

Shine a Light 2022

Lesson 3: Speak or Stay Silent

Created by: Erica Hruby, M.A.



**SHINE
ALIGHT**
on Antisemitism

Educator Background Information/ Knowledge

The #ShineALight Campaign

The #ShineALight Campaign is a national initiative to create a collective light of celebration spreading the Jewish joy of Chanukah. Sponsored by two NY-based funders and the UJA-Federation of NY, the campaign is designed as a counter-expression to antisemitism and other messages and acts of hate towards Jews and Israel. The Jewish Education Project is a proud content partner of the #ShineALight Campaign and is delighted to provide these materials to Jewish educators. We encourage you to utilize this education content in the weeks leading up to and through Chanukah (this year and in the future), and if applicable, at other times of the year.

Purpose:

The purpose of this lesson is to explore the role of speaking up versus staying silent when negative things are happening around us. In the time of the Maccabees, they not only spoke up, but took physical action. Both are important ways for people to counteract hatred, falsehoods, bigotry, and more. This lesson includes many opportunities for students to learn lessons about the power of words and engage with what it means to them. While some words convey hope and positivity, others reveal hate and prejudice.



Overview:

- 1) Anti-silence rally at Gunn High School
- 2) Pastor Martin Niemöller Poem, "First They Came"
- 3) "The Danger of Silence," Clint Smith TedTalk
- 4) Exploration of quotes
- 5) It is a Jewish "duty" to speak out



Supplies Needed:

- Information about the [history of Chanukah](#) and the [formal definition of antisemitism](#)
- Access to computer or other devices to view videos
- Print Pastor Martin Niemöller poem (see page 7)
- Print [myjewishlearning article](#) on the Jewish duty to speak out
- Print quotes pages ([link here](#) or print from pages 9-13)
- Print definition of antisemitism (see page 6)
- Optional: Use Jamboard or Padlet to respond/react to discussion questions



Timing (75 minutes total):

- 1) Anti-silence rally at Gunn High School – 15 minutes
- 2) Pastor Martin Niemöller Poem: "First They Came" – 15 minutes
- 3) 'The Danger of Silence', Clint Smith TedTalk – 15 minutes (40 min with added activity)
- 4) Exploration of quotes – 15 minutes
- 5) It is a Jewish duty to speak out – 15 minutes

Lesson 3: **Speak or Stay Silent**



Lesson:

1) Video: Anti-silence rally at Gunn High School re: GSA

- a. This activity kicks off this lesson with students stepping up and speaking out in support of ideals that are important to them. They will experience the power of words and the importance of community.
- b. Show students the [video of the anti-silence rally at Gunn High School](#)
- c. Depending upon the number of students, the discussion can be done
 - i. Whole group
 - ii. Chevruta (pairs)
 - iii. Small groups
- d. Have students discuss the following seven questions after viewing the Gunn High School video
 - i. Discussion Questions:
 1. What happened at Gunn High School?
 2. Who was being targeted? Why?
 3. Who were the perpetrators? Why?
 4. What was at risk for the students and school to hold the rally?
 5. What was at risk for the students and school to NOT hold the rally?
 6. Following the rally, what do you think the impact was on all participants?
 7. What parallels can you draw to the students holding the rally and what the Maccabees did during the Maccabean Revolt? (may need to provide a quick refresher if students aren't familiar with the story and themes)

2) Pastor Martin Niemöller Poem, "First They Came"

- a. This activity lets students explore the power of words and the danger of not speaking up (or stepping up) through poetry.
- b. Ask students if they have ever heard of the famous Martin Niemöller poem called "First They Came." If they have, ask them to summarize it.
- c. Ask students if they know who Pastor Martin Niemöller was and/or why he wrote the poem.
 - i. Share [brief bio](#)
 1. Pastor Martin Niemöller was born January 14, 1892.
 2. He is best known for writing "First They Came," one of the most famous poems about the Holocaust.
 3. Initially an antisemitic Nazi supporter, his views changed when he was imprisoned in a concentration camp for speaking out against Nazi control of churches.
 4. He later encouraged Germans to take responsibility for Nazi atrocities.
 5. He died March 6, 1984.

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Lesson, Continued



- ii. Ask a student to read the poem aloud

First They Came

First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist
Then 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 unionist
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 out for me

- a. After reading the poem, as a whole class or in chevruta or small groups, discuss the following questions:
 - i. Did students realize the poem was written by someone who originally supported the Nazi party?
 - ii. From whose perspective is Pastor Martin Niemöller writing about in the poem?
 - iii. How do you feel about Pastor Martin Niemöller coming to this realization only after HE was targeted? (as opposed to speaking up when he saw others being targeted)
 - iv. How do we know that Pastor Martin Niemöller's perspective changed? Was this his "lightbulb" moment?
 - v. Does anyone want to share about a moment when they held off speaking up until it directly impacted them? [i.e. unfair teacher grading practices or someone not getting invited to a B-Mitzvah or party]
 - vi. How about a moment when you spoke up to defend a person, idea, organization, etc.?

3) Saying no to silencing: it is a Jewish duty to speak out

- a. This activity helps students understand that according to Judaism, we have a duty to speak up. It is an expectation of us as a member of the Jewish community.
- b. Rabbi David Evan Markus wrote about Judaism and our duty as a Jew to speak up in a December 2016 article for myjewishlearning.com
- c. Have a student read aloud the below portion of the article and discuss.

