Teaching the Holocaust

Methodological Considerations for Educators

- **We must accurately define the "Holocaust."**
- **We have a dual responsibility to teach the magnitude AND the personal nature of what happened.**
- **We must put people above statistics.**
- **We must show the humanity before 1933 to show that Jews are not merely "victims," but human beings. This will decrease the social and historical distances between the people involved and ourselves.**
- **We must put this history into its proper context: Our first response to a student's question must be, "When?"**
- **We cannot let the perpetrators frame the perspective of our study. Students must make careful distinctions about what they are seeing and hearing. We cannot allow the Nazis to shape the perception of reality or historical memory through their pictures, interpretations, and stereotypes.**
- **We must avoid simple answers to this complex history.**
- **We must try to avoid stereotypical and over-generalized descriptions.**
- **We must teach that just because it happened does not mean that it was inevitable.**
- **We must strive to be precise with our language.**
- **We must strive for a balance in establishing whose perspective informs our study of the Holocaust (Victims, Perpetrators, Collaborators, Bystanders, Rescuers).**
- **We must not romanticize history to engage our students' interests.**
- **We must be sensitive to appropriate written and audio-visual content.**
- **We must select appropriate learning activities. We must be aware that we cannot 'recreate' these events in our classrooms.**
- **We must avoid comparisons of pain.**
- **We must ground our studies in human rights education.**