



**CALIFORNIA TEACHERS
COLLABORATIVE FOR
HOLOCAUST AND
GENOCIDE EDUCATION**

Room 8: Civil Rights and Jewish Community: Shared Struggles and Solidarity

Audience: 6 - 8 grade

Time: Two 50-minute sessions

Student Outcomes

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

1. Compare and contrast Jim Crow laws in the United States with Nuremberg Laws in Nazi Germany.
2. Analyze how the Jewish community participated in and supported the Civil Rights Movement.
3. Identify examples of allyship and solidarity between African American and Jewish communities.
4. Connect the concept of Tikkun Olam to social justice movements and civic engagement.
5. Evaluate the importance of cross-community solidarity in confronting discrimination.

Aligned Standards (California Common Core)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9: Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

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Context:

This two-day lesson explores the connections between the Civil Rights Movement and the Jewish community, examining how shared experiences of discrimination fostered solidarity and allyship. Students will analyze primary sources to compare Jim Crow laws with Nuremberg Laws, learn about Jewish participation in the Civil Rights Movement, and explore how the Jewish value of Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) connects to social justice activism. The lesson builds on Alex Teplich's virtual museum Room 8, focusing on historical connections and contemporary relevance of cross-community solidarity.

Glossary:

Key Terms

- **Jim Crow Laws:** Legal framework enforcing racial segregation in the Southern United States from the late 19th century until 1965.
- **Nuremberg Laws:** Anti-Jewish legislation introduced in Nazi Germany in 1935 that institutionalized racial theories and discrimination.
- **Civil Rights Movement:** Social movement in the United States from approximately 1954-1968 aimed at ending legalized racial discrimination and segregation.
- **Allyship:** The practice of emphasizing social justice, inclusion, and human rights by members of a privileged group working with marginalized groups.
- **Tikkun Olam:** Hebrew phrase meaning "repair of the world"; refers to actions taken to improve society.

- **Solidarity:** Unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest.
- **Discrimination:** The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people.
- **Segregation:** The enforced separation of different racial groups.

Materials:

- [Read about the museum](#)
- [Access to virtual museum Room 8](#)
- Handout 1: Jim Crow and Nuremberg Laws Comparison Chart (see attached)
- Handout 2: "What is Tikkun Olam?" Reading and Reflection Questions (see attached)
- Handout 3: Exit Ticket (see attached)

Differentiation:

- Provide primary source documents at varied reading levels
- Create mixed-ability groupings for collaborative activities
- Offer sentence starters and paragraph frames for written responses
- Include visual supports alongside text (photographs, timelines, maps)
- Provide audio recordings of key texts for students who benefit from auditory learning
- Extension activities for accelerated learners that involve independent research
- Pre-teach key terms with visuals and examples

Assessment(s) (Teacher choice):

- Day 1: Completed Venn diagram comparing Jim Crow and Nuremberg Laws
- Day 1: Exit ticket with reflection on connections between the two systems of discrimination
- Day 2: Small group presentations on examples of Jewish-Black solidarity
- Day 2: Written reflection connecting Tikkun Olam to social justice actions today

Lesson/Activity:

DAY 1: Understanding Parallel Systems of Discrimination

Introduction (10 minutes)

- Begin with a content warning about the challenging nature of discrimination and hatred that will be discussed, framing the lesson as a continuing conversation. Remind students they can take breaks if needed.
- Introduce lesson objectives and essential questions: "How have different groups experienced discrimination throughout history?" and "What similarities and differences exist between Jim Crow laws and Nuremberg Laws?"
- Quick write: Students respond to the prompt "Why might it be important to compare different examples of discrimination from history?"

