

How Do I Respond to a Crisis?

American Responses to the Holocaust

Discovering
American
Jewish History
Through
Objects

01 SAVE A LIFE, SAVE THE WORLD

Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if they destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life of Israel, it is considered as if they saved an entire world.

שכל המאבד נפש אחת מישראל, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו אבד עולם מלא.
וכל המקים נפש אחת מישראל, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו קים עולם מלא.

Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5; Yerushalmi Talmud 4:9

Why is saving a life equivalent to saving an entire world?

02 SPEAK OUT

How can we ask our Christian friends to lift their voices in protest against the wrongs suffered by Jews if we keep silent? ...What is happening in Germany today may happen tomorrow in any other land on earth unless it is challenged and rebuked. It is not the German Jews who are being attacked. It is the Jews.

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, honorary president, American Jewish Congress, March 19, 1933.

03 BOYCOTT

Any Jew buying one penny's worth of merchandise made in Germany is a traitor to his people. I doubt that the American government can officially take any notice of what the German government is doing to its own citizens. Our only line of resistance is to touch German pocketbooks.

William W. Cohen, Vice President of the American Jewish Congress, March 27, 1933.

Would you ever participate in a boycott? Why or why not?

04 QUIET DIPLOMACY

The American Jewish Committee, in agreement with responsible Jewish organizations in Europe, declines to sanction a declaration of boycott against Germany. We will not make threats, but rather rely upon the moral forces of America and of other enlightened countries in the world. If these moral forces are dead, then civilized man will perish and brutes will rule.

Dr. Cyrus Adler, President, American Jewish Committee, August 19, 1933.

SOUND THE ALARM 08

I am convinced...that certain officials in our State Department... have been guilty not only of gross procrastination and willful failure to act, but even of willful attempts to prevent action from being taken to rescue Jews from Hitler.

Josiah DuBois et. al., "Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of this Government in the Murder of the Jews," January 13, 1944.

FIGHT 07

I worked with a German girl who told me that she was going back to Germany because she loved Hitler, and that really got to me. It was at that point that I said I can't just sit here not doing anything and I decided to join up.

Dorothy Nash, Jewish WWII veteran

What would you do if you heard a friend say something hurtful to someone else?

RESCUE 06

We can delay and effectively stop, for a temporary period of indefinite length, the number of immigrants into the United States. We could do this by simply advising our consuls to...resort to various administrative devices which would postpone and postpone the granting of the visas.

Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long, June 26, 1940.

To think of being able to help even a handful of children is a beautiful thought. It is a luxurious dream but most impractical.

Eleanor Kraus, 1939.

INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE 05

There is no room for discrimination on grounds of race, color, or creed in the Olympics. The A.A.U. voted in 1933 to accept an invitation to compete at Berlin in 1936, provided Germany pledged that there would be no discrimination against Jewish athletes. If that pledge is not kept, I personally do not see why we should compete.

Judge Jeremiah Mahoney, president of the Amateur Athletic Union, July 24, 1935.

The Olympic Games belong to the athletes and not to the politicians...Germany's political policy within or without its borders has no hearing on the subject.

Avery Brundage, President, United States Olympic Committee, October 1935.

If you had been an Olympic athlete in 1936, would you have boycotted the German games?



Stamp, "Boycott Hitler!" ca. 1933
Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, 1990.1.8.1

OPEN BOOK

Teacher
Guide
7th – 11th
Grade

How Do I Respond to a Crisis?

American Responses to the Holocaust

This lesson examines a very difficult time in American and Jewish history, including the rise of the Nazi party, escalating persecution of German Jews, and the 1942 revelation of Nazi plans for exterminating all European Jewry.

Adolf Hitler's rise to power and the Nazi party's anti-Jewish policies unsettled America's Jews, many of whom had family or cultural ties to Germany and to the nations living in Germany's shadow. Still caught in the depths of the Great Depression, American Jews remained uncertain how to respond. Many assumed—in America and Germany—that Nazi rule would be short lived. As the persecution of German Jews intensified, their alarm increased. Nobody imagined the horrors that lay ahead, but the threat that Nazism posed to freedom soon became all too clear.

With millions of lives at stake, tough choices lay before the Jewish community. This lesson focuses on the various ways the Jewish community responded to these threats, including internal disagreements about what action to take.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- What were the possible courses of action open to American Jews?
- What were the risks and rewards for each course of action?
- How do you decide when to speak up or take other action? What are the risks of speaking out? What are the risks of silence?
- How can and should responses to crises differ when they come from groups directly affected by the crisis versus those not directly affected?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- Apply inquiry-based methods to interpreting museum objects and/or primary sources.

