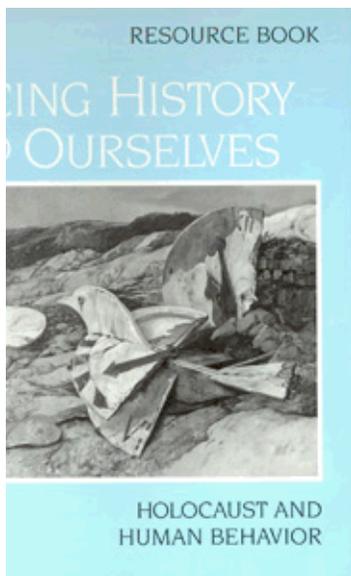


Facing History and Ourselves

For more than 25 years, the organization Facing History and Ourselves has engaged teachers and students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and anti-Semitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. By studying the historical development of the Holocaust and other examples of collective violence, students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives. They learn to combat prejudice with compassion, indifference with ethical participation, myth and misinformation with knowledge.



Facing History sponsors institutes for teachers that explore Facing History's content and methodology by connecting history to the moral questions inherent in a study, not only of violence, racism, and anti-Semitism, but also of courage, caring, and compassion. Generally, the opening sessions consider individual and group behavior. How is our identity formed? How do we acquire membership in a group? Who is part of our "universe of obligation"? Participants also consider the relationships among perpetrators, their victims, and bystanders.

In the sessions that follow, participants examine the choices Germans and others made in the 1920s and 1930s. As they come to understand the way many of those choices undermined democracy, they begin to realize how hatred, indifference, denial, and opportunism, little by little, can shape a period in history. As they study Nazi policies of indoctrination and terror, participants reflect on the fragility of democracy and the importance of freedom. As they learn how the Jews, "Gypsies," and others were humiliated, isolated, and ultimately murdered, they discover that history is not inevitable.

The closing sessions consider questions of right and wrong; of guilt and responsibility. They also explore what happens to a history that is denied or revised. In these sessions, participants contemplate issues related to prevention, by returning to themes developed in the opening sessions. Those themes are explored through models of participation drawn from American society.

Throughout the institute, participants explore new Facing History resources that illuminate themes developed in Facing History's primary resource book, *Holocaust and Human Behavior* (1994). These materials include *Race and Membership in American History: The Eugenics Movement*, *The Jews of Poland*, *The Armenian Genocide*, and study guides to such films as *Twilight: Los Angeles* and *Facing the Truth* with Bill Moyers, a documentary about the work of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Participants will also receive password access to Facing History's Online Campus at www.facinghistory.org. The campus provides opportunities to share curriculum outlines, discuss teaching strategies, and integrate technology into the classroom.

As participants work with these and other materials, they are encouraged to make connections to their own society and recognize universal themes. They also consider how to help their students connect the past to the questions raised by tragedies such as the events of September 11, 2001. What can we learn about democracy from the violent history of a failed democracy? About tolerance from horrific examples of neighbor turning against neighbor? About responsibility from accounts of educated adults who betrayed a generation of young people? About moral courage from a society that stressed blind obedience?

To learn more about Facing History and Ourselves, its publications and the Facing History Institutes, contact the New York regional office, 225 West 34th Street, Suite 1416, New York, New York, 10122, Phone: (212) 868-6544.