

GROWING UP **BLACK** IN NAZI GERMANY

HOLOCAUST
CENTER *for*
HUMANITY

Educate. Inspire. Take Action.

FOUR LESSON CURRICULA

Lessons Exploring
Effects of Nazi Racial
Policies on
Hans J. Massaquoi,
a Black Boy in
Germany, and What
His Experiences
Mean for Us Today

GRADE LEVEL: Adaptable for
grades 7-12



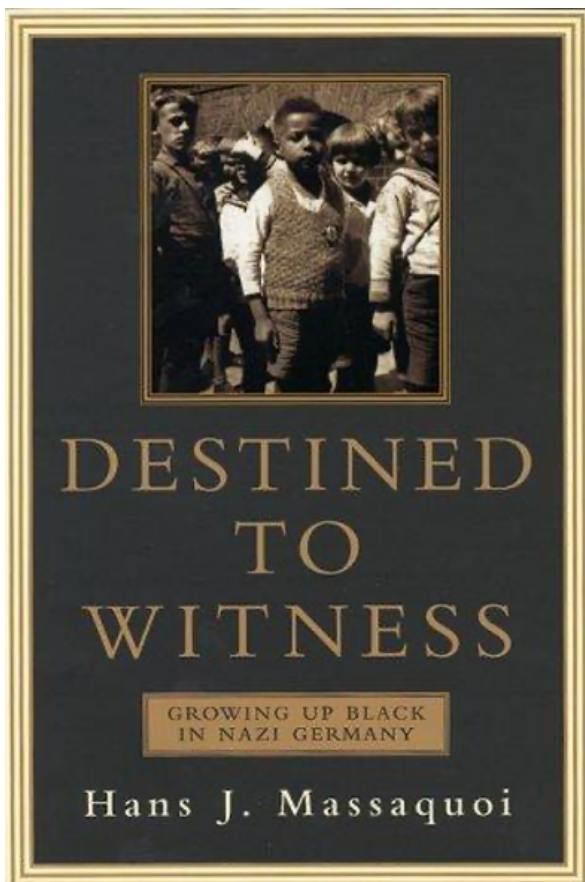
GRADE LEVELS

Adaptable for grades
7-12

SUBJECT: Multidisciplinary

TIME REQUIRED: The introductory portion of this lesson is estimated to comprise one class session. The length of time needed for the four ensuing lessons varies, but an estimate of one class session per lesson is reasonable. Teachers may choose to do only one, or up to all four of these enrichment lessons. Activities may be completed in class or as assessments.

This is a *thematic* lesson that builds upon fundamental knowledge and provides in-depth exploration of a topic.



RATIONALE

Students will examine primary sources, including excerpts from the autobiography of Hans Jurgen Massaquoi, a Black German during the Nazi era, as well as an image, and will understand how hatred and racism that fueled the Holocaust affected the lives of a victim group other than Jewish people: Afro-Germans.

ABOUT THIS UNIT

This series of lessons spotlights another group singled out by the Nazis during the Holocaust: Black people in Germany, also known as “Afro-Germans.” There were only 20,000 Black people living among a population of 65 million people in Germany in 1933. Yet, “German authorities routinely and viciously persecuted and discriminated against German residents of African descent,” -- planning for their eventual disappearance through a forced sterilization policy.

WHY TEACH THIS SERIES OF LESSONS

Like Massaquoi’s book, this unit invokes questions of racism, hatred, prejudice in both Germany and the United States, identity, the role of educators and how to combat hatred. As such, it transcends the Holocaust alone, and is an invaluable resource both for educators and students looking for examples that further speak to them about their own lives, the choices they make, and consequences of actions and inactions.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did Nazi racism, touting Aryan supremacy above all and hatred and vilification of everyone else, affect the lives of Black people in Germany?
- How did individuals in Nazi Germany choose to act when confronted with Nazi racial ideology towards Black people in Germany? Was it then, and is it now realistic to expect fairness and decency from one another, including educators and others who work with children, no matter the circumstances?
- How can we apply the lessons of a survivor of Nazi racism to how we treat others today, helping to make the world a better place in which to live?

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

At the end of this lesson, students will:

- Understand the Holocaust as an event that affected individuals among different victim groups in unique, and yet similar ways
- Appreciate that the racism, hatred and prejudice of individuals, groups and nations invoke challenges for individuals, groups and nations to act. Such ensuing actions -- including the failure to act -- yields consequences for everyone.
- Enhance their skills in reading comprehension, particularly inference, academic discourse and poetry, additionally making deep connections between the dangers of hatred in the world and how it impacts our respective identities and responsibilities

TEACHER PREPARATION & MODIFICATIONS

*This lesson is intentionally flexible for both in-person or remote instruction.

*Teachers may teach this entire series of lessons, including the hook and contextual information contained in the Introduction, in about one to two weeks -- depending on the choice to engage students with the optional culminating work. Conversely, teachers may choose to do just one or more of the individual lessons following the Introduction.

