

## About The Holocaust Reconciliation Project

I have been presenting workshops (in English) to German students since 2007. My goal is to foster a better understanding and relationship between the German and Jewish communities, which in turn will help fight anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice. This can be achieved in some small measure by inculcating in the current generation of Germans, a new sense of responsibility, transcending the guilt and shame of previous generations, while being ever mindful of the past.

My academic credentials enhance my ability to achieve my goals. I have a Ph.D. in History, with a specialization in Germany, 1918-1945, with special emphasis on Weimar Culture. My work has been published in numerous journals and encyclopedias. I was Chair of the History Department at Yeshiva University HS, New York City and have been working with students, grades 9-12, for over thirty years.

As a child of survivors, my personal background, academic interests and frequent trips to Germany have made me mindful of the angst-ridden relationship forced on our peoples as a result of the Shoah. My story is one which resonates with students and serves as a natural springboard to further dialogue. For example, we expand the perception of Jews as more than mere victims, by discussing them in the broader historical context of both Germany and Europe. Also, my own personal struggles, including both theological and psychological conflicts, enable students to confront their own feelings about the burdens of our shared past.

The project enables German high school/gymnasium students to confront their legacy -- both the constructive and destructive aspects -- and helps them incorporate lessons which will in turn extend pluralism and common democratic values. At the same time, responsibility by the Jewish community to eradicate remnants of anti-German feelings is discussed. Hopefully, students will realize how a bridge to understanding and reconciliation must be constructed by both sides to safeguard human rights throughout the world. The flexible program is usually 4 hours in length and includes a Power Point presentation. It consists of the following segments:

- My family's history both before and during the Holocaust and how it has impacted me.
- My visits to Germany (including a dramatic return to my father's house and visits to 3 concentration camps) and how that has enabled me to come to terms with my own prejudices and subsequent advocacy for the building of tolerance.
- Recognizing that many German students are not fully aware of the rich diversity of Judaism, an overview is provided.
- Realizing the new role Germany plays in Europe, as well as with Israel and the United States, the workshop includes related issues, i.e. comparisons to other holocausts, the New Germany and EU, Germany's Recent Immigration Policies, Recent German-American Foreign Relations Since the Iraq War, and Germany's Role in the War on Terrorism.
- Prior to the session, students are given a number of articles to help prepare them for the workshop. After my presentation, we reconvene in student-centered discussions where we can examine some of the questions and issues that have been raised.

Geoffrey S. Cahn, Ph.D.

Geoffcahn@aol.com or Reconschools@aol.com

[www.holocaust-reconciliation.org](http://www.holocaust-reconciliation.org)