Suggested Pre-Lesson Activity

1. Ask students to share what they already know about the Holocaust, correcting misconceptions and filling in factual information as needed. Note the geographic locations that students mention, such as whether they focus only on Germany or also mention other countries.

2. Explain that this lesson will focus on how American Jews reacted to the Holocaust. Divide students into five groups and assign each a specific organization or event to research and explain to the rest of the class, using at least one historical image or text:

- German boycott
- American Jewish Committee
- March of the Rabbis (1943)
- *We Will Never Die* (1943)
- War Refugee Board (1944-45)

3. Have students report their findings to the rest of the class.

4. After each presentation, facilitate a class discussion about each reaction. Consider the following discussion questions:

- What parties were involved? What factors were affecting the situation?
- What factors influenced how decisions were made? Why do you think those decisions were made? Do you agree?
- Were other options available at the time? What do you think would have happened if people had chosen those other options?

Procedure

1. Refer to the *OpenBook Overview* and follow the instructions for the “See, Think, Wonder” activity as a class. Consider using the following discussion questions.

See:

- What animals do you see in the image? Where are they?
- What religious symbols do you see? What patriotic symbols do you see?
- What text do you see? What colors are the texts?
- What colors do you see?

Think:

- Why do you think the words “Boycott Hitler” are much bigger than the words “not Germany?”
- Who do you think the stamp was meant to reach? What do you think the stamp’s makers hoped people would do?
- What do you think the eagle symbolizes? The wolf?
- What do you think the chained gate represents?
- Why do you think the eagle is on top of the chained gate?
- Why do you think the wolf is in front of the Ten Commandments?
- What do you think “Brotherhood of Mankind” means??
- Where do you think people saw this stamp? How do you think people reacted to it?

Wonder:

- I wonder who designed this stamp.
- I wonder how it was used.
- I wonder if it was successful in encouraging the public to boycott Germany.
- I wonder if there were similar stamps made for alternative viewpoints.
- I wonder how the Nazis responded to the stamp.

2. If you haven’t already, divide students into pairs or trios. Distribute one Talmud page to each group and Student Guide to each student.

3. Refer to the *OpenBook Overview* and follow the instructions for the *havruta* study.

4. Refer to the *OpenBook* Overview and follow the instructions for the Wrap up activity. Consider using the following discussion questions.

- Can you find two texts that agree with each other? What do you think their authors might say to each other?
- Can you find two texts that disagree with each other? What do you think their authors might say to each other?
- How many texts advocate for an action? How many texts advocate for inaction? How do these texts differ?

General prompting questions:

- Do you watch the news or read a newspaper? How do you learn about events happening in the world?
- How do you respond to issues you care about?
- Have you ever called a congressperson? Signed a petition? Marched in a protest? What was that experience like and what did you hope to accomplish?
- If you wanted to help someone, but doing so came with a tremendous risk of failure, what would you do?

Suggested Post-Lesson Activity

- 1. Tell the class:** Imagine you were given information about something bad happening in a class at a nearby school or neighborhood. You know they have been having problems, but you're not sure how true this information is. You want to tell others immediately so you can get the word out and maybe help others, but a teacher asks you to keep it quiet for now. What would you do?
- 2. Have students discuss with their *havruta* partners** how they would respond to the scenario, then ask a few volunteers to report out. Encourage friendly debate between any students with differing responses.
- 3. Explain that Rabbi Stephen S. Wise had to deal with this difficult dilemma:** wanting to respond to a crisis when his government told him to stay silent.
- 4. Read the telegram that Gerhard Riegner sent, and explain why it was sent and how the State Department responded to it.**
- 5. Discuss the telegram and its consequences. Consider using the following discussion questions:**
 - Why do you think the State Department insisted on keeping the telegram a secret? Do you agree or disagree with their response, and why?
 - Why do you think Wise agreed to do what State Department officials asked? Can you think of the pros and cons of going along with the State Department's request?
 - What do you think might have happened if Wise had chosen to publicize the telegram instead of waiting for permission from the government?
 - What would you have done if you were in Rabbi Wise's position?