Silencing is a crisis of spirit, and I don't know the half of it – but my Jewish ancestors did. Some were murdered in the Holocaust, silenced to death. Others were born female at a time, not too long ago, when some men imagined that women didn't "need" a Jewish education and couldn't become Jewish teachers and leaders. Centuries of Jews faced official silencing, bans, civic disqualification, exile and more.

It's no wonder that Judaism's core trope of liberation theology is the biography-becomes-spirituality journey from silencing to speech – from slavery to freedom (Passover), concealment to revelation (Purim), discrimination to empowerment (Hanukkah). As Hanukkah's populist story recounts, Jews have known the darkness of being silenced into submission. It's a core Jewish calling, and a core human calling, to bring that kind of darkness into light.

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Lesson, Continued



- d. After reading the article portion, as a whole class or in chevruta or small groups, discuss the following questions:
- When have you (or those you care about) been silenced?
 - What kind of silencing was it?
 - In what ways is silencing like “darkness?”
 - When have you (or those you care about) spoken up?
 - What did you speak up for?
 - In what ways is speaking up like “light?”

4) "The Danger of Silence" TedTalk Clint Smith

- This activity illustrates how damaging and dangerous speech can be when it is allowed to go unchecked. A spoken word poet shares his experiences in working with students in an urban school setting.
- Show students [Clint Smith's TedTalk called, "The Danger of Silence"](#)
- Depending upon the number of students (and time), the discussion can be done in
 - Whole group
 - Chevruta (pairs)
 - Small groups
- Have students briefly discuss the following questions after viewing the video
 - What was the overarching message in Clint Smith's poem?
 - Did any lines in the poem stand out to you in particular? [i.e. “Silence is the residue of fear.” “Who has to have a soapbox when all you ever needed was your voice?”]
 - What harm can silence cause?
 - How has silence from the non-Jewish community of late impacted the spread of antisemitism in the U.S.?
 - Is it brave or courageous when we speak up or simply something we should do?
 - In what ways does speaking up shine a light on antisemitism, injustice, stereotyping, etc.?
- If you wish to add more to this lesson, you can have the students create their own spoken word poetry piece.
 - Students can explore the power of words - spoken or written by writing their own poem.
 - Through analysis, composition, and performance of spoken word poetry, students can address antisemitism that they are seeing in the world today.
 - Learn more about the components of writing a spoken word poem in this [MasterClass article](#).

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5) Exploring quotes referencing speech

- a. In this exercise, students will read quotes from a variety of sources reflecting on the power of words. They will connect these quotes from a wide variety of people, in different periods of time, to antisemitism today.
- b. Print the PDF on pages 9-13 with all five of the quotes. Place them around the room.
- c. Ask students to take a walk around the room and read each quote.
- d. After reading each quote, ask students to stand by the one that speaks most to them.
- e. If there are multiple students standing by each quote, instruct them to speak to each other about why the quote stood out to them. If there are fewer than two students at any of the quotes, you can skip this step.
- f. Go around the room and let each student briefly explain why the quote speaks to them.
- g. Ask them to relate their quote to antisemitism in the world around them.
- h. Quotes:
 - i. "Words are, in my not-so-humble opinion, our most inexhaustible source of magic. Capable of both inflicting injury, and remedying it." – Albus Dumbledore, Harry Potter (fictional character)
 - ii. "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."
– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Civil Rights leader)
 - iii. "People can tell you to keep your mouth shut, but that doesn't stop you from having your own opinion." – Anne Frank (Holocaust victim)
 - iv. "I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented." – Ellie Wiesel (Holocaust survivor)
 - v. "Don't ever let a soul in the world tell you that you can't be exactly who you are."
– Lady Gaga (musician/actor)



Wrap-up:

Students will walk away from this lesson with a better understanding of how words (silent or expressed) can impact challenges that students face in their daily lives, including big issues like antisemitism.

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Resources

The definition of antisemitism:

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>

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Pastor Martin Niemöller Poem: "First They Came"

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Saying No to Silencing Article

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Quotes About Staying Silent or Speaking Up

1. "Words are, in my not-so-humble opinion, our most inexhaustible source of magic. Capable of both inflicting injury, and remedying it." – Albus Dumbledore, Harry Potter (fictional character)



Photo: <https://www.wizardingworld.com/features/things-you-may-not-have-noticed-about-albus-dumbledore>

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– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Civil Rights leader)

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Photo: <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/martin-luther-king-jr>

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Quotes About Staying Silent or Speaking Up

3. "People can tell you to keep your mouth shut, but that doesn't stop you from having your your own opinion."
– Anne Frank (Holocaust victim)



Photo: <https://time.com/4113855/anne-frank-diary-co-author/>

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Quotes About Staying Silent or Speaking Up

4. "I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."
– Ellie Wiesel (Holocaust survivor)

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Photo: <https://www.jewishrichmond.org/jcrc/public-statements/jcrc-statements-comments-articles/public-statement-the-passing-of-elie-wiesel>

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Quotes About Staying Silent or Speaking Up

5. "Don't ever let a soul in the world tell you that you can't be exactly who you are."
– Lady Gaga (musician/actor)



Photo: <https://www.forbes.com/profile/lady-gaga/?sh=3271da6e31fe>

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