

# Facilitator Remarks

## INTRODUCTION

The topic we are about to cover for the next hour is a solemn one that will put us all in a serious state of mind. “Why be such a downer?” you may ask. Well, we must learn about the Holocaust because it is really about human treatment, and that is not in the past. It is constantly in the present for each of us.

Bullying is a hot topic that you all hear lots about in your schools today, and that is very applicable to the Holocaust. Why do you think it is applicable to the Holocaust? The Holocaust was totally unchecked bullying. It started with name calling (“Stinking Jew” was used on government issued posters), and escalated to the murder of millions.

For bullies to gain and keep their power, there must be conspirators. Conspirators are not only those who join in to help the bully, but those who witness what is happening yet stay silent and show indifference. The Holocaust succeeded in torturing and killing around nine million individuals because of crimes of indifference, and because of conspiracies of silence.

Who do bullies usually pick on? I’ll give you an example. In the wild, the lion will attack the sick and young prey that are more vulnerable because they can’t keep up with their herd. So, it is not surprising that the first group targeted for killing in the Holocaust were the Jewish disabled. The Nazi bully first went after the most vulnerable people, those who had the least ability to defend themselves. Each Holocaust victim ceased to be an individual human with feelings and a story, but was instead reduced to a number. A number like the one you were given.

So, we are going to spend some time with this solemn topic because it is our responsibility to give voice to the voiceless – be they the disabled, the poor, the elderly, the child, the minority, the “uncool” – to the most vulnerable. We are going to give a name and identity back to these numbers.

## CONCLUSION

Before you leave, I want to talk about one more survivor story. MARTIN NIEMÖLLER was a Protestant pastor in Germany who was a supporter of the Nazi party until Hitler began making laws to govern the churches as well as the state. He spoke out against this and, as a consequence, he spent seven years in a concentration camp. After the war, he gave many lectures about what had happened in Europe, offering different versions of this famous quote that I want to leave with you:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out--Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out--Because I was not a Trade Unionists.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out--Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me--and there was no one left to speak for me.

Remember, indifference and inaction always means being on the same side as the bully, never on the side of the victim. Let there be no mistake about it – indifference in the face of evil is a form of collaboration with evil.

As you leave today, remember the person behind the number on your arm. The survivors of the Holocaust are true heroes of humanity. They witnessed and endured the worst of inhumanity, but somehow found courage to go on. And so we honor them by remembering that each person has a name and an identity.