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Object Information

Stamp, Boycott Hitler, ca. 1933

After Hitler was appointed German chancellor in 1933, American Jews searched for ways to voice their protest. Many, but not all, called for a nationwide boycott of German goods to protest Nazi policies against Jews. At a rally that year, sponsored by the Jewish War Veterans, former congressman William W. Cohen declared that “any Jew buying one penny’s worth of merchandise made in Germany is a traitor to his people.” In 1936 the American Jewish Congress joined the Jewish Labor Committee to form the Joint Boycott Council. Prominent department stores like Macy’s and Gimbels joined the boycott and refused to sell German goods.

This red, white, and blue stamp was issued as a publicity tool for the anti-Nazi boycott. A snarling dog wrapped in a swastika is being barred from entering a chained gate guarded by

an American eagle and bearing the words “brotherhood of mankind.” Behind the dog is a wall featuring a Star of David and the tablets of the Ten Commandments.

Not all American Jews approved of the boycott. In fact, the influential American Jewish Committee opposed the movement altogether, fearing that it would incite antisemitism at home and abroad.

Moreover, Jewish leaders in Germany opposed the boycott, fearing that it would only intensify anti-Jewish persecution. Their fears were realized when Nazi officials retaliated with a counter-boycott of Jewish businesses. In the end, the American boycott of German goods had only minimal economic impact, but it did help American Jews raise public awareness of the Nazi threat.



Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, 1990.1.8.1

Appendix A – Historical Background

The economic devastation of the Great Depression in the United States, combined with the country's commitment to neutrality and deeply held prejudices against immigrants, limited Americans' willingness to welcome refugees. Neither President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration nor the US Congress were willing to adjust America's complicated and bureaucratic immigration process—which included quotas (numerical limits on the number of immigrants)—to aid the hundreds of thousands of refugees trying to flee Europe. Instead, the US State Department implemented new restrictive measures during this period that made it more difficult for immigrants to enter the United States. The United States issued far fewer visas for Jews to immigrate than it could have during this period. Nevertheless, it admitted more refugees fleeing Europe than any other nation in the world did.

When World War II began in September 1939, most Americans hoped the United States would remain neutral. Over the next two years, amid ongoing debates between those who wanted the United States to stay out of war and focus on the defense of the Western Hemisphere (isolationists) and those who favored proactively assisting Great Britain, even if it meant entering the war (interventionists), the United States slowly began to support the Allied powers. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, ended this debate. Two days later, President Roosevelt told Americans: "We are now in this war. We are all in it—all the way. Every single man, woman, and child is a partner in the most tremendous undertaking of our American history."

Over the next year, the US military doubled in size to four million service members and trained continually to prepare for combat. During most of 1942, the US Navy fought Japan in the Pacific, while ground troops prepared for battle in North Africa and Europe. On the home front, millions of women entered the workforce, many for the first time, and Americans were forced to adjust to rationing of food and consumer goods.

Even as the United States went to war to defend democracy abroad, the government violated the rights and limited the opportunities of its own minority citizens. In February 1942, two months after the attack at Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt signed an executive order permitting the government to take "every possible protection against espionage and against sabotage." Citing national security concerns, the US government used that order to relocate more than 110,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry—at least two-thirds of whom were American citizens—to ten camps across seven inland states. Japanese American men in these camps were not permitted to enlist in the US military until 1943, but when they did, the 442nd regimental combat team, made up entirely of Japanese Americans, became the most decorated military unit in American history and helped liberate Dachau.

Throughout World War II, the US Army remained segregated by race. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) showcased the dedication of African American troops as part of its Double-V campaign, advocating victory against fascism abroad and against racism at home. The Army remained segregated until 1948, three years after the end of World War II.

On November 25, 1942, many American newspapers published reports that two million Jews already had been murdered. The World Jewish Congress's representative in Switzerland, Gerhart Riegner, had tried to report this information and plans for future mass murder to his organization's president, Rabbi Stephen Wise, in August 1942, sending a message through the US State Department. State Department officials at first tried to block Riegner's report from reaching Rabbi Wise. They claimed that the planned murder of more European Jews was merely a "war rumor." Yet after investigating Riegner's report over the next three months, State Department officials verified the news of the Nazi regime's plan, and, according to Wise, authorized him to inform the American public.

In response to this news, Jewish communities in many Allied nations held rallies and vigils, and they declared Wednesday, December 2, 1942, to be an international day of mourning. The United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and nine Allied governments released a "Declaration on Atrocities" on December 17, 1942. This declaration condemned the "bloody cruelties" and "cold-blooded extermination" of Europe's Jews and vowed that the Allies would punish war criminals after the fighting stopped. It made no promise to initiate rescue efforts.

