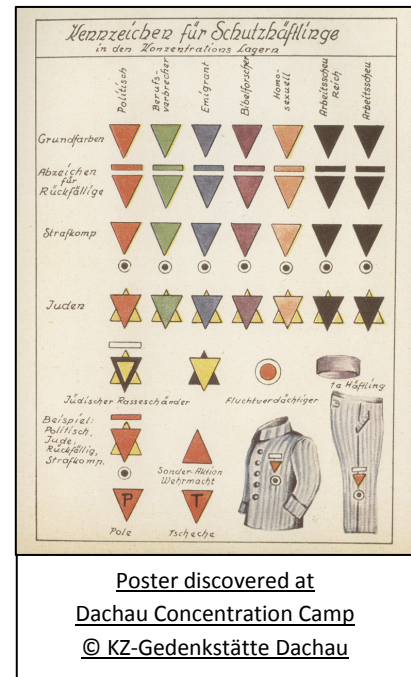


A Mosaic of Victims of Nazi Hatred

A note to teachers and group leaders. This is a long case study but we do not intend you to cover all the information in one lesson or activity. Please refer to the lesson plans and activities related to this case study, which is contained on our education website for further information.

The Nazis did not value diversity. Taking a great interest in eugenics and working from the premise of a false science of race, they declared that the “Aryan” people were superior to all other groups. They created an ‘ideal’ image of a German citizen – strong and healthy, fair-skinned, blond haired and blue-eyed. Propaganda films were made to show the model of the ‘perfect’ German male and female.



Nazi ideology stated that not all humans were equal; some were even considered “*untermenschen*” (sub-human) if they did not fit their warped sense of the ideal. The Nazis hated anyone who was ‘different’, even including those who fitted their Aryan concept of normality but held different views or thoughts which did not support Nazi ideology, policy and activities.

As soon as they came to power in 1933, Hitler and the Nazis began their persecution of those who did not fit into the society they desired, by controlling, restricting and in many cases, taking their lives.

Badges of Classification

In order to identify prisoners within a camp, the Nazis used a badge system – Those classed as non conformists and “Asocials” wore a black triangle though some Gypsies in this group wore brown and others were marked with a Z for Zigeuner, the German word for Gypsy.

Gay men had to wear a pink triangle, Criminals green one and red triangles marked out political opponents. These badges made the prisoners easier for the Nazis to classify but also served to take away an individual’s personal identity and reduce them to the rank of stateless person, simply for being different. Although the badge system differed from one

camp to another, the message was clear-those considered by the Nazis as unworthy of life should be singled out and clearly identified.

“Asocials”

The Nazis incarcerated and murdered those they classed as “asocial”, including those who were politically opposed to their national socialism, such as Communists, Socialists, Social Democrats and Trade Union leaders; some Roma were also included in this group. The Nazis also imprisoned those who challenged the morality of their activities including some Christians and members of student resistance groups. A number of Freemasons were also imprisoned and today Lodge members may choose to wear a forget-me-knot badge to remember those whose membership brought them into conflict with the Nazi authorities. Individuals who were serving sentences in prison for criminal activities were also classed as “asocial”.

Black experience

In the 1920s, there were 24,000 Black people living in Germany. Until recently many were unaware of Nazi attitudes towards and treatment of Black and mixed race Europeans. Although there was no systematic elimination, many Black people were singled out because they were different and were persecuted, alienated and even murdered.

Following World War I and the Treaty of Versailles (1919), the victorious Allies occupied the Rhineland in western Germany. The use of French colonial troops, some of whom were Black, in these occupation forces exacerbated anti-Black racism in Germany. Racist propaganda against Black soldiers depicted them as rapists of German women and carriers of venereal and other diseases. The Nazis, at the time a small political movement, viewed them as a threat to the purity of the Germanic race.

In Mein Kampf, Hitler claimed that “the Jews had brought the Negroes into the Rhineland with the clear aim of ruining the hated white race by the necessarily-resulting bastardisation.” Nazi propaganda posters, showing friendship across racial groups, referred to “a loss of racial pride”. African German mulatto children were marginalised in German society, isolated socially and economically, and not allowed to attend university. Racial discrimination prohibited them from seeking jobs, including service in the military.

