

# HOLOCAUST:

## RESISTANCE, RESCUE AND SURVIVAL

### The Nuremberg Laws: Increasing Isolation and Persecution

By Ilana Cone Kennedy, Education Coordinator, *Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center*

*Little by little things got worse and our rights were taken away. In the smaller cities you felt the anti-Semitism more than in the bigger cities. In the bigger cities you didn't feel it as much at first. I grew up in Berlin, but I was going to trade school in a small city. I could no longer sit on a bench in the park. And then I couldn't use the street cars. In 1937 I received a letter saying, 'You are hereby expelled from going to school.' To tell the truth, I was relieved. Things were getting bad — I was attacked at school because I was Jewish. The Hitler youth were everywhere. I used to wait to go into class until the teacher was there hoping for her protection.*

Klaus S., a survivor of Auschwitz, who grew up in Germany and currently lives in the Seattle area. Klaus is a member of the Holocaust Center's Speaker's Bureau.

In the early 1930's, the Nazi party began passing laws that limited the movement and choices of Jews and others in German society. In one year, 1933, 42 anti-Jewish measures were passed. Nineteen more were passed in 1934. Each law was designed to protect "Aryan blood" from contamination with "Jewish blood."

In September 1935, Hitler announced another set of new laws at the annual Nazi party rally in Nuremberg. These laws, which came to be known as the **Nuremberg Laws**, stripped Jews of their German citizenship and all related rights, outlawed marriages between Jews and non-Jews, and forbade Jews from employing young German women. Excerpts from the Nuremberg Laws are below.

#### I. The Reich\* Citizenship Law Supplementary decree Nov. 14, 1935

##### Article 3.

- (1) A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He cannot exercise the right to vote; he cannot occupy public office.
- (2) Jewish officials will be retired as of December 31, 1935...

#### II. The Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor

##### Article 1.

Marriages between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are hereby forbidden...

##### Article 4.

Jews are prohibited from displaying the Reich and national flag and from showing the national colors.

These laws separated and isolated the Jewish people from general society. With few legal rights and protections, the Nazis could increase persecution of the Jewish people.

In order to uphold their laws, the Nazis needed to legally define who was a Jew. On November 14, 1935, the Nazis defined a Jew as "a person with two Jewish parents, or three or four Jewish grandparents." The Nazis went back to the Nuremberg Laws they passed in September 1935 and wrote in this definition.



"Jews must sit only on the yellow benches in Bayerischen Square. Eyewitness account 1939." Photo by Judith Adler. Berlin Holocaust Memorial.

Who you were no longer depended upon how you defined yourself or your beliefs. People could be defined as Jewish even if they didn't see themselves as Jewish, and even if they didn't participate in the Jewish religion. This definition meant that people with Jewish grandparents who had converted to Christianity were also defined as Jews.

As the power of the Nazi party increased, more and more laws against the Jews, and against other groups they identified as "asocial" were passed. Who were the victims of the Nazis? What were their lives like when the Nazis were in control? In the next two articles we will look at the groups the Nazis targeted and we will hear stories from those who survived.

# activities

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1. Look through The Seattle Times for an example of a law that has recently passed, or that is being debated. Who does this law affect? Do you agree with the law? Why or why not?
2. Discuss the role of laws in a democracy – what is the purpose of laws? For whom are laws? Write an essay that expresses your opinion on the importance of laws. Include in it your opinion on their role, purpose and for whom they should be written.
3. Look for articles in today's Seattle Times where peoples' rights have been limited or that represent oppression.



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