*As a thematic lesson providing a deeper examination of the Holocaust and/or racism, hatred and prejudice generally, it is assumed that students will already have at least a general understanding of the Holocaust before engaging in these lessons.

Recommendations to establish such basic understanding include, but are not limited to:

- Teacher reviews and adheres to the [Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust](#)
- Teacher utilizes the [Pyramid of Hate](#) activity with students and defines [key terms](#)
- Teacher establishes historical context, using at least one of the following: the [Timeline Activity](#) (remote version [here](#)), [Overview lessons](#), or [The Path to Nazi Genocide](#) film

*In addition, because many of the discussion and/or writing prompts within these lessons pertain to questions of race, prejudice, hatred and identity, educators are encouraged to consider how to have "[courageous conversations about race](#)." These "[meaningful conversations prerequisites](#)" should help create safe, respectful conversations.

LEARNER VARIABILITY MODIFICATIONS

- Preview and post Key Terms
- Activities can be modified for group or individual instruction
- Activities can be modified for online instruction
- Maps of Hamburg's location in Germany, and Liberia's location in Africa are included
- Excerpts, etc., are included within as text integrated within the lessons, as well as in separate documents for the teacher to separately share with students.

HOOK

(½ class session)

Ask students to closely consider the photograph on the book cover taken in the early to mid-1930s in Hamburg, Germany, then discuss the questions that follow, either whole class, partners, or small groups (or in breakout rooms, if teaching remotely). Here is a printable or shareable version. It may be used individually or in groups to help facilitate their responses to the questions, and/or it may be assigned and collected by the teacher.

ASK THE STUDENTS

1) What do you notice in this photograph? What do you wonder? (Once students notice the boy in the center, Hans-Jürgen Massaquoi, is wearing a swastika emblem on his sweater)

2) Why do you think the Black boy in the center is wearing a swastika emblem on his sweater?

3) What do you know about Nazi racial policy?

4) What do you know, or believe Hitler and the Nazis must have thought about Black (“Afro-Germans”) people in general, let alone in Germany? What do you wonder?



5) What challenges do you think the boy in the center of this photograph might have faced ... among his peers; among his teachers; among German citizens generally during the years of the Holocaust?

6) Now think of the challenges Black people faced during the 1930s and '40s in the United States: What similarities and differences do you believe existed between the treatment of Black people in Germany and Black people in the United States during that era?

CONTEXT

Historical Context and Biography: Framing the Ensuing Lessons (½-1 class session)

A) Context:

- Read the following excerpts with your students, or ask students to closely read them alone, or in pairs. Here is the passage, also set forth below, which you may share with your students. Here is a close reading template that you may consider sharing with your students to help them unpack the material. Then, pose and discuss the question that follows.
- In the alternative, after discussing the passage and addressing students' observations and questions, you may assign the question as a writing prompt. Here is helpful information to encourage students to provide evidence and reasoning to support their answers, or claims (CER). And here is a blank CER template, if you believe your students need this scaffolding.

TEXT

"The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its allies and collaborators. The Nazis came to power in Germany in January 1933. They believed that the Germans belonged to a race that was "superior" to all others. They claimed that the Jews belonged to a race that was "inferior" and a threat to the so-called German racial community.

By 1945, the Germans and their allies and collaborators killed nearly two out of every three European Jews as part of the "Final Solution." The "Final Solution" was the Nazi policy to murder the Jews of Europe.

During the era of the Holocaust, German authorities also persecuted other groups because of their **perceived racial and biological inferiority**. These included Roma ("Gypsies"), people with disabilities, some of the Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, and others), Soviet prisoners of war, **and Black people**.

German authorities persecuted other groups on **political, ideological, and behavioral grounds**. Among them were Communists, Socialists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and homosexuals." (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia, "Introduction to the Holocaust.")

PART ONE

Hook & Context

“Although the Nazis did not have an organized program to eliminate African Germans, many of them were persecuted, as were other people of African descent. Some Black people in Germany and German-occupied territories were isolated; an unknown number were sterilized, incarcerated or murdered. Persecution of Black people occurred despite their relatively small presence in Germany. Black people accounted for roughly 20,000 people out of an overall population of 65 million by 1933.” (1.3%)
(United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia, “Afro-Germans During the Holocaust.”)

“The Nazis also perceived German residents of African nationality or descent as inferior and dangerous and planned for their eventual disappearance—within a generation—through a mass sterilization policy. Though this policy was not consistently applied, the German authorities routinely and viciously persecuted and discriminated against German residents of African descent.”
(USHMM Encyclopedia, “Nazi Racism: In Depth”)

“While Jews were the priority target of Nazi racism, other groups within Germany were persecuted for racial reasons, including Roma (then commonly called "Gypsies"), **Afro-Germans**, and people with mental or physical disabilities. By the end of the war, the Germans and their Axis partners murdered up to 250,000 Roma. And between 1939 and 1945, they murdered at least 250,000 mentally or physically disabled patients, mainly German and living in institutions, in the so-called Euthanasia Program.” (USHMM
Encyclopedia, “Introduction to the Holocaust.” (For more information about Nazi racism, see the following **USHMM** articles: **Victims of the Nazi Era: Nazi Racial Ideology** and **Nazi Racism: An Overview.**)

ASK THE STUDENTS

Drawing from information in the reading excerpts above and/or based on what you already know, how was the treatment of Black people in Germany similar to the campaign against the Jews, and how was it different?

