

# New York State Needs a Comprehensive State Approved Holocaust and Other Genocide Education Curriculum

*By Beth Rickert*

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As the year 2020 fades into the sunset, many are noting a glaring rise in anti-Jewish sentiment.

Whether on the streets of Brooklyn or on college campuses, Jews are targeted just for being Jewish. A recent survey revealed that 8 out of 10 American Jews feel that anti-Semitism in the US is getting worse. (Source: The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.)

It's beyond dispute - anti-Jewish incidents are increasingly common, but when asked, shockingly, most non-Jews don't think the hatred of Jews is increasing. In fact, many Americans aren't even sure what constitutes anti-Semitism. And 7 out of 10 Americans say fewer people seem to care about the Holocaust than they used to, even though a majority (58%) believe something like the Holocaust could happen again.

It's up to us to Educate to Stop Hate!

For decades, Holocaust survivors told their stories, and the world faced the horrible truth that humanity can turn on itself in ghastly ways. The sacrifice of six million Jews and five million non-Jews under the raging rampage of the Nazi regime gave a tangible witness to the atrocities that can happen when ignorance prevails.

As that truth retreats into the shadow of history, a new generation has grown up without learning its vital lesson. The LGBTQ

community, the mentally and physically handicapped and many other advocacy groups are unaware that they were slaughtered by the Nazis. How many Black people are aware that they too were persecuted in Nazi Germany and considered to be an inferior race?

New Yorkers have a wide-open door of opportunity to bring the power of that truth back into the spotlight. This opportunity has been ours since 1994, when a law was passed that required Holocaust education to be included in public schools in New York and New Jersey.

Just one problem: while New Jersey schools followed through and instituted a comprehensive State approved Holocaust education curriculum to boost the awareness of bigotry in young and impressionable minds, New York educators never established such a curriculum. In 2014 NYS did create a limited curriculum that was moving in the right direction but it was left up to the 732 individual school districts and over 4700 schools to follow through.

It's time for Albany to fix this nightmare. A State sponsored Holocaust education curriculum would close the gap in this story.

It would contrast this dark chapter of human history with the heroism that humankind can show against acts of discrimination. It would help children and their families learn the warning signs that can prevent future brutality towards, not only

Jews, but any targeted group of individuals.

Let's re-open the door to Holocaust education together in 2021.

Voices for Truth and Humanity, an all-volunteer organization comprised of New Yorkers of many varied ethnicities, is partnering with the Jewish Post in a campaign aimed at New York lawmakers and influencers.

The mission? To make sure that:

- \* The warning messages of the past will carry forward into the future.

- \* The dynamics, pressures, and propaganda that allowed the Holocaust to occur will be made clear to a new generation.

- \* The Holocaust's lessons will be ingrained in young minds and hearts as they become an integral part of our children's K-12 education.

As we enter 2021, New York awaits a vaccine for the deadly Covid-19 virus that has taken a terrible toll. What if we could give the schoolchildren of New York another "vaccine" against the terrible toll of violence, prejudice, and inhumanity? A comprehensive State approved Holocaust and other genocide education curriculum would provide a long-term preventive care approach to one of society's most pernicious evils, help us heal from the tragedy of the past, and guard our future from the infections of bias and bigotry.

With your support, we can achieve our goal. For more information visit [www.voices4th.org](http://www.voices4th.org)

**DEAR READERS:** You can support this effort by reaching out to your elected officials and education leaders to institute a comprehensive State approved Holocaust and other genocide curriculum.