As details about the ongoing Nazi mass murder of European Jews trickled out to the public in 1943, American Jews remained divided on how much pressure to exert on the federal government to take action to rescue Jews. Some worried that appeals on behalf of Jewish victims would result in an antisemitic backlash in the United States. Others insisted that public pressure would be the only way to spark government action to rescue victims before the

war ended. A few tried both tactics: Rabbi Stephen S. Wise sponsored a massive pro-rescue rally in Madison Square Garden and also lobbied President Roosevelt privately to assist the European Jews.

The State Department and the British Foreign Office tried to address the mounting public pressure for an Allied rescue effort by holding the Bermuda Conference in April 1943. Delegates from both countries met in Bermuda to formulate plans to aid endangered Jews, though their governments had given them strict instructions that limited any real possibility of mass rescue. When the conference ended with no publicized plan, rescue advocates only grew more frustrated. The American press criticized the conference as empty posturing on the part of both nations.

After word reached America of the Nazi killing of European Jewry, pressure mounted on the Roosevelt administration to help European Jews. To spur action, playwright Ben Hecht prepared a memorial to the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution, "We Will Never Die." The pageant, sponsored by the Revisionist Zionist Bergson Group, was part of a mass demonstration at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Later seen in other US cities, the show was part of the Bergson Group's effort to pressure Washington to act decisively to rescue Europe's remaining Jews.

The Roosevelt administration also received pleas for action from individuals. In 1942 Jan Karski, a member of the Polish underground resistance, witnessed the horrors suffered by Jews both in the Warsaw ghetto and in a transit camp near another Jewish ghetto in German-occupied Poland. Karski met with President Roosevelt at the White House on July 28, 1943,

and told the president about the dire situation Jews faced under the Nazi regime. As Karski later recalled, FDR promised that the Allies “shall win the war” but he made no mention of rescuing Jews.

In December 1943 the Treasury Department investigated lengthy State Department delays in approving World Jewish Congress relief funds intended for Jews in France and Romania. Treasury staff discovered that assistant secretary of state Breckinridge Long had ordered the US legation in Switzerland to stop sending information about the murder of Jews to the United States and specifically to block details provided by Gerhart Riegner.

Secretary of the treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. decided to take these findings to President Roosevelt after he read his staff’s report, titled “Personal Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews.” On January 16, 1944, Morgenthau and two members of his staff met with the president, who agreed to remove responsibility for refugee and rescue activities from the State Department.

Roosevelt signed an executive order on January 22, 1944, creating the War Refugee Board (WRB). Headed by the secretaries of treasury, state, and war, the WRB was responsible for carrying out the new US policy for the rescue and relief of Jews and other minorities persecuted by Nazi Germany and its collaborators.

The WRB’s first director, John Pehle, and most of its staff were Treasury Department employees, though some private citizens and relief organization representatives joined its efforts. Funds for the WRB’s administrative and secret rescue operations came from Roosevelt’s emergency fund and through

congressional appropriations. The WRB streamlined bureaucratic paperwork, eased regulations, and lent government communication channels to assist private organizations—Jewish and non-Jewish—that wanted to send relief funds to Europe.

The WRB launched a propaganda campaign to warn those who prevented refugees from crossing their borders that they would face legal punishments after the war and negotiated with neutral nations to ensure open borders. It opened the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter in Oswego, New York, bringing 982 refugees, most of whom were Jewish, from Allied-occupied Italy to the United States. After the Nazi regime’s invasion of Hungary in March 1944, the WRB worked with the Swedish government to place Swedish businessman Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest to protect Jews. As more information about the deportations from Hungary to Auschwitz reached the United States, the WRB forwarded requests to bomb the rail lines, or the camp itself, to the War Department, which rejected the proposals. It released details about the operations of the Auschwitz concentration camp to the American public and supported secret ransom negotiations with Nazi officials to save Jewish lives. The WRB also sent three hundred thousand food packages, disguised in Red Cross boxes, into concentration camps in the final weeks of the war.

As Allied troops moved into Europe in a series of offensives against Nazi Germany, they encountered concentration camps, mass graves, and numerous other sites of Nazi crimes. Soviet forces were the first to overrun a major Nazi concentration camp, Lublin-Majdanek, near Lublin, Poland, in July 1944. On January 27, 1945, Soviet troops liberated Auschwitz. The US military did not participate in the liberation

of any extermination camps in Nazi-occupied Poland.