When the Nazis came to power one of the first directives was aimed at these mixed-race children. Underscoring Hitler’s obsession with racial purity, by 1937, every identified mixed-race child in the Rhineland, termed by the Nazis, a “Rhineland bastard” had been forcibly sterilised in order to prevent what they saw as further “race pollution”. To help usher in the Nazi dream of a pure, blond haired, blue-eyed race, Black Germans, like Jews, Roma and

Sinti, Gay people and those with any criminal record were labelled 'asocial'. Many Black people found they no longer had jobs and that they were excluded from many aspects of life.

Hans Hauck, a Black survivor of Nazi racial policies and a victim of the mandatory sterilisation programme, explained in the film "Hitler's Forgotten Victims" that, when he was forced to undergo sterilisation as a teenager, he was given no anaesthetic. Once he received his sterilisation certificate, he was "free to go", as long as he agreed to have no sexual relations whatsoever with Germans.

European and American Blacks were also interned in the Nazi concentration camp system. Lionel Romney, a sailor in the U.S. Merchant Marine, was imprisoned in the Mauthausen concentration camp. Jean Marcel Nicolas, a Haitian national, was incarcerated in the Buchenwald and Dora-Mittelbau concentration camps in Germany. Jean Voste, an African Belgian, was held in Dachau. Bayume Mohamed Hussein from Tanganyika (today Tanzania) died in the Sachsenhausen camp, near Berlin.

Black prisoners of war faced illegal incarceration and mistreatment at the hands of the Nazis, who did not uphold the regulations imposed by the Geneva Convention. Lieutenant Darwin Nicholas, an African American pilot, was incarcerated in a Gestapo prison in Butzbach. Black soldiers of the American, French and British Armies were worked to death on construction projects or died as a result of mistreatment in concentration or prisoner of war camps. Others were immediately killed by the SS or Gestapo.

As the war progressed and prisoners of war were taken, the Nazi regime separated Black prisoners from White ones, though it should also be pointed out that soldiers from the USA were already segregated within the US army. Once taken prisoner by Hitler's troops, Black prisoners received harsher treatment and less food than white POW's and whilst most white POWs were imprisoned many of the Black soldiers either worked until they died or were executed.

Today an elderly Black German man, Gert Schramm, visits schools in Germany. He talks to the students there about the conditions in Buchenwald concentration camp. Gert can speak about these conditions with authority; he was once imprisoned there. Schramm was born in 1928, the son of a white German mother and a Black American father. Although his parents never married and his father returned to America, Gert's German family often welcomed his father on regular visits to his son. In 1941 however, Gert's father was arrested on one of his visits, was sent to Auschwitz and never heard of again. In May 1944 Gert was arrested and at the age of 15 found himself in "protective custody" in Buchenwald. He became prisoner 40489 and is now one of the last surviving witnesses of the atrocities which took place there. Gert was the only Black inmate of this camp and he believes that he only survived because a group of white communist political prisoners looked after him.

In 2009 President Obama, like Schramm the son of a Black father and a White mother, visited the Buchenwald Memorial. Whilst he was there he spoke about the actions of the Nazis and their policies of discrimination and hatred. He reminded us that “this place teaches us that we must ever be vigilant about the spread of evil in our own time, that we must reject the false comfort that others’ suffering is not our problem and commit ourselves to resisting those who would subjugate others to serve their own interests.”

Disabled Victims and the T4 Euthanasia Programme

The Nazis systematically murdered hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities. These murders took place within “euthanasia” programmes designed to eliminate the Disabled who, according to the Nazis, were a danger to the health and purity of the Aryan race.

Hitler claimed that the “right of personal freedom recedes before the duty to preserve the race.” In 1939 the killing of Disabled children and adults began following a request to Hitler by the parents of a severely deformed child asking for permission for their child to be killed. Hitler agreed and this request was used as the precedent for the murder of those whose lives the Nazis deemed as “worthless” and who were thought to be a threat to the perfection of the Aryan gene pool.

In 1939 the Reich Committee for the Scientific Registration of Severe Hereditary Ailments called for compulsory registration of all “malformed” children. Medical teams were told to report all children with physical and neurological difficulties. So called “experts” then reviewed the registers and marked a cross by the names of the children they thought should be killed. The experts did not even examine the children; they simply condemned them by the stroke of their pens.

The Reich committee told those in charge of public health to transfer the children identified for euthanasia to specific wards in medical institutions, where they were murdered by the staff. Between 1939 and 1945 it is estimated that at least 5,000 and possibly as many as 25,000 Disabled children were killed in Germany and Nazi occupied territories.