B) About Hans J. Massaquoi:

What follows is concise biographical information regarding Hans Jurgen Massaquoi, as well as an excellent, 15 minute-long video biography highlighting his life. Ask students to read and/or watch one or both of these resources, recording their notices and wonders to facilitate an ensuing discussion highlighting students' wonders. Here is a resource concerning the notices and wonders strategy. Here is the passage, including a link to the video, also set forth below, which you may share with your students.

TEXT

Hans-Jürgen Massaquoi (1926-2013) was born in Hamburg, Germany, the son of a white German nurse and a Black Liberian businessman. He grew up in the house of his grandfather, Momoulu Massaquoi, who was both the Liberian Consul-General in Hamburg and also an important contact for Black travelers to Germany. Hans and his mother remained in Germany when political trouble took his father and grandfather back to Liberia, and they had to accustom themselves both to the realities of a working-class lifestyle and to the rise of the Nazis beginning in 1933. Like other German boys, Hans went to school and, like other German boys and wanting to fit in with his friends, he was captivated by Hitler. So he was devastated to learn that, as a Black child, he was ineligible to join the Hitler Youth with the rest of his schoolmates. He later found that, because of his skin color, his path to secondary education and an eventual profession was blocked, causing much soul-searching about his identity throughout. At the same time, he toughened and, with the support of his mother, formed valuable relationships that protected him through to the end of the war.

After the war, Hans traveled to the United States, joined the US Army, and later earned a journalism degree. He became an important media figure, rising eventually to become the managing editor of Ebony magazine. His 1999 autobiography, **Destined to Witness, Growing Up Black in Nazi Germany** (Harper Perennial), written in English and translated into German and later produced as a two-part, German television movie (2006), offers a unique insight into the everyday experiences of growing up black in Weimar and Nazi Germany. (courtesy of Blackcentraleurope.com, by Jeff Bowersox, and **Destined to Witness, Growing Up Black in Nazi Germany**)

Here is an excellent overview video biography of the life of Hans J. Massaquoi, 15 minutes long.

LESSON OPTIONS

Teachers can choose any or all of the lessons options below, or use them as in-class or at-home assessments. These lessons have been created in ways amenable to remote learning.



I. Identity: The Need for Belonging in a Hateful World ...
Identity Charts, Discussion & Writing
(1-2 Class Sessions)



II. The Power and Responsibility of Choice: What Role do Educators Have?
Learning Centers, Discussion, Writing
(1-2 Class Sessions)



III. Race & America from the Perspective Of One Who Grew up Black in Nazi Germany...
Discussion & Writing
(1 Class Session)



IV. How to Fight Hatred ... Activity, Discussion and Found Poetry
(1-2 Class Sessions)

Lesson Options

Teachers can choose any or all of the lessons options below, or use them as in-class or at-home assessments. These lessons have been created in ways amenable to remote learning.

I. Identity: The Need for Belonging in a Hateful World (1-2 class sessions)



A. Identity Charts are a graphic tool that can help students consider the many factors that shape who we are as individuals and as communities. In this foundational lesson, developed by **Facing History and Ourselves**, students create their own identity charts to deepen their understanding of themselves, groups, nations, and historical and literary figures. Sharing their own identity charts with peers can help students build relationships and break down stereotypes. In this way, identity charts can be used as an effective classroom community-building tool, as well as bases on which to consider values and priorities in this lesson, and on which to rely when analyzing characters in texts.

- **Begin by showing students** an example provided in the link above, further explaining how this activity may prove to be illuminating not only for themselves, but also in relation to others. It additionally serves as a foundation for comparison throughout this lesson.
- Using this blank template, give students up to 10 minutes to complete their own identity chart. Inform them that they will be sharing their identity charts with another student, and perhaps the class (see below option).
- **(Optional) Pair students** to share and discuss their identity charts with one another. Then, when the whole class has reconvened, ask Partner A to share one fascinating fact they learned about Partner B, and vice versa, taking turns across the room. **An additional option** in the remote learning context might be to ask Partner A to post one interesting fact or quality they learned about Partner B, and vice versa, etc., on a **Google Jamboard**, which the teacher can then share with the students. Here is a link to an already-created, blank Google Jamboard document.

PART TWO

Lesson One

B. Explain to students that they will be reading portions of **Destined to Witness: Growing up Black in Nazi Germany, by Hans-Jurgen Massaquoi**.

- **Read** together, or, using [this document](#), ask students to read the excerpts that follow.
- **Then**, asking students to consider their own **identity charts** which they created in Part A of this Lesson,

EITHER:

1) Assign students to answer in writing one or more of the questions that follow (also contained in [this student document](#)). Here is [helpful information](#) to encourage students to provide evidence and reasoning to support their answers, or claims (CER). And [here is a blank CER template](#), if you believe your students need this scaffolding.