Though the liberation of Nazi camps was not a primary military objective, American soldiers advancing in the spring of 1945 liberated major concentration camps, including Buchenwald, Dachau, and Mauthausen, as well as hundreds of smaller camps. They also encountered and liberated prisoners on forced marches. After touring the Ohrdruf concentration camp on April 12, 1945, General Dwight D. Eisenhower sent a telegram to Washington: “The things I saw beggar description. ... The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality were ... overpowering. ... I made the visit deliberately in order to be in a position to give firsthand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to propaganda.”

Eisenhower encouraged American soldiers in the vicinity of a concentration camp to tour the site, take photographs, and write letters to their families in the United States describing what

they had seen. He also arranged for delegations of journalists and members of Congress to tour the newly liberated camps.

When World War II ended in Europe in May 1945, more than two million Europeans were displaced, including a quarter million Jews. American, Soviet, British, and French troops occupying German territory set up displaced-persons (DPs) camps to house Holocaust survivors and other DPs. In the first few months after the war ended, the camps were places of suffering and hunger. Jewish survivors were often held in the same camps with German civilians, or even with Nazi perpetrators.

Adapted from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Holocaust Encyclopedia

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-united-states-and-the-holocaust-1942-45?parent=en%2F25548>

Appendix B – Supplementary Information for Talmud Page

01 SAVE A LIFE, SAVE THE WORLD

The Talmud, a record of rabbinic discussions, is considered the authoritative primary source of Jewish religious law. Its two components are the Mishnah, a record of oral traditions developed after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, and the Gemara, interpretations, commentary, and applications of those oral traditions. There are two main Gemaras and corresponding Talmuds: the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (Jerusalem Talmud) and the *Talmud Bavli* (Babylonian Talmud). This precept is found in both Talmuds in Sanhedrin, a Mishnah tractate that deals with court and trial procedures. In the fourth chapter, the Mishnah describes this warning that judges should give to witnesses in capital cases, to remind them of the heavy responsibility entailed by the potential for capital punishment.

02 SPEAK OUT

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise (1874–1949) was a Reform rabbi, liberal activist, and an early American Zionist leader. Born in Budapest, Wise immigrated as a child to New York, where he earned his PhD at Columbia University and received rabbinical training from private teachers. After leading congregations in New York and Portland, Oregon, he founded the Free Synagogue in 1907 in New York City. He

became a noted champion of civil rights and social justice, preaching to audiences at Carnegie Hall and serving as an early board member of the NAACP.

Unlike most Reform rabbis of the time, Wise was an early supporter of Zionism. In 1898 he helped found the Zionist Organization of America. He was also a founder and leader of the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress. As honorary president of the American Jewish Congress, he organized a mass anti-Nazi protest in Madison Square Garden, calling for an end to antisemitism in Germany. At the March 19, 1933, meeting held to announce the rally, Wise spoke in response to Joseph Proskauer and Irving Lehman, judges who criticized the rally and boycott for its potential to cause more trouble for Jews in Germany. Wise underscored the necessity of political action to safeguard German Jews.

Wise and the American Jewish Congress organized more protests and participated in the boycott of German goods. As a supporter and friend of President Roosevelt, Wise urged the president early on to take action on behalf of German Jews and to oppose the Nazi regime. In a 1942 press conference, Wise informed the American public of the confirmed Nazi plan to commit genocide and made further appeals to the president and world leaders to stop the Nazis.

03 BOYCOTT

The American Jewish Congress (AJCongress) was founded in 1918 as a national democratic organization of Jewish leaders whose aim was to rally for equal rights for all Americans. Its founding members included US Supreme Court

justices Louis Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, despite opposition from the US State Department, the German government, and conservative Jewish organizations, AJCongress organized numerous protest rallies against Hitler and the Nazi Party. In August 1933, AJCongress started a general boycott of German goods in response to anti-Jewish violence and boycotts in Germany immediately following Hitler's appointment as chancellor that same year.

Numerous Jewish organizations, including the American League for Defense of Jewish Rights, the Jewish Labor Committee, B'nai B'rith, and the Jewish War Veterans joined the boycott, as did many large businesses such as Macy's, Gimbels, Sears, Roebuck, and Company, and Woolworth's. In response, the Nazis announced a one-day counter-boycott of Jewish businesses in Germany, to be lifted if anti-Nazi protests in the United States ceased. This was the first anti-Jewish boycott that was officially sanctioned by the German government. The American boycott of German goods lasted until the United States entered World War II.