Many children were killed with strong drugs by tablet or lethal injection but in some institutions they were simply left to die of starvation in “hunger houses” or “starving pavilions”. Dr Hermann Pfannmuller, a dedicated member of the Nazi party and the Director of one of the killing wards, even took people on guided tours of the facilities, educating them about the need to destroy “human husks” who were biologically “deficient”. An eyewitness to one of the tours stated that Pfannmuller claimed starvation was simpler than injections and tablets because it avoided providing foreign journalists with “slandorous campaign material” against the Nazis and their policies.

After the war some doctors were put on trial for murdering Disabled children but the majority of medical staff who had worked in the killing wards of hospitals and clinics simply carried on working within medical teams as though nothing had happened. When challenged about the part they played most of them simply claimed they had done nothing wrong. Others said that although they felt uncomfortable about killing children they were trained to follow the orders of their superiors.

Disabled adults also became targets for extermination. A villa at Tiergartenstrasse 4 became the centre in control of the euthanasia programme, code named Aktion T4. By the autumn of 1939 local governments had to provide lists of all institutions which held “mental patients, epileptics and the feeble-minded”. The institutions were required to report the names, dates of birth, race and citizenship details of all patients and also to note whether anyone ever visited them. Disabilities to be reported included schizophrenia, epilepsy, senile disease, encephalitis, syphilis and terminal neurological conditions. Those regarded as “feeble-minded”, committed as “insane” and those who were non-Germanic were also listed.

Medical “experts” at T4 reviewed the lists and from these they selected individual Disabled people for death. Those selected, accompanied by their medical records, were sent to one of six killing centres, in most cases without the knowledge or consent of their relatives. Officials were instructed to identify the patients by attaching their name to their backs with a piece of tape, sedating anyone who became distressed and using force to subdue any individual who resisted. Most of the victims were gassed. Nazi doctors experimented with different gas combinations, viewing the process and timing the number of minutes it took for patients to die, in order to discover which mix of gas was the most efficient. Some of the findings would later inform the technology within Nazi death camps. Relatives of the victims were sent official letters telling them that their loved ones had died of natural causes, “pneumonia” or “a stroke” or “meningitis”. Hypocritically the Nazi State offered condolences for their loss.

The work of T4 was supposed to be secret but as more and more Disabled people were transported to centres people in the locality began to ask questions about the fate of those who were not seen again. Some Church leaders challenged the Nazis, speaking openly about the consequences of establishing a principle that “unproductive human beings” should be killed. Some said that those taking part were breaking the fifth commandment; “Thou shalt not kill”. Bishop Worum of the Lutheran Church worried about the future of Germany and wrote to a government minister: “What conclusions will the younger generation draw when it realises that human life is no longer sacred to the state?” he asked.

Initially anyone who protested was punished but there was so much public unrest that in August 1941 Hitler issued orders to stop the T4 programme. However by then at least 70,000 and possibly as many as 250,000 Disabled people had been killed in the six separate T4 centres.

The T4 programme might have officially ended but Disabled people remained targets for Nazi atrocity throughout the war, with many placed on starvation diets, others sterilised or subject to so called “scientific experiments” or condemned to forced labour for little or no pay. Recent evidence suggests that a large number of Deaf people were included in the sterilisation programme, with the youngest known victim being nine years old. In 1960 a former student of an institution for the deaf in Heidelberg, sent a letter to one of the people who had allowed his sterilisation to take place. “For you, the word human is no longer applicable” he wrote “You had me sterilised, killed and destroyed me so that I can’t have a child. You did not really understand what a human being is.”

Gay Victims of Nazi persecution

In the first two decades of the twentieth century the Lesbian and Gay scene in Germany was growing and thriving. Berlin in particular was one of the most liberal cities in Europe with a number of Lesbian and Gay organisations and publications based there. Gay cultural events were held in the city and there were known Gay venues in cafés and bars.

By the 1920s, Paragraph 175 of the Penal Code (which criminalised homosexual acts) was being applied in an increasingly limited fashion. Magnus Hirschfeld’s Institute for Sexual Science led the world in its scientific approach to sexual diversity and acted as an important public centre for Berlin Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered life. In 1929 the process towards complete decriminalisation had been initiated within the German legislature and members of the Gay community were hoping for a future of recognition and acceptance.

