

Recognizing the parallels and differences between the Holocaust and other historical events

Pedagogical concept:

In this exercise, students will develop **critical thinking** skills, and by working collaboratively on Mind Maps, they will be able to **discuss and share** their thoughts. It is important that the students understand there are no “right” or “wrong” answers, but it's rather about developing, as a final result, a joint **mind map** in small groups, and discussing in the class the mind maps that each group compiled.

By comparing and contrasting the **differences** between the Holocaust and other historical events, students are made more sensitive and aware of experiences of victims during the Holocaust, and during other historical events. The exercise intentionally *does not include* the Palestine / Middle East conflict; while the authors understand that this topic requires a separate exercise, this exercise should not be about the struggles between Israel and some of its neighboring countries.

Duration: 1 hour

Necessary materials:

Short handouts about

- the Holocaust
- the 2015 refugee crisis,
- the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022,
- the repression met by Republican women during the civil war and Franco's dictatorship
- women in the Armenian genocide
- All examples will be explained / contextualized according to the 10 stages of genocide, see for example here:
<https://museeholocauste.ca/en/resources-training/ten-stages-genocide/>
- Graphic of Stanton's model:
<https://www.hmd.org.uk/learn-about-the-holocaust-and-genocides/what-is-genocide/the-ten-stages-of-genocide/>

Level: Advanced

Description of the activity/methods:

1. Students will receive short handouts (1 page maximum) about the Holocaust and different historical events (or stories from their own context)

2. They will prepare presentations using Prezi or similar free online tools, outlining the historical event, the victims, the specific character of this event, and what could be considered as similarities or differences between this event and the Holocaust.
3. *Optional Task*: write a Facebook post as a response to a Holocaust distortion

Any additional information or instructions:

Short handouts

The repression met by Republican women during the civil war and Franco's dictatorship

The Francoist repressive strategy unleashed after the coup d'état of 17 July 1936 developed complex mechanisms of physical and psychological punishment. Within Franco's repressive system there was a specific procedure applied to Republican women. It is argued that the different repressive strategies used against the female population by Spanish fascism was motivated by the perception of women as second-class citizens and therefore inferior to men. Their punishment followed criteria of exemplarity.

On 17 July 1936 a military uprising against the legitimate government of the Second Republic took place in Spain. The fact that the uprising failed in part of the country prompted the military occupation of the areas that did not support the coup – which developed into a full-fledged civil war that would end on 1 April 1939, with the complete defeat of the Republic and the establishment of the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, which lasted until his death in 1975. Two main periods have been defined in the study of Franco's repression. From 17 July 1936 to February 1937, there was a phase in which supporters of the rebellion against the Republic operated through the application of the so-called War Declaration Decrees, which encouraged extrajudicial violence. From February 1937 onwards, emergency summary trials were established that functioned until 1945. Nevertheless, people were still killed by extrajudicial means during this period. This procedure was not limited to the period of the conflict. It also continues during the first years of the dictatorship until 1948. Together with these forms of extreme violence, Francoist repression also resorted to the concealment of the crimes, the destruction of evidence and propaganda. The Francoist repressive apparatus not only contemplated the physical elimination of people: it also developed complex mechanisms of psychological punishment which included, from the beginning of the war, the segregation, persecution, harassment and imprisonment of suspects, as well as the seizure of their assets or the application of the Law of Political Responsibilities, among others. Within Franco's repressive system there was a specific procedure applied to Republican women. They suffered a specific violence as consequence of their political activity during the Republic or because they were the wives, mothers, sisters or relatives of Republicans. The different repressive strategies used against female groups by Spanish fascism were motivated by the perception of women as second-class citizens and therefore inferior to men. According to Francoist ideologues like Juan Antonio Vallejo Nágera, women intellectually inferior and unreliable and used social revolutions to unleash their sexual appetite and cruelty. The consideration of women as subaltern led to the application of different types of punishment that not always implied death. On the one hand,

it could be physical, through the execution, torture and rape of women first during the war and later in Franco's prisons. On the other, it could also be psychological, by eliminating aspects of their femininity through the shaving of their hair and their public exposure after having ingested castor oil, which caused them severe diarrhoea – the alleged purpose was to 'throw communism out of their bodies'. Republican women were caricatured as prostitutes, due to their efforts to achieve emancipation and equal rights during the Republic and their struggle against patriarchal culture and Catholic morality (Nash 2015). After the war, many women that had been left destitute and were marginalized due to their Republican credentials were driven to prostitution.