04 QUIET DIPLOMACY

Cyrus Adler (1863-1940) is arguably the founder of what is now referred to as "Jewish studies" in America. Born in Van Buren, Arkansas, he began his career as honorary assistant curator of Semitics at the Smithsonian Institution, where he built the institution's Hebraic collection. Adler also served as special commissioner to the Orient for the World's Columbian Exhibition of 1893 and as an editor of the Jewish Encyclopedia from 1899 to 1905. He helped found the Jewish Publication Society

of America in 1888, became president of Philadelphia's Dropsie College in 1908, and was appointed chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1924.

05 INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

When Adolf Hitler took power in Germany in 1933, sports fans in other countries began to question the morality of holding the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, which had been selected as the host city in 1931. In September 1934, as president of the American Olympic Committee, Avery Brundage (1887-1975) traveled to Germany and announced that he had found no discrimination against Jewish athletes and that Germany had pledged there would be none during the games. Brundage's prevention of the US boycott quickly helped him become a prominent figure on the International Olympic committee, and he was later appointed as president, serving from 1952 to 1972. During his last Olympics as president in 1972, he again criticized the politicization of sports after Palestinian terrorists murdered eleven Israeli Olympic team members, and he retired amid heavy criticism.

Although preparing for the Olympic Games continued to move forward as planned, there was a strong movement in the United States to boycott them, led by Judge Jeremiah Mahoney (1878-1970). Mahoney was an Irish American Catholic lawyer, a New York Supreme Court justice, and president of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), the organization responsible for choosing the United States' Olympic team. As a lawyer and judge he was well known for his opposition to racial and religious discrimination. He spoke nationally against the games and against antisemitism in Germany.

Ultimately, the AAU decided by three votes to attend the games; once the United States decided to participate, other countries followed.

06 RESCUE

Breckinridge Long (1881–1958) was a personal friend of President Roosevelt and contributed to his 1932 presidential campaign. Roosevelt made Long the US ambassador to Italy, and during his tenure Long was criticized for advising against punishing Italy for invading Ethiopia. When war broke out in September 1939, Long became special assistant secretary of state in charge of problems arising from the war, a position he held until January 1940, when he was appointed assistant secretary of state. He advocated for strong immigration restrictions during the war and actively prevented Jews from entering the United States. Long resigned from the State Department in November 1944 and went into retirement.

After the German annexation of Austria and a wave of anti-Jewish pogroms in 1938, the number of Germans applying for American immigration visas increased drastically, but due to the American quota system most were put on a waiting list. While overseeing the State Department's Visa Division, Long supported strict immigration-control policies, bolstered by a national fear that Nazi spies disguised as immigrants might enter the United States. Under his supervision, the division instructed officials at European consulates to deny visas to applicants with close relatives in Nazi territory and required that all visa applications be reviewed in Washington, DC, via an extensive interdepartmental review process designed to

lengthen processing times.

In 1943, after more information was released in the United States about the Nazi plan to commit genocide, Long made attempts to undermine rescue actions on European Jews and to prevent intelligence about the Nazi plan from becoming public in the United States. That year, he testified that the United States had accepted 580,000 refugees since 1933, which was quickly proven false. In 1944, the US Treasury Department uncovered his efforts to conceal information about the Holocaust, and he resigned from the department that November.

In January 1939, the president of the Independent Order B'rith Sholom, a Jewish fraternal order founded in 1905 and headquartered in Philadelphia, approached Gilbert (1897-1975) and Eleanor Kraus (1903-1989) about a risky mission to save Jewish children trapped inside Nazi Germany. He offered to fund the Krauses' efforts provided they organize and implement the mission and house the children in B'rith Sholom's twenty-five-bedroom country retreat, originally built as a retirement home. Gilbert Kraus agreed and the next week he traveled to Washington, DC, for meetings with representatives from the State Department. At the same time Eleanor Kraus initiated the procurement of fifty affidavits that would provide sponsorship and support for each child's immigration to the United States, with help from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. After organizing the affidavits, the Krauses met again with under secretary of state George Messersmith, who informed the couple that they must travel to Germany for the rescue to succeed and warned that they might be criticized by other American rescue organizations.

In their efforts to rescue children the Krauses had to work within the stringent immigration quotas put into place by the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act. Gilbert Kraus departed for Germany on April 7, 1939, and upon arriving in Berlin, Raymond H. Geist, the consular chargé d'affaires, recommended Vienna as the best location to find eligible children. Shortly thereafter, Kraus contacted the Jewish community in Vienna and began screening candidates. He decided to consider only children between ages four and fourteen. Each child underwent physical and psychological examinations. On April 17, Gilbert telephoned Eleanor to assure her of his safety and request that she join him in Europe. On April 20, 1939, Eleanor Kraus departed for Hamburg. When she arrived in Vienna eight days later, she immediately began assisting in the screening.

