



South Carolina
Council on the Holocaust

Statement on Holocaust Denial

8/12/2018

Holocaust denial is the untenable assertion that the Holocaust did not happen. Similarly, Holocaust distortion and minimization are forms of denial that argue that the numbers of Jews murdered were exaggerated or that the Nazi state did not systematically murder Jews.

We know that six million Jews were systematically murdered in a Nazi-sponsored campaign of terror that also resulted in the death of five million others, including handicapped children, Jehovah's witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, homosexuals, political groups, Roma and Sinti ("gypsies"), and Slavs. Extensive historical documentation, physical evidence at mass murder sites, ghettos, killing centers ("death camps"), and concentration camps, testimonies from survivors, liberators, eye-witnesses, military officials, and the admissions of those who participated in the Holocaust clearly show that the Holocaust was a planned genocide intentionally perpetrated between 1933 and 1945 across the European continent with the express purpose of murdering all Jews in Europe.

Denial and distortion are motivated by antisemitism. Their function is to perpetuate hurtful stereotypes and false information. Many countries in Europe have passed laws that criminalize Holocaust denial and/or the display of Nazi symbols or ideology. However, the United States of America does *not* have a law against Holocaust denial either at the federal level or at individual state levels unless such speech is believed to provoke imminent violence.

The South Carolina Council on the Holocaust believes that denial **is** an abhorrent form of social violence even when physical violence is not immediately present. There is ample evidence in the fields of sociology, anthropology, history, and political science to show that hate speech *does* perpetrate social violence upon communities, and that it *is* the first step toward normalizing alienation and subsequent physical violence toward minority groups. Holocaust denial should not be allowed to stand unchallenged. It should not be disseminated in our communities through any means.

As such, the South Carolina Council on the Holocaust condemns Holocaust denial, minimization, and distortion in all forms. Furthermore, we reject claims that those who deny the Holocaust should be allowed to do so because they do not "know" they are spreading inaccurate information or because they "believe" their lies to be true. Holocaust education has existed in classrooms and communities in the United States for over 60 years.

To combat Holocaust denial in South Carolina, the Council works with educators to raise awareness about the history of the Holocaust and antisemitism, and to honor local survivors and liberators who call our state home.

If you have questions about what constitutes Holocaust denial, especially if you are an educator who is facing denial or distortion in your classroom or community, please visit some of these resources for guidance:

[*European Antisemitism from its Origins to the Holocaust*](#) from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum provides answers to the frequently asked question, “Why the Jews?”

[*Holocaust Denial Explained*](#) from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum defines types of denial and explains their dangers.

[*An Open Letter from Holocaust Survivors on Holocaust Denial*](#) from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is a plea from some of the last living Holocaust survivors as to why we should take all forms of denial seriously.

[*The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Statement on Holocaust Denial and Distortion*](#) provides an internationally agreed upon definition of denial.

[*Teaching with the Film Denial*](#) from the Anti-Defamation League is one of many resources about denial and antisemitism found on the ADL’s website.

The South Carolina Council on the Holocaust was created by the state legislature in 1989 to ensure the promotion of Holocaust education throughout our schools and communities. Any questions or inquiries can be directed to Dr. Christine Beresniova, Executive Director of the Council at cberesniova@scholocaustcouncil.org