OR:

2) Ask students to discuss, in think-pair-share partnerships or small groups, each -- or select questions that follow (also contained in [this student document](#)). You **may** then ask groups to highlight the most compelling aspects of their discussions among the whole class. This modification might allow for the most authentic responses to be shared, considering that the questions invoke personal, serious conversations and thinking. However, perhaps the conversations would function best in a smaller group context.

TEXT

"Barely seven, I, of all people (being one of the few blacks in Germany), became an unabashed proponent of the Nazis simply because they put on the best shows with the best-looking uniforms, best-sounding marching bands, and best-drilled columns, all of which appealed to my budding sense of masculinity.

Whenever the Fuhrer addressed the German people ... all instruction (in school) came to a mandated halt.... Most of Hitler's speeches lasted over an hour. Yet ... we never were bored or failed to be fascinated and moved by the sound of his voice ... as he lashed out at groups and individuals whom he deemed his -- and therefore Germany's -- enemies. Jews, non-Aryans, Marxists, Communists, liberals, reactionaries, and democrats were the most frequent targets of his wrath. While we kids were too young to understand the meaning of these words, we nevertheless sensed the power that emanated from the speaker, and we took pride in an emerging, all-powerful father figure who was courageous and not intimidated by Germany's adversaries." (pp. 41-42)

TEXT

"It would still take years before I fully understood, and was able to permit myself to believe, that Hitler was an infinitely evil, morally corrupt psychopath. Desperately, I kept clinging to the government-promoted image of a benevolent (well-meaning) demigod and savior of the German people. After each psychologically crushing blow dealt me by one of Hitler's (followers), I rationalized that I had been victimized by an overzealous (overeager) Nazi underling who had overstepped his authority and perverted the Fuhrer's grand scheme. I simply could not get myself to blame the architect of the racist policies himself. Only after years of maturing and of being rejected, humiliated, and psychologically brutalized was I able to see Hitler himself for what he really was and as the ultimate source of my mounting problems.

It was not until I reached my teens that the awful truth struck home. Until then, instead of putting the blame for my problems with racists where it belonged, I blamed myself. More than anything, I blamed my appearance--especially my African hair, which I had come to loathe. Although I had vowed not to let (hateful teacher) Wriede get the better of me, his and other teachers' (and schoolboys') all-out psychological warfare against me had taken its toll. Under the steady barrage of the hated word 'Neger' (derogatory word for Black person) and the equally offensive 'Mischling' (half-breed), my self-esteem had plunged to a frightening low." (pp. 91-92)

ASK THE STUDENTS

- 1) Why do you think Hans-Jurgen, as a boy, had been "desperate" to cling to the idea that Hitler and the Nazi values were good -- not evil and racist? What did Hans-Jurgen have to gain, or lose?
- 2) Do you overlook, or even tolerate or accept certain things in your friends and/or family members and mentors that violate your values and ideals? Why or why not? Is there a cost you are unwilling to pay to be accepted by others; to belong? Where do you draw the line, and why?
- 3) How much do the opinions or views of others shape your self-esteem and/or identity? To what extent are you similar or different than Hans-Jurgen? Explain.
- 4) Why would a person blame oneself for others' hateful, racist comments rather than those others?
- 5) In light of this activity and the above questions and discussion, do you have anything to add to, or otherwise modify your own **identity chart**? Why or why not?

The Power and Responsibility of Choice: What role and impact do educators have?

(1-2 class sessions)



(photo courtesy of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

CONTEXT

The following information will be helpful to teachers before beginning this lesson. In addition, you may consider reading it with your students, or alternatively, sharing it with them to read and perhaps view the linked video. Here is a [shareable document](#).

TEXT

The lesson, [Oath and Opposition: Education under the Third Reich](#), developed by the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**, asks what role teachers played during the Holocaust. “Under the authority of the Third Reich,” the Overview provides, “teachers were obligated to join the National Socialist Teacher’s League, which was responsible for carrying out the educational goals of the Nazi Party, and to take an oath of loyalty to the Fuhrer, Adolf Hitler. Despite these obligations, though, teachers were still able to make individual choices. Some chose to comply with Nazi ideology, while others chose to act in opposition.”

[Here is a short film](#) created by the USHMM, under five minutes, which provides an overview of education under the Third Reich.

Reflecting upon his school years in Hamburg, Germany, Hans-Jurgen Massaquoi wrote that, “Most teachers were professional educators who treated me like everybody else. And there were a few ... who – sensitive to my plight (as a Black boy in Nazi Germany) – went out of their way to make my life a little easier.” (pp. 72-73.) However, like so many of his childhood and adolescent peers and other adults, many teachers did not treat him “like everybody else.”

PART TWO

Lesson Two

A. Ask students to consider the following quotes in relation to, or stated by four of Hans-Jurgen's teachers. This work will set up the ensuing discussion questions, which you may assign as one or more **writing prompts**, or else as prompts for **discussion** in the groups established below, or with the entire class.