In early May the Krauses confirmed twenty-six children as eligible for immigration and soon added more until the list numbered fifty. On May 20, the Krauses attended a farewell dinner with the children and their families, and the following day the group departed for Berlin, where the USS Harding was scheduled to depart on May 23. After eleven days at sea, the USS Harding arrived in New York Harbor. They traveled to the B'rith Sholom retreat and within days all had received medical attention and food. The children participated in courses on civics and US history, as well as intensive English-language immersion, while the Krauses began looking for foster homes. Many of the children lived with friends and colleagues from B'rith Sholom.

The Krauses' efforts represented one of the largest private rescue operations before the beginning of World War II. Some of the children had trouble adapting while others

integrated quickly into their new homeland. While some of the children's families were able to escape or survive, many of the children were never reunited with their families.

07 FIGHT

During World War II, approximately 1.5 million Jews fought as part of the regular Allied armies. About five hundred thousand Jews, both men and women, served in the United States armed services, with roughly ten thousand killed in combat and nearly fifty-two thousand receiving US military awards. Jewish soldiers served on all fronts in both Europe and in the Pacific, and many took part in liberating the concentration camps in Europe.

Some Jewish American soldiers had experienced antisemitism in the United States, but many were immigrants or the children of immigrants from urban areas that were largely Jewish. These soldiers often underwent a culture shock upon entering the military and experiencing explicit antisemitism from their peers.

A number of the Jews serving in the armed forces were women who joined the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (later the Women's Army Corps) and served in every theater of war. In the Navy, women joined the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), where they held the status of naval reservists and provided stateside support. Numerous other Jewish women supported the war effort by taking on factory work and other home-front jobs.

08 SOUND THE ALARM

Born in Camden, NJ, and a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Josiah E. DuBois Jr. (1912–1983) served as special assistant to the secretary of the treasury, 1944–45; general counsel for the War Refugee Board, 1944; member of the Allied Reparations Commission, Moscow, 1945; and deputy chief counsel for war crimes in charge of the I. G. Farben case, Nuremberg, Germany, 1947–48. As a member of the Treasury Department, DuBois played a critical role in exposing the State Department’s suppression of information about the Holocaust and its obstruction of efforts to ease immigration restrictions to allow Jews fleeing the Nazis to enter the United States.

DuBois worked in the Treasury Department’s Foreign Funds Control Division in the 1930s, which exposed him to the increasing danger faced by Jews living in Nazi Germany. When World War II began, US citizens could not legally send funds into enemy territory without special permission. Therefore, when the World Jewish Congress wanted to transfer funds to Europe to ransom Jewish refugees in France and Romania, it requested authorization from the State Department and the Treasury Department. DuBois received the request, immediately approved it, and then forwarded it to the State Department, where it stalled. Troubled by the delay, DuBois decided to investigate, which angered State Department

officials. A friend secretly provided DuBois with documents from Donald Hiss, indicating that top State Department officials were actively and deliberately obstructing opportunities to rescue European Jews.

DuBois relayed his discovery to treasury secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr., who initially resisted taking the information to President Roosevelt. However, after DuBois completed an eighteen-page report entitled “Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews,” Morgenthau decided to go directly to the president. The report exposed the State Department’s pattern of obstruction and concluded that assistant secretary of state Long was “not only [guilty] of gross procrastination and willful failure to act, but even of willful attempts to prevent action from being taken to rescue Jews from Hitler.” Morgenthau presented an abbreviated version of the report to Roosevelt along with a draft for an executive order establishing the War Refugee Board.

DuBois was named general counsel for the WRB, and his Treasury colleague John Pehle became its executive director. Despite limited government funding, the WRB managed to save well over two hundred thousand European Jews during the fifteen months of its existence.

OPEN BOOK

Student
Guide

How Do I Respond to a Crisis?

American Responses to the Holocaust

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2. Why did Rabbi Wise say that “[i]t is not the German Jews who are being attacked [, it] is the Jews?” Why did he make that distinction?
3. Think about an issue you care about. Where, geographically, is that issue taking place? Do you know why it is happening? Explain your response and what you think will happen if no one takes action.