Direct Instruction (15 minutes)

- Present brief overview of Jim Crow laws in the United States, highlighting their purpose, timeline, and impact
 - Resource: [Jim Crow Museum at Ferris State University](#)
 - Resource: Facing History and Ourselves:
- Introduce the Nuremberg Laws from Nazi Germany, explaining their context and consequences
 - Resource: [Facing History and Ourselves](#)
- Model analysis of one example from each system, highlighting similarities and differences

Collaborative Investigation (15 minutes) *(Differentiation: Mixed-ability groupings, varied text complexity)*

- Divide students into small groups of 3-4
- Distribute Handout 1 (comparison chart)
- Groups analyze primary sources to identify key characteristics of each system
- Students complete comparison chart

Discussion (5 minutes)

- Facilitate whole-class discussion on findings, guided by questions:
 - What similarities do you notice between these two systems?
 - What purposes did these laws serve in their respective societies?
 - How did these laws affect daily life for the targeted groups?

Assessment and Closure (5 minutes)

- Exit ticket: Students complete a 3-2-1 reflection
 - 3 similarities between Jim Crow and Nuremberg Laws
 - 2 differences between the systems
 - 1 question they still have

DAY 2: Jewish Participation in the Civil Rights Movement and Tikkun Olam

Review and Introduction (10 minutes)

- Briefly review previous lesson's key points about Jim Crow and Nuremberg Laws
- Introduce the focus for today: "How did the Jewish community participate in the Civil Rights Movement, and what motivated their involvement?"
- Show 2-3 historical photographs of Jewish participation in Civil Rights activism

Tikkun Olam Connection (10 minutes)

- Introduce the concept of Tikkun Olam using Handout 2
- Discuss how this Jewish value connected to Civil Rights activism
- Ask students to consider: "How does the concept of 'repairing the world' relate to fighting discrimination?"

Jigsaw Activity (20 minutes) *(Differentiation: Scaffold readings, provide sentence starters)*

- Divide class into "expert groups" of 3-4 students
- Assign each group one aspect of Jewish participation in the Civil Rights Movement:
 1. Rabbis and religious leaders
 2. Jewish organizations

3. Individual Jewish activists and their contributions
 4. The concept of Tikkun Olam and its connection to social justice
- Expert groups read assigned materials and prepare to teach others
 - Students regroup into "teaching groups" where each student shares information from their expert group

Application and Reflection (5 minutes)

- Students individually write short reflections connecting historical examples to contemporary issues
- Prompt: "How can the historical alliance between Jewish and Black communities inform how different groups work together today?"

Assessment and Closure (5 minutes)

- Gallery walk: Students post one takeaway from the lesson on classroom walls
- Final reflection question: "What is one action that exemplifies Tikkun Olam that you could take in your own community?"

Supplemental Resources

Facing History and Ourselves. (2022). *Teaching about the Nuremberg Laws*.
<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-holocaust-and-human-behavior>

National Civil Rights Museum. (2023). *Virtual resources for educators*.
<https://civilrightsmuseum.org/learn/>

Schneier, M. (2000). *Shared dreams: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Jewish community*. Jewish Lights Publishing.

Schultz, D. (Ed.). (2015). *This light of ours: Activist photographers of the civil rights movement*. University Press of Mississippi.

References

Branch, T. (1989). *Parting the waters: America in the King years, 1954-63*. Simon & Schuster.

Friedman, S. (1995). *Jews and the American slave trade*. Transaction Publishers.

Greenberg, C. L. (2010). *Troubling the waters: Black-Jewish relations in the American century*. Princeton University Press.

Medoff, R. (2019). The rabbi of Selma: Abraham Joshua Heschel and the civil rights movement. *American Jewish History*, 103(3), 351-373.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/ajh.2019.0032>

Sugrue, T. J. (2012). *Sweet land of liberty: The forgotten struggle for civil rights in the North*. Random House.

Webb, C. (2001). *Fight against fear: Southern Jews and Black civil rights*. University of Georgia Press.

Handouts for Room 8 Lesson

Handout 1: Jim Crow and Nuremberg Laws Comparison Chart

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions

Compare and contrast Jim Crow laws in the United States and Nuremberg Laws in Nazi Germany by completing this chart. Use information from the class discussion and your own research to fill in the details.