If teaching in person,

Learning Centers/Stations

- **Print out** this [shareable document](#) that includes each of the four teachers' excerpts;
- **Cut out** the excerpts for each of the four teachers where the respective lines are indicated below each excerpt;
- **Either tape** the four respective teacher excerpts to the wall, or else place one each on four tables/desks in your classroom;
- **Assign your students in groups** no more than four. Note that, assuming you have more than 16 students, you would need to create perhaps a total of eight stations (two groups per teacher excerpt), rather than four.
- **Utilizing close reading strategies**, ask students to read them alone or together with their small groups, recording their responses utilizing [this document](#)-- one response per teacher (ie., one for Fraulein Beyle, etc.). **In the alternative**, ask students to work with a partner or in their small group, recording their [notices and wonders](#) for each of the teachers' comments and/or actions on [this document](#). Students would each need one notice and wonder page if they are working alone or, if in a group, perhaps one page for the entire group.

Using either option, allow for about 10 minutes per station/learning center (maybe slightly more for close reading), then rotate four times. Students will now be prepared for the ensuing discussion questions.

If teaching remotely,

- Assign your students either to work with a partner, or in a small group (no larger than four) in a breakout room.
- Using this [shareable document](#), ask students to read the excerpts, then, working together, instruct students to work with a partner or in their small group, recording their [notices and wonders](#) for each of the teachers' comments and/or actions on [this document](#). Students would each need one notice and wonder page if they are working alone or, if in a group, perhaps one page for the entire group.

TEXT

PART TWO Lesson Two

*Fraulein Beyle

- "...When my turn came to say here and stand up, some boys looked at me and started to giggle. Those boys who were laughing just now are very ignorant. In fact, they are too ignorant to be in my class,' Fraulein Beyle scolded. 'The next time anyone laughs at Hans-Jurgen or anybody else, he will have to leave the classroom and wait outside in the hall until class is over.' Then, turning to me, she said, 'I hope you won't let stupid boys like that upset you. You are a fine boy. Don't let anybody make you think otherwise.'" (p. 36)

- (In the following excerpt, Hans-Jurgen had just kicked a boy who had been touching his hair and calling him names)
"'...(Y)ou deserve what you got,' Fraulein Beyle ruled sternly (to the other boy). 'You have no business calling people names or making fun of the way they look. In the future, if you ever bother Hans-Jurgen again, I will report you to Fraulein Rodewald (the principal) for punishment and, in addition, have a word with your parents. Now run along and never let me catch you picking on anyone again!'" (p. 38)

After this, Fraulein Beyle summoned Wolfgang, a tall, blond boy seven years older, from across the playground.

"Come here a minute, Wolfgang,' Fraulein Beyle called.... 'This is Hans-Jurgen, he's just started school.... The reason I called you, Wolfgang ... is that it looks as if Hans-Jurgen here could use someone to look after him. How would you like to be his bodyguard?'
'Don't you worry about a thing, Fraulein Beyle,' (Wolfgang smiled). 'Nobody's going to bother him. I'll make sure of that.'"(p. 39)

*Herr Wriede

- "(Principal Wriede) was a fanatic follower of Hitler, a fact he emphasized by affecting a square, albeit reddish-blond, Hitler-type mustache."
(During an address to all of the students in the school), "he suddenly spotted me among the ranks of boys, and, like a snake trying to mesmerize its prey, fixed his hateful gaze on me.
'What I intend to instill in this school is pride in being German boys in a National Socialist German state,' he intoned without taking his eyes off me." (p. 67)
(One day, Wriede filled in for the sick gym teacher and created an obstacle course, as a test of courage for all of the boys), "to separate the cowards from the boys with guts....
Surveying the course, I anticipated no problems and confidently awaited my turn. By the time it came, most boys had successfully completed the course, though a few ... on Wriede's orders, had been sent to the 'cowards' corner.' I got through the major part of the course quite easily and was headed for the big (jump) when I saw that Wriede ... rather than letting the rope swing to and fro, he held it back in such a way that it remained totally out of my reach. As I waited for him to release the rope, ready to leap as soon as it swung toward me, Wriede shouted, 'Feigling (Coward)! Kein Mut (No courage)! Get out of the way!' Not quite believing that he could be this unfair, I waited another moment to see if perhaps he would relent and send the rope my way. But he became only more enraged, shouting at me, 'Out of the way! Give somebody with courage a chance. Get over there with the other cowards!'" (p. 68)

Herr Dutke

- “(Herr) Dutke used to delight in wearing his Nazi uniform in the classroom to lend an especially festive note to his courses on Volkskunde (folklore), which he used mainly to vent his racist hostility. ‘Stop that negerhafte grinsen (negrified grinning),’ he once hissed at me when he caught me joining the class in innocent laughter. ‘Negroes don’t have a thing to grin about in National Socialist Germany.’ To drive home his point, he frequently picked pupils who came closest to what he and his fellow Nazis considered the ideal Aryan type by having them stand in front of the class and pointing out their blond hair, blue eyes, ‘nobly formed skull,’ and other ‘desirable’ physical features.” (p. 108)

