



October 2021

MESSAGE

From the Swedish National Organization for Holocaust Education

Holocaust Education Initiative – Unique new educational material to counter anti-Semitism

In the run-up to the International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Anti-Semitism – Remember ReAct – the Swedish National Organization for Holocaust Education (RFF) rolled out the drama documentary *When the Voices Fall Silent*. This film is part of an educational package entitled *Holocaust Education Initiative* which is aimed at teachers as well as high-school and senior-high school students. Teachers get an entirely new and unique pedagogic tool to prevent and counteract anti-Semitism in schools.

The Swedish Educational Radio Broadcasting Company (UR) is now showing the film on its UR Play and UR Access platforms. One of the consistent themes throughout the film is that it is primarily through “the individual person’s destiny that we can understand our collective history”.

“It sears our hearts when we hear about Nazism in Sweden. In a democratic country! How can we allow such a thing?” asks Leon Rytz, one of the very last surviving voices from the Holocaust, who participates in the film.

The film aims to motivate students to learn more about values, and also to promote opportunity for discussion. With the teacher’s help and guidance, students gain increased awareness of how important it is to constantly be on the alert to ensure that democracy is maintained and defended. The film emphasises the importance of having the courage to leave the comfort of one’s own group, to take responsibility for people who may be perceived as different or as outsiders. A democratic society requires that we can see past cultural, linguistic and ethnic differences and instead see other people as our fellow human beings. We all carry both an individual and a shared responsibility in this regard.

The film is a drama documentary that depicts the destinies of certain individuals during the Holocaust. It transports the viewer between today and yesterday, blending together drama, historic archival material and animation – and draws keen parallels to today. The film starts off in today’s Gothenburg and charts a course to Poland at the time of the Second World War. By using youngsters as actors and extras, it creates a bridge between historic events and everyday life in school today. This makes it easier for the students to feel involved and in familiar surroundings, and to forge a firm link to the contents and message of the film. The reactions of the youngsters and the narrator’s voice all help create a tangible link to today. They are woven into the film and convey a feeling of hope that a new generation will take in the information, that they will base their assumptions on thorough evaluation of information and understand the value of democracy.

The educational package also includes a pitch film and teacher guides. Teachers may choose to work with various themes such as Jewish Identity, Anti-Semitism, the Warsaw Ghetto, the Value of Democracy, or The Rescuers.

The Swedish National Organization for Holocaust Education

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More information is available at www.riksff.se