

What Are You Going to DO About It?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How can and do individuals respond to injustice?
- What are some of the factors that influence how a person responds to injustice?
- What are the most effective ways to try to correct injustice?

Overview

In this activity, students will explore the meanings of “justice” and “injustice” and view eye witness testimonies to analyze how some people have responded to the injustice of genocide throughout history. They will then apply what they’ve learned to the creation of a strategy for addressing a social injustice in their own community.

Target Audience

Middle School Social Studies

Activity Duration

Two 45–60 minutes class periods

Enduring Understandings

- Injustices against individuals occur on a daily basis on both a personal and global scale.
- Injustices can only be corrected when concerned individuals take action.
- There are many different ways for individuals to take action against injustice.

MATERIALS

- Computer with Internet connection and a projector
- Oskar Schindler resources:
 - [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Oskar Schindler](#)
 - [OskarSchindler.com](#)
 - [Yad Vashem: Oskar Schindler](#)
- If available, devices with internet access, one per student or student pair
- Handouts, one copy per student
 - Reaching Out a Hand
- Ideally, the teacher will have placed the clips in a location accessible to students prior to the lesson.

Background Information/Links

The decision to risk personal security to intervene on behalf of another human being is always a complicated one. Whether it is standing up for a friend against a bully, marching for LGBTQ+ rights, or peacefully defying segregation laws, a person who decides to confront injustice recognizes that they may face negative consequences but act anyway. In times of genocide, when intervention often carries with it the risk of severe punishment or execution, these decisions to help are especially fraught. In all genocides—from the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust to the Rwandan and Syrian Genocides—there were a few courageous individuals who risked everything to help victims of persecution, guided by their desire to correct injustice. Their actions took many forms, from working through official channels to take victims to safety to secretly hiding victims or anonymously providing a scrap of food.

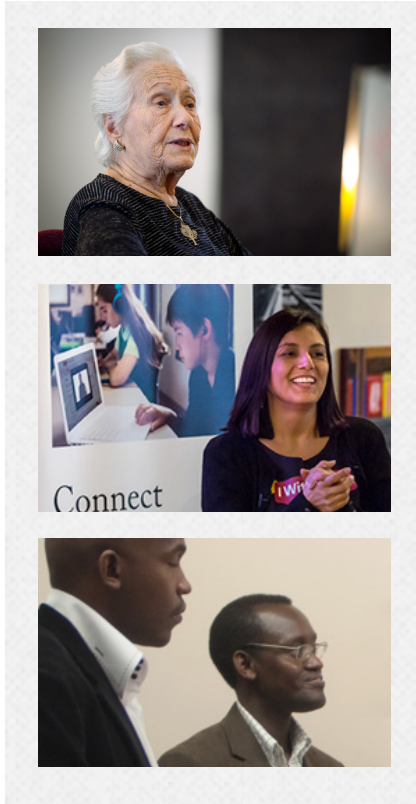
For additional information:

- BBC: “Ethics: A General Introduction,” http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/introduction/intro_1.shtml
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: “Genocide Timeline” <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007095>
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: “Oskar Schindler” <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005787>
- Armenian National Institute: “The Armenian Genocide: Context and Legacy” http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Education.56/current_category.117/resourceguide_detail.html#full_text
- History.com: “Rwandan Genocide” <https://www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide>

Procedure

Consider

- 1 The teacher will ask, “Do you know who Oskar Schindler was and what he did?” Students will share their current knowledge of Oskar Schindler. If possible, have students read a brief synopsis of Oskar Schindler’s life (resources listed above). Otherwise, select a resource and read portions to help students understand who Oskar Schindler was and why he is remembered today.
- 2 The teacher will show Rena Finder’s testimony about Oskar Schindler and ask students to discuss what resonates with them about the story.
- 3 The teacher will ask the class for a definition of “just,” then define “just” as morally correct, right, or fair. Justice is correctness or fairness.
- 4 Students will discuss what it means to stand up for what is just and the possible consequences of fighting for justice for oneself or another. The teacher will encourage students to share examples to support their thinking.
- 5 The teacher will create a word web on the board with the word “injustice” at the center. Students will brainstorm injustices they have encountered personally, then talk about present-day injustices they are aware of in the community or in the news and list them on the web. Possible injustices might include bullying, arbitrary grades or punishments, racism, sexism, or discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community. Facilitate discussion to help students recognize that all forms of injustice are intolerable and that some forms of injustice happen to individuals, while others happen to whole populations of people.
- 6 The teacher will ask, “How can we as individuals take a stand against such injustices? Students will discuss how they have personally taken a stand against injustices, how they have seen others do so, and how they could respond in the future.
- 7 The teacher will transition to the Collect segment of the lesson by saying, “Let’s engage with other examples of individuals who, under the extreme conditions of genocide, took a stand.”