“Herr Dutke told the class that non-Aryans, ‘like your classmate Hans-Jurgen,’ were prohibited by the Nuremberg racial laws from marrying or associating with German women. The purpose for the prohibition, Dutke explained with ill-concealed relish, was to prevent Rassenschande, the most cardinal of cardinal sins under the Nazi regime, by which superior Aryan blood was diluted with inferior non-Aryan blood. Such dilution, he elaborated, if allowed, would ultimately lead to the destruction of the German people. Accordingly, Rassenschande was considered worse than murder.” (p. 167)

Herr Herbst

- “When the bell signaled the end of the first class, Herr Herbst asked me to stay. I braced myself for some Wriede-type shenanigans. After the other boys left the classroom, Herr Herbst asked me to sit down. ‘I don’t intend to talk about this ever again,’ he opened the discussion, ‘but I thought you should know that your skin color is of absolutely no importance to me. In my class, you will be treated like anybody else. I’ve seen your report cards and know that you are an excellent student. If you are willing to work hard and behave in my class, I see no reason why we shouldn’t get along. Do you?’”

B. The following questions may be assigned as writing and/or discussion prompts.

EITHER:

Assign students to answer in writing one or more of the questions that follow (also contained in [this student document](#)). Here is [helpful information](#) to encourage students to provide evidence and reasoning to support their answers, or claims (CER). And here is a [blank CER template](#), if you believe your students need this scaffolding.

OR:

Ask students to discuss, in think-pair-share partnerships or small groups, each -- or select questions that follow (also contained in [this student document](#)). You *may* then ask groups to highlight the most compelling aspects of their discussions among the whole class. This modification might allow for the most authentic responses to be shared, considering that the questions invoke personal, serious conversations and thinking. However, perhaps the conversations would function best in a smaller group context.

ASK THE STUDENTS

- 1)** Compare and contrast the actions and statements made by Hans-Jurgen's teachers. What facts most stick out to you for each teacher? Based on the facts identified, what motives/pressures likely influenced their decision-making?
- 2)** What do you hope or expect from your teachers? Should your teachers have a role in stating – and sometimes acting upon – their personal beliefs? Do you expect them to do so? Are – or should -- teachers be role models for students? Give examples to support your answers.
- 3)** If your teachers are ordered to follow and implement specific policies, is it realistic to expect that they might disobey such expectations if such orders are contrary to their own beliefs? Why or why not?
- 4)** If you observe a teacher negatively singling out a fellow student on the perceived basis of race or other differences, what choice(s) do you have? What factors might complicate your choice(s)? Do you believe that you would face more, or fewer complicating factors than Hans-Jurgen's classmates? How so?
- 5)** Compare and contrast Fraulein Beyle's actions with that of Herr Herbst. Is one course of action better or worse than another, knowing what you know today, or are they relatively equal? How so? If a teacher today did or said on your behalf what Fraulein Beyle and Herr Herbst did for Hans-Jurgen, how would you feel? Are there any negatives attached to what they did or said?

Race & America from the Perspective of One Who Grew up Black in Nazi Germany

(1 class session)

CONTEXT

The following information will be helpful to teachers before beginning this lesson. In addition, you may consider reading it with your students, or alternatively, sharing it with them to read. Here is a [shareable version](#) of this short contextual passage.

TEXT

After his African family members, including his father and grandfather returned to Liberia when Hans-Jurgen was a small child, Hans-Jurgen's first meaningful encounters with people who "looked like him" were not until American soldiers, among them many African Americans, arrived in Hamburg, Germany as the war was coming to a close.

"During World War II, African American and white soldiers who were bonded on the battlefield were divided at home. The US 12th Armored Division (see above photo) was one of only ten US divisions during World War II that had integrated combat companies. Despite the overarching segregation in the military at the time, more than one million African Americans fought for the US Armed Forces on the homefront, in Europe, and in the Pacific. After battling for freedom and defending democracy worldwide, African American soldiers returned home after the war only to find themselves faced with the existing prejudice and "Jim Crow" laws, which imposed "separate, but equal" segregation."

(USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia, "[African American Soldiers During World War II](#)")



(African American soldier with the 12th Armored Division, posing with captured German soldiers. (Photo courtesy of USHMM))

Race & America from the Perspective of One Who Grew up Black in Nazi Germany

(1 class session) - continued

A. Read the following excerpts from **Destined to Witness: Growing up Black in Nazi Germany**. You may wish to read the excerpts aloud together in class, and/or:

- Utilizing close reading strategies, ask students to read them alone or together with their small groups, recording their responses utilizing this document.
- In the alternative, ask students to work with a partner or in their small group, recording their notices and wonders on this document. Students would each need one notice and wonder page if they are working alone or, if in a group, perhaps one page for the entire group. Then,

EITHER:

Assign students to answer in writing one or more of the questions that follow (also contained in this student document). Here is helpful information to encourage students to provide evidence and reasoning to support their answers, or claims (CER). And here is a blank CER template, if you believe your students need this scaffolding.

