMALL STEP TOWARD A BIG CHANGE

Who? Jesse Owens
What? Athlete
When? 1936
Where? Berlin, Germany

Americans were divided on the issue of whether to boycott the 1936 Olympics, and US Jewish and African American athletes were caught in the middle. Jesse Owens, America's track and field star, faced a lot of pressure from people on

both sides of the debate. In the end, US athletes participated in the Berlin Olympics. Jesse Owens won four gold medals and broke three world records. Sadly, his success did not change racial prejudice in the United States or abroad, but he did spark a conversation about race in America.

LOOK AT THE EXHIBITION: Read Jesse's quote to learn about his experience of racism after he returned from Berlin.

DO AN ACTIVITY: Start a conversation with a friend or family member about this topic. Use the definitions below to expand the conversation.

What is a debate? A discussion about a subject on which people have different views

What is prejudice? A negative opinion or judgment that is not based on logic or experience

What is racism? The idea (not based in fact) that people of one race are better or worse than other people

EXTEND YOUR VISIT: Famous Americans, including athletes, sometimes use their platform to call for social change. Use the resources at your library to research an athlete who took a stand on a social issue.



Photo courtesy of: Dartmouth Library

STORY 2: TAKE A STAND

Who? Dr. Seuss

What? Artist

When? 1941

Where? New York, New York

In 1941, many Americans did not want to go to war with Germany; they believed the United States should not focus on foreign issues. Dr. Seuss felt differently. He was worried about the innocent people in Europe and he wanted the United States to take action. He decided

to use his skill as an artist to change American minds. Although Dr. Seuss's characters were playful, his message was very serious.

LOOK AT THE EXHIBITION: Find Dr. Seuss's cartoon of an adult reading to two children. In this cartoon, Dr. Seuss compares Adolf Hitler, the leader of Nazi Germany, to the Big Bad Wolf in "Little Red Riding Hood." What do you think Dr. Seuss was telling people about Adolf Hitler?

DO AN ACTIVITY: Use the space on the next page to draw a picture of an issue that is important to you. You may choose to use both words and pictures like Dr. Seuss!

EXTEND YOUR VISIT: Check out *Dr. Seuss Goes to War* from your library to learn more about Dr. Seuss's cartoons.

[**WARNING FOR PARENTS:** Some of Seuss's cartoons, particularly of Japanese and Japanese Americans, feature racist stereotypes common at the time.]