Source: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00438243.2020.1740775>

Women in the Armenian genocide

The Armenian genocide was the systematic destruction of the Armenian people and identity in the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Spearheaded by the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), it was implemented primarily through the mass murder of around one million Armenians during death marches to the Syrian Desert and the forced Islamization of others, primarily women and children.

Women and children, who made up the great majority of deportees, were usually not executed immediately, but subjected to hard marches through mountainous terrain without food and water. Those who could not keep up were left to die or shot.

The Islamization of Armenians, carried out as a systematic state policy involving the bureaucracy, police, judiciary, and clergy, was a major structural component of the genocide. Although the first and most important step was conversion to Islam, the process also required the eradication of Armenian names, language, and culture, and for women, immediate marriage to a Muslim. Although Islamization was the most feasible opportunity for survival, it also transgressed Armenian moral and social norms.

The CUP allowed Armenian women to marry into Muslim households, as these women had to convert to Islam and would lose their Armenian identity. Young women and girls were often appropriated as house servants or sex slaves. Some boys were abducted to work as forced laborers for Muslim individuals. Some children were forcibly seized, while others were sold or given up by their parents to save their lives. Special state-run orphanages were also set up with strict procedures intending to deprive their charges of an Armenian identity. Most Armenian children who survived the genocide endured exploitation, hard labor without pay, forced conversion to Islam, and physical and sexual abuse. Armenian women captured during the journey ended up in Turkish or Kurdish households; those who were Islamized during the second phase of the genocide found themselves in an Arab or Bedouin environment.

The rape, sexual abuse, and prostitution of Armenian women were all very common. Although Armenian women tried to avoid sexual violence, suicide was often the only alternative. Deportees were displayed naked in Damascus and sold as sex slaves in some areas, constituting an important source of income for accompanying gendarmes. Some were sold in Arabian slave markets to Muslim Hajj pilgrims and ended up as far away as Tunisia or Algeria.

During and after the genocide, Armenian women resisted: silently, discreetly, but sometimes also loudly and overtly; and often in spiritual or cultural ways. A common thread in women's testimonies is a spirit of defiance - a sense of dignity, resilience and a refusal to allow their identity to be destroyed - that they have passed on to future generations. A hundred years later, descendants of survivors view their relatives' actions as inspiration for their own lives and appear to have inherited elements of rebelliousness and resistance from them. The memories of mothers, grandmothers, greatgrandmothers and great-aunts nurture their identity both as Armenians and as women. In many cases, these have been passed directly from survivors to younger generations, especially from grandmothers to granddaughters. The USC Shoah Foundation's online collection contains video testimony of survivors being interviewed by their granddaughters, often with an emphasis on cultural tradition and continuity, which has provided descendants with a deeply-held Armenian identity and even perhaps, a capacity to transcend the trauma of the genocide. In one such video, Siranoush Boyajian follows her description of churches being burned down, with the memory of particular bread served at Mass. She says she has been making this type of bread for her church in America for over 20 years: "We still have our customs... We try to teach our children... They're proud to be an Armenian, because they see what we went through to come this far."³ The relationships between family members, and the role descendants take on in preserving their relatives' memories, echo the historical importance of intergenerational relationships in pre-war Armenian families. Traditionally, many generations lived together, and cultural knowledge was transmitted between grandmothers, mothers and daughters. Survivor Bertha Nakshian Ketchian described her own grandmother, Mariam, who refused to give her away to a Turkish official, emphasizing her grandmother's courage and the importance of having been able to preserve her Armenian identity:

"She was afraid of nothing and nobody. ... And now she was fighting with all her might and cleverness to protect what was left of her once thriving large family... You saved me from going to worse than death and staying in the house of the enemy to become a Turk. ... Dear Grandmother Mariam, I appreciate what you did with all my heart. Moreover, as the years go by, I realize more fully how very much it means to me to have lived as who I really am."

Source:

https://agmipublications.asnet.am/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/IJAGS_Vol.4_N1_37-53.pdf