OR:

B. Ask students to discuss, in think-pair-share partnerships or small groups, each -- or select questions that follow (also contained in this student document). You may then ask groups to highlight the most compelling aspects of their discussions among the whole class. This modification might allow for the most authentic responses to be shared, considering that the questions invoke personal, serious conversations and thinking. However, perhaps the conversations would function best in a smaller group context.

Race & America from the Perspective of One Who Grew up Black in Nazi Germany

(1 class session) - continued

Caution: Offensive language is alluded to in the passage below. The words themselves have been deleted, instead using the first letter, only, of the word, followed by asterisks. Teachers, consider addressing such references as you see fit, knowing your students.

In the following excerpt, Hans is conversing with two African American seamen, shortly after liberation, on a Naval ship docked in Hamburg:

"Then came my turn to ask questions. From the time I was a child and able to read 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' I had known about the mistreatment of blacks in the United States. Later, I added to that knowledge through newspaper articles about race riots, lynchings, and Jim Crow. But I had never had an opportunity to learn the facts firsthand. When I asked the inevitable question, 'How are Negroes treated in America?' both men replied in unison, "Like s***!" They then explained to me that cities in the North, like New York, Chicago, and Detroit, were 'halfway okay,' but that anyplace in the South--'no matter where'--was a b****.'

'How are you getting along with the white people on this ship?' I wanted to know.

'We don't,' replied Smitty. 'We does our work and keeps to ourselves and they does their work and keeps to theirselves. In other words,' Smitty summarized, 'We don't f*** with them, and they don't f*** with us.'

Slim told me that the ship was crawling with 'crackers,' which, he explained, were racist white people from the South, and he advised me to avoid them like the plague." (p. 297)

In the next excerpt, Hans-Jurgen had emigrated after the war from Germany to the United States and became a US soldier.

"...(D)ressed in my (American) army uniform, I was riding a train from Chicago to Fayetteville, North Carolina, on my way back to my post at Fort Bragg, when I was assaulted by a white train conductor after I had fallen asleep and missed moving to a segregated "colored car" when the Southbound train reached the Mason-Dixon Line. 'Get your black a** out of here and go where you n***** belong!' the conductor, a shriveled white man, had screamed at me after kicking me from behind. Rather than risk being lynched for beating an old white man, as was my deep-felt inclination, I controlled my anger, picked up my duffel bag, and did as I had been told." (p. xiv)

In this final excerpt, Massaquoi is reflecting on his dismay regarding the overt racism and segregation throughout the ranks of the US military, "which had just fought a brutal war for the stated purpose of making the world free for democracy.

Race & America from the Perspective of One Who Grew up Black in Nazi Germany

(1 class session) - continued

It took me a while to psychologically digest my introduction to the American dilemma -- America's inability, or unwillingness, to live up to its creed of 'liberty and justice for all.' I had known for quite a while that white people in America, especially in the South, did not always live up to that creed and, indeed, had committed some of the most brutal atrocities against their fellow black fellow citizens, but I had no idea that racial discrimination was not only condoned but openly practiced by the United States government. As much as I hated the Nazis for it, somehow, their overt racism and refusal to accept me in their military ranks (because he was black) seemed more honest to me than the United States' lip service to democracy and eagerness to recruit blacks while keeping them at arm's length in segregated, low-status service units commanded primarily by whites. I found it difficult to admit to myself, but my newly created ideal of an America that had mounted and won a crusade to free the oppressed had received a severe, perhaps fatal blow." (pp. 318-319)

ASK THE STUDENTS

- 1)** What most surprises you in the above excerpts regarding the following: Perspectives on racism in America; the American military in the 1940s; and Massaquoi's comparison of racism in Germany compared with racism in America? Why? Refer to specific evidence and reasoning to support your responses.

- 2)** Based on your own experiences, what, if anything, has changed in relations between members of different races and ethnic origins in America in contrast to Massaquoi's reflections?
 - What is similar, and what is different?
 - What ideas do you have for how things can improve, beginning with steps you are already taking, and/or will take?
 - Are your ideas attainable? If not, is there still value in pursuing them -- why?

How to Fight Hatred (Discussion, Activity, and Found Poetry *(1 class session)*)



Read the following excerpts from *Destined to Witness: Growing up Black in Nazi Germany*. You may wish to read the excerpts aloud together in class, or else provide students with a copy of the passage to read alone or in pairs. Then consider doing one, or all three of the following assignments/activities with your students.

TEXT

"It is only through constant and concerted vigilance that (people) can hope to prevent repeating the horrors of the Holocaust.

I hope that my story will convey the inescapable lesson I have drawn from the slice of history I was destined to witness from uncomfortably close range: if it happened once, it could happen again; and if it could happen in Germany -- a country raised on the wisdom of intellectual giants like Goethe and Schiller and enriched by the timeless contributions of musical geniuses like Beethoven, Bach, and Brahms -- it could happen anywhere.