Collect

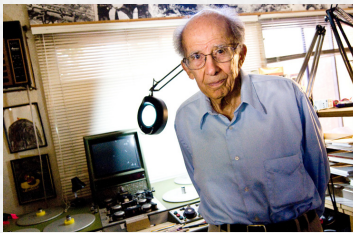
- 8 The teacher will introduce the concept of genocide as the most extreme form of injustice and explain that people throughout history have responded differently to genocide.
- 9 Students will predict possible individual responses to genocide (from doing nothing to publicly trying to stop the killing) and the reasons for each (from support for the genocide to self-preservation to belief in human rights).
- 10 Students will view clips of four eye witness testimonies about varying responses to genocide and complete a graphic organizer to collect the following information for each clip:
 - How did the person respond?
 - Was the response done secretly or openly?
 - What personal sacrifices did the responder make?
 - How effective was the response at confronting an injustice?
- 11 The teacher will lead a class discussion, emphasizing the similarities and differences among the various responses and pointing out that all aid givers faced serious consequences if they were caught.

Construct

- 12 The teacher will direct students to think about how what they've just learned about responses to genocide might inform responses to the social injustice they identified earlier in the lesson.
- 13 Working in groups of four, students will brainstorm a wide range of possible positive responses to this injustice, how each would help change victims, and the risks associated with each.
- 14 Each group will decide which of their possible responses they feel would be most effective and will share it with the full class.

Communicate

- 15 In pairs (half of each group of four), students will create public service announcements (PSAs) urging positive responses to the chosen social injustice.
 - The PSAs can take the form of a poster, script for a radio or television advertisement, magazine page, social media campaign (must consist of several different posts), etc.
 - Each pair's project should focus on the positive response they identified as potentially most effective.
 - Each project should define the social injustice, provide an example, explain why it is "unjust," and propose positive ways to address the injustice.



Connections

Connect to Student Lives	Connect to Contemporary Events	Connect to the Future
Students will begin by brainstorming examples of social injustices that they are familiar with.	Students will connect responses to injustice during various genocides to possible responses to modern social injustices.	Students will develop their own sense of how they should respond to injustice, which will guide their future actions.

Clips of Testimony

Collect

- **Philip Markowicz**
Philip describes an incident during a transfer in a cattle car in which an anonymous person gave him a sandwich, which he credits with saving his and his brother's lives.
- **Victor Dortheimer**
Victor explains how he came to work in Oscar Schindler's factory. He states that Schindler got special permissions for his factories in order to save Jews.



■ Diane Uwera

As people were being killed around her, Diane decided to walk home and was stopped by a Hutu woman who knew her family. The woman hid Diane and three others for a month, even though her husband was participating in the killings.

■ Samuel Kadorian

Samuel relates that a Christian doctor took in him and his mother during the genocide. Using nursing skills and money given to her by this doctor, his mother helped Armenians escape to Syria. She was frequently questioned by the police for these actions.

Reaching Out a Hand



STUDENT HANDOUT

Testimony	How did the Witness Try to Confront Injustice?	Were Their Actions Public or Secret?	What Sacrifices Did the Witness Make to Help? (Infer if necessary)	How Effective Were Their Actions in Confronting Injustice?
Philip Markowicz				
Victor Dortheimer				
Diane Uwera				
Samuel Kadorian				

Survivor and Witness Biographies



STUDENT HANDOUT

Rena Finder was born on February 24, 1929, in Kraków, Poland. She was born into a middle-class family surrounded by friends and family. When Rena was 10, life changed as new laws passed kept her from going to school, riding buses, and even walking on the sidewalk. The family was forced to move to the Kraków ghetto. Her grandparents and father were taken from the ghetto, and she never saw them again. Rena and her mother survived by securing employment at the factory owned by Oskar Schindler. When they were forced into Płaszów work camp, they were able to continue working at the factory. After three years, Schindler had to shut down his factory, and the women were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Rena was 13. Fortunately, Schindler was able to relocate his factory and paid a “bag of diamonds” to bring his workers back to the factory. This is where Rena and her mother were when the Soviet forces liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau in May 1945. They lived in a displaced persons camp for three years before Rena and her new husband, Mark, obtained visas to emigrate to the United States. They moved to Peabody, Massachusetts, and later moved to South Florida. Rena and Mark had three daughters. This interview took place in Framingham, Massachusetts, on October 23, 1996.

