

# How Do I Respond to a Crisis?

American Responses to the Holocaust

Discovering  
American  
Jewish History  
Through  
Objects

## 01 SAVE A LIFE, SAVE THE WORLD

Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if they destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life of Israel, it is considered as if they saved an entire world.

שכל המאבד נפש אחת מישראל, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו אבד עולם מלא.  
וכל המקים נפש אחת מישראל, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו קים עולם מלא.

Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5; Yerushalmi Talmud 4:9

Why is saving a life equivalent to saving an entire world?

## 02 SPEAK OUT

How can we ask our Christian friends to lift their voices in protest against the wrongs suffered by Jews if we keep silent? ...What is happening in Germany today may happen tomorrow in any other land on earth unless it is challenged and rebuked. It is not the German Jews who are being attacked. It is the Jews.

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, honorary president, American Jewish Congress, March 19, 1933.

## 03 BOYCOTT

Any Jew buying one penny's worth of merchandise made in Germany is a traitor to his people. I doubt that the American government can officially take any notice of what the German government is doing to its own citizens. Our only line of resistance is to touch German pocketbooks.

William W. Cohen, Vice President of the American Jewish Congress, March 27, 1933.

Would you ever participate in a boycott? Why or why not?

## 04 QUIET DIPLOMACY

The American Jewish Committee, in agreement with responsible Jewish organizations in Europe, declines to sanction a declaration of boycott against Germany. We will not make threats, but rather rely upon the moral forces of America and of other enlightened countries in the world. If these moral forces are dead, then civilized man will perish and brutes will rule.

Dr. Cyrus Adler, President, American Jewish Committee, August 19, 1933.

## SOUND THE ALARM 08

I am convinced...that certain officials in our State Department... have been guilty not only of gross procrastination and willful failure to act, but even of willful attempts to prevent action from being taken to rescue Jews from Hitler.

Josiah DuBois et. al., "Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of this Government in the Murder of the Jews," January 13, 1944.

## FIGHT 07

I worked with a German girl who told me that she was going back to Germany because she loved Hitler, and that really got to me. It was at that point that I said I can't just sit here not doing anything and I decided to join up.

Dorothy Nash, Jewish WWII veteran

What would you do if you heard a friend say something hurtful to someone else?

## RESCUE 06

We can delay and effectively stop, for a temporary period of indefinite length, the number of immigrants into the United States. We could do this by simply advising our consuls to...resort to various administrative devices which would postpone and postpone and postpone the granting of the visas.

Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long, June 26, 1940.



Stamp, "Boycott Hitler!" ca. 1933  
National Museum of American Jewish History, 1990.1.8.1

To think of being able to help even a handful of children is a beautiful thought. It is a luxurious dream but most impractical.

Eleanor Kraus, 1939.

## INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE 05

There is no room for discrimination on grounds of race, color, or creed in the Olympics. The A.A.U. voted in 1933 to accept an invitation to compete at Berlin in 1936, provided Germany pledged that there would be no discrimination against Jewish athletes. If that pledge is not kept, I personally do not see why we should compete.

Judge Jeremiah Mahoney, president of the Amateur Athletic Union, July 24, 1935.

The Olympic Games belong to the athletes and not to the politicians...Germany's political policy within or without its borders has no hearing on the subject.

Avery Brundage, President, United States Olympic Committee, October 1935.

If you had been an Olympic athlete in 1936, would you have boycotted the German games?