Terrorism and brutal pogroms (violent attacks) in the name of racial, religious or ethnic cleansing, and tribal dominance as practiced by the Nazis in Germany have been reenacted by the Afrikaners (white ruling class) in South Africa, the Serbs in Kosovo, the Tutsis in Rwanda, and the Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, to name just a few. Initially, the purveyors of racism need no more than the silent acquiescence of the public. In the case of Nazi Germany, first Germans and then the entire world turned a deaf ear to the flagrant human rights abuses until it was too late to prevent the architects of racial madness from carrying out their evil schemes. That sad chapter in history suggests that it is never too soon to confront bigotry and racism whenever, wherever, and in whatever form it raises its ugly head. It is incumbent upon all to confront even the slightest hint of racist thought or action with zero tolerance.

Those of us who have experienced the depravity to which a country can sink under a government controlled by unscrupulous manipulators owe it to our fellow human beings to keep this unholy specter vivid in the public's mind." (pp. 436-437)

How to Fight Hatred

(Discussion, Activity, and Found Poetry)

(1 class session)

ASSIGNMENTS/ACTIVITIES

1) Read and Respond in Writing and/or Discuss

EITHER:

Assign students to answer in writing the question that follows (also contained in [this student document](#), which also contains the passage). Here is [helpful information](#) to encourage students to provide evidence and reasoning to support their answer, or claim (CER). And here is a blank CER template, if you believe your students need this scaffolding.

OR:

Ask students to discuss, in think-pair-share partnerships or small groups, the question that follows (also contained in the above-linked [student document](#)). You **may** then ask groups to highlight the most compelling aspects of their discussions among the whole class.

ASK THE STUDENTS

Do you believe it is possible to achieve a world without hate, for which Hans-Jurgen Massaquoi certainly aspires? If not, do Massaquoi's words still bear value? Why or why not? How so? What is the value of hope in a hateful world? Use evidence from the above passage to support and/or inform your response.

2) Activity & Discussion.

- Ask students to **highlight one sentence** that most impacts, or sticks out to them from the above passage. They may do so directly on the previously provided [passage](#), or else on the previously provided [student document](#), already setting forth the ensuing directions.
- Next, ask students to highlight just one word from the above passage.
- Taking turns, first call on every student to only read aloud the sentence they chose, without explanation or interruption, in rapid succession.
- Then, call on every student to only read **the single word** they chose, without explanation or interruption.
- When everyone is done, ask students for their observations of this activity -- how do they feel; what did they learn; what, if anything, surprised them?

How to Fight Hatred (Discussion, Activity, and Found Poetry (1 class session)

3) Found Poetry. There are *two options* below, one for students to create individual found poems, and the other for all students to contribute to a class found poem. Either option serves as tremendous culminating work, invoking English Language Arts skills, and reflection and critical thinking skills informed by, and illustrative of the [Guidelines for Teaching about the Holocaust](#).

a) Individual Found Poem

Ask students to create a found poem. “A ‘found poem’ is one that is created using only words, phrases, or quotations that have been selected and rearranged from another text. To create found poems, students must choose language that is particularly meaningful or interesting to them and organize the language around a theme or message. Writing found poems is a structured way to have students review material and synthesize their learning.” Facing History and Ourselves provides excellent guidance in this regard, including for remote instruction. Here is a [link to this resource](#). Here is the [student-friendly assignment](#), including instructions, the passage and a note catcher to set up their individual poems. When done, invite students to share their poems with the class.

b) Class Found Poem (this activity has been adapted from the USHMM lesson, [Exploring Holocaust-era Diaries](#), and the [Densho Project](#))

“A ‘found poem’ is one that is created using only words, phrases, or quotations that have been selected and rearranged from another text. To create found poems, students must choose language that is particularly meaningful or interesting to them and organize the language around a theme or message. Writing found poems is a structured way to have students review material and synthesize their learning.” Facing History and Ourselves provides excellent guidance in this regard, including for remote instruction. Here is a [link to this resource](#).

- Either display or share with students [the passage](#), excerpted from Hans-Jurgen Massaquoi’s, **Destined to Witness: Growing Up Black in Nazi Germany**
- **After reading** the excerpts together or providing time for the students to read the passage, **ask them to select** one word, phrase or sentence from the text that strikes them as most meaningful, important or powerful
- Ask students to **write** the word, phrase or sentence on a sentence strip or piece of paper. **If teaching remotely**, students may enter their word, phrase or sentence on, for example, **Google Jamboard**. Here is a link to a document you may use. Instruct students to click “sticky note” on the far left panel of the page, then type in their selection.
- Once every student has had the opportunity to enter their word, phrase or sentence, now give each student one turn to place, or arrange his/her entry where he/she believes it best belongs.
- Once everyone has completed his/her arrangement, the “found poem” is complete. Ask for a volunteer to **read the poem** aloud to the class.

How to Fight Hatred
(Discussion, Activity, and Found Poetry
(1 class session)

ASK THE STUDENTS

- What themes are evident in the poem?
- What is included in the text that is missing from the poem? Why?
- What mood (the emotions you feel as you read/hear the poem read) does the poem evoke?
- What does the poem reveal about the tone, or mood of the Massaquoi text (the author's attitude toward the subject)?