However, Nazi conceptions of race, gender and eugenics dictated the regime’s hostile policy on homosexuality. Within days of Hitler becoming Chancellor repression against Gay men and Lesbians commenced. On 6 May 1933, the Nazis violently looted and closed The Institute for Sexual Science, burning its extensive collection on the streets. Other organisations with links to the Gay community were shut down. Paragraph 175 was toughened and the authorities were encouraged to enforce it. Unknown numbers of Gay men and Lesbians fled abroad. Some entered into marriages in order to appear to conform to Nazi ideological norms. All hope of acceptance was quashed. The thriving Gay culture in Berlin was lost.

Lists of homosexually active persons were compiled by the police. Surviving records from 1937-1940 contain over 90,000 names. Significant numbers of Gay men were arrested, of whom an estimated 50,000 received severe jail sentences. Most homosexuals were exposed to inhuman treatment in police prisons. They could be subjected to hard labour

and torture, or be executed or experimented upon. Some 10-15,000 people were deported for being Gay, to concentration camps, where conditions were particularly harsh.

Most died in the camps from exhaustion. Many were castrated and some subjected to other gruesome medical experiments. Recent research in Sachsenhausen reveals a special area of the camp reserved for Gay inmates, were assigned particularly tortuous activities. Some people belonged to more than one classified group. As each group was badged by the Nazis there were Jewish Gays who wore a yellow triangle to show they were Jewish and a pink triangle to indicate that they were Gay. There must have been many other unidentified Lesbians and Gay men in camps – there because they were persecuted for other reasons.

During the redrafting of Paragraph 175 in Germany, there was much debate about whether to include Lesbianism, which had not been highlighted in the code. It was decided to omit this but nevertheless Lesbians suffered the same destruction of community networks as Gay men and as they were excluded from public life they often faced financial and social hardship.

After the war, the Allies did not attempt to remove or challenge the Nazi-amended Paragraph 175 and in addition neither they, nor the new German states, nor Austria would recognise homosexual prisoners as victims of the Nazis – a status essential to qualify for reparations. Many Gay men continued to serve their prison sentences because they were still classed as criminals who had broken the law. This continuing inequality meant that many of the Nazi's Gay victims were unable to speak out and give their testimonies.

It took Friedrich-Paul Groszheim almost fifty years to tell of his detention. Arrested in Lubeck, along with 230 other men, in 1937 and again in 1938, he was tortured and given the choice of castration or concentration camp. He had to submit to the former, survived surgery but did not speak publically until 1992. Today he believes that he is "living proof that Hitler didn't win."

Gypsies (Roma and Sinti) Devoured

Europe's Gypsies were targeted by the Nazis for total destruction. The "*Porrajmos*" (literally "The Devouring") is the term used to describe the genocide of Europe's Roma and Sinti (Gypsy) population by the Nazis. Upward of 200,000 Gypsies were murdered or died as a result of starvation or disease. Many more were imprisoned, used as forced labour or subject to forced sterilisation and medical experimentation.

When they first came to power the Nazis did not need to make brand new laws to target Gypsies. The Roma and Sinti were already subject to discrimination and prejudice. A Bavarian law of 1926 enforced a systematic registration of all Gypsies. All the Nazis needed to do was build on already existing laws. Very few people spoke up for the Gypsies.

In June 1936, a Central Office to "Combat the Gypsy Nuisance" opened in Munich and shortly after that the Berlin police were given the authority to conduct raids against Roma and Sinti. The rationale given was to prepare the city for the Olympic Games and prevent the Gypsies "spoiling" the image the city aimed to present to the rest of the world.

Once the war began the persecution of Gypsies intensified. Deportations of Gypsies to ghettos including Lodz and to concentration camps including Dachau, Mauthausen and Auschwitz-Birkenau which had a specific "Gypsy Camp" began.

On 26th February 1943, the first transport of Roma and Sinti men, women and children arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Of the 23,000 Gypsies imprisoned within the camp, it is estimated that around 20,000 were murdered.

Citizens of the Reich were encouraged to denounce Gypsies. The police often received information from individuals prepared to betray their neighbours, for example Margarete Dickow contacted the Berlin police in June 1943. She gave them information about two Gypsy families, the Krauses and the Freiwalds. Upon observing no action being taken she expressed her disappointment in a second letter, sent in October. In this she demanded positive action to remove these families from her neighbourhood. She wanted them deported to a camp.