Aspect	Jim Crow Laws	Nuremberg Laws
When and where were these laws enacted?		
What groups were targeted?		
List 3 specific examples of restrictions imposed by these laws		
How were these laws enforced?		
How did people resist these laws?		
When and how did these laws end?		

Analysis Questions

Answer the following questions in complete sentences:

1. What similarities do you notice between Jim Crow laws and Nuremberg laws? Identify at least two.
2. What differences do you notice between these two systems of discrimination? Identify at least two.

3. Why do you think it's important to compare different systems of discrimination from history?
4. How did these laws impact daily life for the targeted groups?
5. What lessons can we learn from studying these historical examples of discrimination?

Handout 2: What is Tikkun Olam?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Reading: Understanding Tikkun Olam

Tikkun Olam (תיקון עולם) is a Hebrew phrase that means "repairing the world" or "healing the world." This concept has deep roots in Jewish tradition and has evolved to become an important principle guiding social action and justice work.

Origins and Meaning

The concept of Tikkun Olam first appeared in classical rabbinic literature. In its earliest form, the phrase referred to legal measures taken to keep social order and promote fairness. Over time, its meaning expanded, especially through Jewish mystical traditions where it came to represent the idea that humans have a responsibility to fix what is broken in the world.

In modern times, Tikkun Olam has become associated with social action, progressive causes, and the pursuit of social justice. It represents the idea that Jews (and all people) have a responsibility to work toward making the world more just, peaceful, and sustainable.

Tikkun Olam and Civil Rights

During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, many Jewish Americans viewed their participation as an expression of Tikkun Olam. They saw the struggle against racial discrimination as part of their religious and ethical obligation to repair injustice in the world.

Jewish participation in the Civil Rights Movement included:

- Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marching arm-in-arm with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma, Alabama
- Jewish lawyers making up nearly half of the attorneys who defended civil rights workers in the South
- Jewish organizations like the American Jewish Committee funding civil rights initiatives

- Jewish students participating in Freedom Summer and other civil rights activities

Many Jewish participants in the Civil Rights Movement made direct connections between their own community's history of persecution and the struggles faced by Black Americans. They understood that working toward justice for others was an expression of their own values and a way to create a better world for everyone.

Reflection Questions

1. In your own words, what does Tikkun Olam mean? Why might this concept be important to Jewish people?
2. How did Jewish Americans apply the concept of Tikkun Olam during the Civil Rights Movement?
3. Can you think of any other historical examples where different communities supported each other in fighting against discrimination or injustice?
4. What are some ways that people your age could practice Tikkun Olam in your school or community today?
5. How might understanding concepts like Tikkun Olam help build solidarity between different communities facing discrimination?

Extension Activity

Think about an issue in your school or community that needs "repairing." Create a brief action plan describing:

- What the issue is
- Why it matters
- Three specific actions that could help address it
- Who would need to be involved
- What the impact might be if the issue were successfully addressed

Handout 3: Exit Ticket

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Day 1 Exit Ticket: Jim Crow and Nuremberg Laws

Complete the following reflection based on today's lesson:

3-2-1 Reflection

3 similarities you noticed between Jim Crow laws and Nuremberg laws:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

2 differences between these systems of discrimination:

- 1.
- 2.

1 question you still have about this topic:

Day 2 Exit Ticket: Civil Rights Movement and Tikkun Olam

Part 1: Knowledge Check

List two ways the Jewish community participated in the Civil Rights Movement:

- 1.
- 2.

Part 2: Personal Reflection

What does Tikkun Olam mean, and how does it relate to social justice movements?

Part 3: Application

Describe one action that exemplifies Tikkun Olam that you could take in your own community:

Part 4: Connection

How can the historical alliance between Jewish and Black communities inform how different groups work together today?