

2014 Days of Remembrance

Confronting the Holocaust **AMERICAN RESPONSES**

Related Films

American Experience: America and the Holocaust (90 mins., 2005, PBS)

As Nazi anti-Jewish policies intensified, the Klein family decided to leave Germany. Son Kurt immigrated to the United States in 1937, joining his brother and sister but leaving his parents behind. Kurt was frustrated again and again by US bureaucratic indifference as he tried to rescue his parents. Using interviews, official photos, home movies, and archival footage to explore the factors that shaped America's response to the Holocaust, *America and the Holocaust* examines the US government's inaction through the experiences of a Jewish refugee trying to save his parents, and through documented evidence of official US policy.

Assignment: Rescue (26 mins., 1997, CreateSpace)

In 1940, the Emergency Rescue Committee, a private American relief organization, sent journalist Varian Fry to occupied France. His assignment: to help enemies of the Nazis. Fry's network of accomplices forged documents and created clandestine escape routes for some 2,000 people. Meryl Streep narrates his story.

Blessed Is the Match: The Life and Death of Hannah Senesh (85 mins., 2008, Katahdin Productions)

The film narrates the remarkable journey of Hannah Senesh, a young Hungarian Jewish poet, paratrooper, and resistance fighter. Told through her letters, diaries, poems, and the recollections of those who knew her, the film traces Senesh's life from her time in Palestine to her daring wartime mission to rescue Jews in her native Hungary.

Defying Genocide (15 mins., 2003, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

Whenever genocide has occurred, individuals have risked their own lives to save others. How can their courage inspire us? The story of Simone Weil Lipman's rescue of thousands of Jewish children during the Holocaust is a starting point for an exploration of human courage. This film focuses on Damas Gisimba, director of a small orphanage in Rwanda besieged by militias during the 1994 genocide. Learn how Gisimba, with the help of American aid worker Carl Wilkens, managed to save some 400 people.

The Double Crossing: The Voyage of the St. Louis (29 mins., 1980, Zenger Video)

On May 13, 1939, the ocean liner *St. Louis* left Nazi Germany carrying more than 900 Jewish refugees bound for Cuba. Cuba refused them entry, as did the nearby United States. The ship returned to Europe and has become a symbol of America's closed-door immigration policies of the 1930s. Archival footage, plus numerous interviews with survivors of the *St. Louis* voyage, document this experience of refuge denied.

Escape from Auschwitz (60 mins., 2008, PBS)

Escape from Auschwitz tells the incredible story of two young Slovak Jews, Rudolph Vrba and Alfred Wetzler, who managed to escape the notorious Auschwitz killing center by hiding in a woodpile for

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three days, then fleeing across enemy territory, determined to tell the world about the atrocities being committed there. The film depicts their daring escape and explores the controversial decisions by Hungarian and other leaders not to publicize their testimony about mass murder.

Frontline: Ghosts of Rwanda (120 mins., 2004, PBS)

Released for the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, *Ghosts of Rwanda* incorporates eyewitness testimony from Tutsi survivors, UN peacekeepers, US government officials, and others to recount the tragic history of the slaughter of 800,000 people over the course of 100 days in 1994.

The Last Days (87 mins., 1998, Ken Lipper/June Beallor with The Shoah Foundation)

Winner of the 1998 Academy Award for Best Documentary, this film traces the experiences of five Hungarian Jews during the final days of World War II. Including historical footage and a rare interview with a former Nazi doctor at Auschwitz, the film tells the story of five people—a grandmother, a teacher, a businessman, an artist, and a US congressman—as they return from the United States to their homeland.

The Path to Nazi Genocide (38 mins., 2013, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

This film examines the Nazis' rise to and consolidation of power in Germany. Using rare footage, the film explores Nazi ideology, propaganda, and persecution of Jews and other victims. It also outlines the path by which the Nazis and their collaborators led a state to war and to the murder of millions of people. By providing a concise overview of the Holocaust and those involved, this resource is intended to provoke reflection and discussion about the role of ordinary people, institutions, and nations between 1918 and 1945.

Sea Tales: The Doomed Voyage of the St. Louis (50 mins., 1998, A&E)

The Doomed Voyage of the St. Louis follows the path of the famous ocean liner that carried refugees from Hamburg to Havana and back again, returning her more than 900 passengers, almost all of them Jewish refugees, to Europe. This episode of the A&E series *Sea Tales* recounts the story through eyewitness testimony and scholarly commentary.

To find out more about Holocaust history, or to learn about a specific topic, please visit <http://www.ushmm.org/research/library/bibliography>.

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