03 BOYCOTT

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the American Jewish Congress organized protest rallies against Nazi actions in Germany and the United States. In 1933 it called for a nationwide boycott of German goods in response to violence against Jews and damage to Jewish businesses in Germany.

1. What did Cohen want Jews to do and why? Restate his quotation in your own words.
2. What do you think Cohen’s speech and the “Boycott Hitler” stamp’s message have in common? How do you think they differ?
3. Why do you think Cohen believed the American government would not officially recognize the dangers faced by German Jews?
4. Can you think of any recent boycott movements? Have you, or would you, participate in a boycott? Why or why not?

04 QUIET DIPLOMACY

Cyrus Adler (1863-1940) is arguably the founder of what is now referred to as “Jewish studies” in America. Born in Van Buren, Arkansas, he began his career as honorary assistant curator of Semitics at the Smithsonian Institution, where he built the institution’s Hebraic collection. Adler also served as special commissioner to the Orient for the World’s Columbian Exhibition of 1893 and as an editor of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* from 1899 to 1905. He was instrumental in founding the American Jewish Historical Society, the Jewish Publication Society of America, and, in 1906, the

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military services on the home front. Jewish men and women also volunteered to work in defense industries, and Jews planted victory gardens and contributed to bond drives.

- 1. Why did Nash join the army? What would you have done in that situation? Can you think of other reasons why American Jews fought in World War II?
- 2. For the German girl who Nash worked with, what was the relationship between Germany and Hitler? What relationship does the “Boycott Hitler” stamp create between Germany and Hitler?
- 3. What do you think Nash’s experience was like? How do you think being a Jewish woman affected her military service?
- 4. Have you ever overheard a friend or classmate say something hurtful to someone else? What did, or would, you do in that situation?

08 SOUND THE ALARM

On January 13, 1944, three aides, including Josiah E. DuBois Jr. (1912-1983) presented treasury secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr. with a scathing report documenting a consistent pattern of deception by high-ranking State Department officials. The report called the murder of European Jews “one of the greatest crimes in history” and charged the State Department with preventing the public from learning about German atrocities and undermining government and private rescue efforts. Shocked, Morgenthau brought a condensed version of the report directly to President Roosevelt. Six days later, the president established the War Refugee Board to create and implement American policy for rescuing European Jews.

- 1. Why was DuBois convinced that State Department officials were guilty of obstructing the rescue of German Jews?
- 2. What could be the consequences for speaking out about injustice? If someone was pressuring you to stay silent, what would you do?

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SYMBOLS

LC	Deferred Cablegram
NLT	Cable Night Letter
	Ship Radiogram

NV15 CABLE=LIVERPOOL 122 1/63 NFD

8/29/42

NLT STEPHEN WIS (CARE MRS SCHNEEBERGER

250 WEST 94 ST) WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS NYK

(330 WEST 42 ST SEE SPL INSTNS ON FILE (RELAY VIA SI)=

HAVE RECEIVED THROUGH FOREIGN OFFICE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM RIEGNER GENEVA STOP (RECEIVED ALARMING REPORT THAT IN FUHRERS HEADQUARTERS PLAN DISCUSSED AND UNDER CONSIDERATION ALL JEWS IN COUNTRIES OCCUPIED OR CONTROLLED GERMANY NUMBER 3-1/2 TO 4 MILLION SHOULD AFTER DEPORTATION AND CONCENTRATION IN EAST AT ONE BLOW EXTERMINATED TO RESOLVE ONCE FOR ALL JEWISH QUESTION IN EUROPE =

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

CFM 3-1/2 4. QUICKEST, SUREST AND SAFEST WAY TO SEND MONEY IS BY TELEGRAPH OR CABLE

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NV15 2/59=

STOP ACTION REPORTED PLANNED FOR AUTUMN METHODS UNDER DISCUSSION INCLUDING PRUSSIC ACID STOP WE TRANSMIT INFORMATION WITH ALL NECESSARY RESERVATION AS EXACTITUDE CANNOT BE CONFIRMED STOP INFORMANT STATED TO HAVE CLOSE CONNEXIONS WITH HIGHEST GERMAN AUTHORITIES AND HIS REPORTS GENERALLY RELIABLE STOP INFORM AND CONSULT NEWYORK STOP FOREIGN OFFICE AS NO INFORMATION BEARING ON OR CONFIRMING STORY=

SAMUEL SILVERMAN=

THE QUICKEST, SUREST AND SAFEST WAY TO SEND MONEY IS BY TELEGRAPH OR CABLE