Walter Winter, a German Sinto was deported, with two of his siblings. He describes his experience:

"I was taken to the internment camp...They were all sitting there men, women and children. The children were crying. It was frightful...About five o'clock in the morning on the third day we had to assemble in the open. We were led to the station via a tunnel from the rear. A passenger train awaited us at the platform, guarded by SS men with rifles. We were told we were to be "evacuated" to Poland. Each of us was to receive a piece of land which we would have to cultivate. We thought "Good, money we have, some clothing too. We will go along with this and then escape." We made such plans during the journey. Nothing came of them."

The Nazis lied; there was no land. All the Gypsies were sent to Auschwitz where they endured much hardship and on the 2nd August 1944 the Ziegenlager (Gypsy Camp) at Auschwitz was liquidated. 2,897 Roma and Sinti were exterminated in the gas chambers. The surviving prisoners, including Walter Winter, were deported to Buchenwald and Ravensbruck Concentration Camps for forced labour.

It is clear that the experiences of Europe's Gypsies have parallels with those of the Jewish people. Both groups were targeted on the grounds of their race and had previously suffered centuries of discrimination before the Nazis took control of Germany. The Nuremberg Laws which prohibited marriage between Jews and Aryans and enshrined the loss of citizenship rights were also applied to Gypsies. As with Jewish children, Gypsy children were banned from public schools and Gypsies found it increasingly difficult to maintain or secure employment.

Despite the atrocities committed against Gypsies by the Nazi regime their experiences were only fully recognised by the West German Government in 1981 and the *Porrajmos* is only now becoming more widely known. Gypsies still face prejudice and discrimination in modern society. In Eastern Europe many still live in poverty and face racial abuse on a daily basis, whilst in the UK the setting up of permanent sites for the travelling community is often challenged in by the wider community and in the press.

Jehovah's Witnesses; freedom over conscience

Thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses were either imprisoned or murdered for their refusal to swear allegiance to the Nazi regime or to take part in the war. Unlike members of other groups targeted by the Nazis, Jehovah's Witnesses faced a unique dilemma. They could choose freedom over conscience in that the Nazis gave them the choice to secure their own release by renouncing their faith. You can read the statement they were told to make (<http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/item/179/>). Most refused and faced continued imprisonment or execution. Their children were stolen from them and sent to special reform schools where they could be "re-educated". Separated from their parents, often forced to change their names, young Jehovah's Witnesses endured hardship but despite Nazi pressure, most refused to give up the principles of their faith. They would not make the Heil Hitler salute nor would they agree that some people were of less value than others. Simone Arnold was one such child, sent to reform school, where even her name was taken away. She suffered physical punishment and hardship because she remained true to her beliefs.

Approximately 2,000 Jehovah's Witnesses died under the Nazi regime, 250 of whom were executed for refusing to take part in armed conflict.

Non-Jewish Poles and Slavic Prisoners of War

The Nazis viewed Poles and other Slavic peoples as inferior to Aryans. They believed that these people should be subjugated, used for forced labour, and should eventually be annihilated. Poles, including thousands of intellectuals, academics and Catholic priests, who were considered ideologically dangerous, were targeted for execution in an operation known as AB-Aktion. Between 1939 and 1945, at least 1.5 million Polish citizens were

deported to German territory for forced labour. Hundreds of thousands were also imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps. It is estimated that the Germans killed at least 1.9 million non-Jewish Polish civilians during World War 2.

In the German-occupied Soviet Union, a Commissar Order, issued by the Armed Forces High Command, to the Germany army made special targets of Red Army political officers and targeted them for murder. During the autumn and winter of 1941-1942, German military authorities and the German Security Police collaborated on a racist policy of mass murder of Soviet prisoners of war: Jews, persons with "Asiatic features," and top political and military leaders were shot. Around three million others were held in makeshift open air camps where there was no shelter, food, or medicine with the deliberate intent that most prisoners would die from exposure and starvation. In her novel *One Last Summer*, which she based on factual accounts in her German mother's diary, Catrin Collier describes the terrible conditions in these open air camps. From 1933-1945, it is estimated that as well as the 6,000,000 Jewish victims of the Nazis, some additional 5,000,000 people were killed under Nazi hate-policies.