

TAKE ACTION: L'CHAIM



L'CHAIM, a BYkids film about the resurgence of Jewish life in Berlin, is directed by 19-year-old Semon Shabaev, whose parents emigrated to Germany from Russia in the 1990s. Semon's film dives into the question of identity, of feeling both German and Jewish, and addresses the historic burden and guilt of the Holocaust carried by his adoptive country. Semon explores German-Jewish identity and the Holocaust by examining silent memorials, active remembrance, and daily echoes of the Holocaust in everyday life in Berlin. He focuses on efforts to both understand antisemitism and find ways not to repeat the past. At the same time, he introduces us to a lively community of young German Jews and the joyous celebration of their rich heritage and culture. When thinking about the issues of restitution, reconciliation and postwar societal healing, **consider Articles 1, 5 and 18 in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:**

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of Brotherhood.

Article 5:

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 18:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

For Teachers: Research

Ask your students to research postwar German-Jewish cultural resurgence. In 1948, at its first postwar assembly, the World Jewish Congress passed a resolution stressing the “determination of the Jewish people never again to settle on the bloodstained soil of Germany.” Consider this statement alongside the thriving German-Jewish community depicted in the film L'CHAIM. How, and perhaps more important, why, have Jewish communities and Jewish life reestablished themselves on this “bloodstained soil?” What has Germany—its leaders and citizens—done to make this possible? How have European Jews responded? Is this effort sustainable? Is it wise?

For Students: Reflect

In the prologue, Holocaust survivor Margot Friedlaender warns about the danger of history repeating itself, saying, “This is how it started back then.” What does she mean by this? What do you think she is referring to—specific events or attitudes? Is her warning necessary in today’s Germany? What responsibility do young Germans, both Jewish and non-Jewish, have to remember the history of the Holocaust and toward future generations? Is this responsibility the same or different for Jewish and non-Jewish Germans?

For All Of Us: Respond

1. Host a community or virtual screening event featuring L’CHAIM to raise awareness about the ways that Germany has promoted reconciliation and restitution after World War II, and to learn more about the Jewish cultural resurgence taking place in Germany and throughout Eastern Europe. Email info@bykids.org for more information.
2. Become an oral historian! Are there Holocaust survivors living in your community? If so, find out if you could interview them.

Alternatively, the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education (<https://sfi.usc.edu/>) has one of the world’s largest videotaped archives of genocide survivor testimonies, and many of those testimonies are available for free online. Conduct your own interview, or watch one of theirs, and create a scrapbook of their story. Focus specifically on their life pre- and postwar. Where did they live before the war broke out? Did they choose to return? Why or why not? What is their family like now? Do they have children? Grandchildren? How have they reconciled their experience in the Holocaust? Donate your scrapbook to your school or local library so that others can learn about this important history.

3. Work with the Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect to bring a traveling exhibit to your school or community. Participate in the training for middle and high school students to learn how to be a Peer Guide. Peer guides learn how to develop their own tours and programming for their school or community. The Anne Frank Center has virtual program offerings as well. Please contact education@annefrank.com for more information.
4. Never forget. Continue to learn about the Holocaust, genocide and antisemitism by visiting the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. (www.ushmm.org), or your local Holocaust history museum. Arrange an in-person or virtual field trip for your class to a Holocaust museum. Please go to www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/u-s-holocaust-museums-memorials for a list of Holocaust museums and memorials in the United States.
5. Sign a petition or start one of your own to raise awareness about antisemitism and prevent Holocaust denial from continuing to grow. Go to www.change.org.

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