Philip Markowicz (born Fajwel) was born on March 15, 1924, in Lodz, Poland. He was in the Lodz ghetto in beginning in 1940, for four years. From October 1944 until January 1945, he was in Auschwitz. From there he was sent to the Flossenbug Camp in Munich and then to Regensburg, Germany, on a Death March. He had worked on repairing railroad tracks in these areas. He was in Lauffen Camp in Germany on May 7, 1945, when the war ended. Philip then went to Einring Displaced Person Camp, near Salzburg, Austria. From there he went to Lager Lechfeld Displaced Person Camp until March 1950. His father was killed in Lodz ghetto; his mother, older brother, and sister were killed in Chelmno, Poland. Philip and his younger brother remained together throughout

the war. Philip and his younger brother were the only survivors in his family. Philip and his wife have three children and six grandchildren. This interview occurred on January 29, 1998 in Aventura, Florida, U.S.

Victor Dorthheimer was born in Kraków, Poland, on September 16, 1918. He grew up with his two brothers in an apartment with many Catholic Polish friends. Victor had to leave school when antisemitism became normal. At that time, Victor wanted to emigrate to British Mandate Palestine. Victor and his family were forced to move to a small town in Poland. He married his girlfriend, Helena, so they weren't split up. In March of 1943, Victor and his wife and others who were able to work were made to dig a massive grave. The grave was used for all the people who were murdered because they couldn't work: the old, the young, and the infirm. Victor ended up in Kraków-Płaszów Camp. Since he was a master painter and could speak German, he was chosen to work in Schindler's factory with his wife. Victor was transferred to Schindler's new factory in Czechoslovakia. When the Soviet army liberated the camp in January of 1945, Victor returned to Kraków to see what was left of his family home. He and his wife then lived in Czechoslovakia before emigrating to Haifa, Israel in 1949. Victor and Helena had one son, Michael and two grandchildren. He and his second wife, Lydia and emigrated to London, England. This interview took place on December 3, 1996, in London, England.

Diane Uwera was born on December 7, 1988, in Butare, Rwanda, to a Tutsi family. At age 5, when the Genocide against the Tutsi began in Rwanda and Tutsis were targeted for mass murder, she and her family were forced to hide in a nearby school. On the third night at the school, she was separated from her family and later discovered that many of the people who were also taking refuge in the school had been murdered, including her sister. A lady who

Survivor and Witness Biographies



STUDENT HANDOUT

lived nearby and knew her family rescued and hid her. When the conflict ended, the same woman took her to an orphanage. Over the next two months, she lived in two different orphanages before being relocated to a third orphanage in Burundi; there, she was found by her cousin. Diane returned to Rwanda and went to live with her aunt in Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda. She lived with her aunt until she was 17 and then she relocated to the United States to live with another aunt. The interview with Diane took place on December 6, 2010, in Houston, Texas.

Samuel Kadorian was born in 1907, in the province of Harput (Elâzığ, Turkey) in the Ottoman Empire. In 1915 mass forced deportations were order for Armenians who lived in Harput. Samuel, his parents, his two older sisters and his younger brother were made to leave their home with other neighbors and forced to walk south toward the Syrian Desert. When passing the outskirts Malatya, Samuel's father and other men, as well as boys older than 10 years old, were separated from the large group and were killed by the Ottoman gendarmes(police). Days later, another round of killings took place as the Ottoman gendarmes threw Samuel and other boys between 5-8 years old into a pile along the Euphrates River and poked at them with their bayonets. Samuel survived this attack as he was at the bottom of the pile. Out of a family of seven, Samuel was the only surviving member of the Armenian Genocide. He immigrated to the United States in 1920. He was interviewed on August 15, 1980, in the United States

National Standards

College, Career & Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards

D2.Civ.7.6-8 Apply civic virtues and democratic principles in school and community settings.

D2.Civ.8.6-8 Analyze ideas and principles contained in the founding documents of the United States, and explain how they influence the social and political system.

D2.Civ.10.6-8 Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

D4.2.6-8 Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples and details with relevant information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations.

D4.4.6-8 Draw on multiple disciplinary lenses to analyze how a specific problem can manifest itself at local, regional, and global levels over time, identifying its characteristics and causes, and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address the problem.

D4.7.6-8 Assess their individual and collective capacities to take action to address local, regional, and global problems, taking into account a range of possible levers of power, strategies, and potential outcomes.

D4.8.6-8 Apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms and schools, and in out-of-school civic contexts.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

RI.8.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

W.8.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.