



# Teachers' Notes

## Holocaust Unit

### Denial

#### Before the Lesson Begins

- Print out FYFT Pledge Cards

#### Lesson Overview

The focus of this lesson is to introduce and discuss the concept of Holocaust Denial. Through this concept, we go on to explore the effects of the denial of prejudice in general.

## Section 1: Examples of Holocaust Denial

#### Discussion Guidance

Holocaust Denial, sometimes known as Holocaust revisionism, is usually a belief that the Holocaust did not happen in the way in which it has been historically recorded. It is normally presented in an academic argument, but can be expressed in different ways.

## Section 2: What is Holocaust Denial

#### Germany

**Nazi Officers:** The Nazi regime & policies did a great deal to facilitate Holocaust denial. The operations of the Holocaust were always referred to in code words/ names in Nazi documentation and mass physical destruction of the camps & bodies were carried out at the end of the war in an attempt to destroy evidence.

Psychologically too, Nazis covered up; Nazi individuals who could not admit the atrocities they committed to themselves fled Germany and held on to their anti-semitic beliefs, encouraging scepticism from other countries who believed reports of the genocide as propaganda from the Allies to demonise Germany further.

#### USA

**Harry Elmer Barnes:** After WWII the USA suffered an economic depression, severely impacting the quality of life for millions of Americans. Unhappy with this situation, some took comfort in believing the reports of the Holocaust were Allied

propaganda. They believed that this 'propaganda' was created solely to force the USA to take part in WWII.

Harry Elmer Barnes was the first American historian to voice support for Holocaust Denial. Originally a staunch Allies supporter, he switched sides after the war and became a Germanophile. His argument supporting Germany against those blaming the country for WWII quickly developed into a purveyance of Holocaust denial as he suggested the Holocaust was a fiction created by the state of Israel as a means to steal reparation payments from Germany.

***The Institute of Historical Review:*** Founded in 1978, this American organisation is the world's leading Holocaust denial group. Anti-semitic and with links to neo-Nazi organisations, it's priority is spread the Holocaust Denial word, so to speak.

***Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust:*** Founded in 1987 by Bradley R. Smith, this organisations intentions echo that of The Institute of Historical Review, but specifically targets spreading Holocaust Denial throughout student bodies & campuses.

## **UK**

***David Irving:*** A writer, historian and Holocaust denier. Infamous for his books concentrating on Nazi Germany & for attempting to sue a fellow academic (Deborah Lipstadt) for libel when she outed him as a Holocaust denier who manipulated historical documents to support his arguments. The court ruled against him and named him an active anti-semitic & racist with Nazi sympathies.

## **Austria**

***Holocaust Denial made Illegal:*** This pseudo-intellectual stance has been made expressly illegal in many countries, including Austria, Poland, Romania & Germany. Furthermore, in countries that have laws against hateful speech, it is considered a serious offence.

## **Middle East**

The anti-Semitism that exists in the Middle East is a result of modern day issues between Israel and nearby countries such as Palestine. It often takes the form of Holocaust Denial as a means to injure the state of Israel; a primarily Jewish country. It has manifested itself in many ways, but notably in Iranian publication *Hamshari*, which ran an International Holocaust Cartoon Contest, printing many Holocaust denial themed cartoons as a result.

***NB:*** It is important to note that there are many more instances of Holocaust denial, we have chosen these examples simply to demonstrate how Holocaust Denial is a world-wide phenomenon often presented as an academic opinion/stance. This makes it more dangerous than outright anti-Semitism as it can more easily brainwash/convince uneducated or bigoted people. For further reading, we recommend Deborah Lipstadt's *Denying the Holocaust*; a thorough examination of the subject.

## Section 3: Why is it so dangerous?

### Discussion Guidance

**NB:** As it is so outrageous many of the students may want to disregard Holocaust denial as something ridiculous. However the techniques and arguments used in Holocaust Denial are dangerous in their convincing, academic presentation. Allowing the students to consider this will help them understand the dangers of denying any type of prejudice. George H Stanton, founder of Genocide Watch, lists denial as the 8th stage in the eight steps to genocide.

If the students are having difficulty, here are several reasons FYFT believes that Holocaust Denial is dangerous:

1. It is an expression of anti-Semitism.
2. It disguises anti-Semitism as a legitimate academic argument.
3. It is offensive and hurtful to victims and all those involved.
4. It undermines efforts to stamp out prejudice based on learning lessons from the Holocaust.
5. It is a manipulation of history; if the Holocaust is denied, what is next?
6. It trivialises/disregards the experience of the victims.
7. It purveys further prejudice (e.g. Neo Nazis deny Holocaust to justify their views)

### Activity Guidance

The aim of this activity is to demonstrate to the students that prejudice is often found in unlikely places, masquerading as things that appear enjoyable or amusing; such as cartoons. For the students to be in a position to combat prejudice in their daily lives then they must be able to identify it, being able to see the prejudice cartoons amongst non-prejudice ones will help them do so.

## Section 4: Other Forms of Denial

**NB:** FYFT believe that the motives behind the majority of cases of Holocaust denial are anti-Semitic. Holocaust denial is often a disguised attack on Jewish people. Other purposeful forms of prejudice also experience these disguised attacks (relative to their own experience). This section aims to help students distinguish between valid arguments and those that are disguised prejudice. An example of this is shaming and blaming the victims of rape. This practise is common in India, the Middle East and even in America. The victim is often blamed for provoking the assault (through behaviour, dress etc.) and the perpetrator/s' behaviour can be excused as a result. We have used this example to discuss the

idea of the purposeful denial of prejudice but feel free to use any other you feel is appropriate.

## Discussion Guidance

2. Although Holocaust denial is extreme example of the denial of prejudice, FYFT believes that it exists on smaller scale in day-to-day situations. The aim of this question is to encourage the students to think about their actions/inactions in reference to purposely denying/trivialising prejudice.
3. FYFT believes that those who purposefully deny prejudice to further their aims should not be directly debated with in order not to legitimise their arguments. We believe that they are not the 'other side' of the argument.
4. In order to stop the spread of purposeful denial, FYFT believes the best method is to simply ensure that our voice is loudest and that as many people as possible hear our message of tolerance and respect.

