

SAYING NO TO HATE:
OVERCOMING ANTISEMITISM IN AMERICA

“Thirty-Six Turning Points”

Book: Norman H. Finkelstein (JPS, 2024)

Syllabus: Rabbi Barry L. Schwartz

Saying No to Hate is a highly readable account of both the history of antisemitism in America, and the efforts to overcome it.

The book will engage teens and adults alike. With an abundance of primary sources it may be used as a textbook in public and private schools, religious schools, and adult education.

The following syllabus takes the approach of telling the story of antisemitism in America through thirty-six episodes recounted in the book, that go from being flashpoints to turning points when the community says no to hate and fights back.

Teachers are encouraged to read the stories with their students. Basic discussion questions regarding each story may be found below.

Of course, the syllabus can be shortened by selecting a smaller number of episodes. But most descriptions in the book are relatively brief. By including all of them, one emerges with a comprehensive picture of ongoing antisemitism in America and the Jews' persistent efforts to combat it.

By knowing the past we can confidently face the future and have the informed conversations about antisemitism in America that are so urgently needed.

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Discussion Questions

1. What was the incident of antisemitism described in this episode?
2. Who were the instigators and what was their stated or unstated justification?
3. What were the larger historical circumstances that gave rise to the episode?
4. How did the Jewish community demonstrate resilience to overcome the situation?
5. How was the greater community involved?
6. To what extent were the Jews successful in combating the situation, and if more could have been done, how did they fall short?
7. What turns this episode from a flashpoint to a turning point?
8. To what extent does this particular manifestation of antisemitism still exist?
9. How do we best combat it now?
10. What other lessons can we draw from this episode?

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Syllabus

1. New Amsterdam: Sept. 1654	pp. 15-17	The Recife 23
2. New Amsterdam: July 1655	pp. 17-19	Asser Levy
3. Savannah: Dec. 1778	pp. 22-24	Mordecai Sheftall
4. Philadelphia: June 1788	pp. 24-25	The Constitution(s)
5. Newport: Aug. 1790	pp. 26-31	Seixas and Washington
6. Tunis: April 1815	pp. 33-39	Mordecai Manuel Noah
7. Annapolis: Jan. 1826	pp. 47-48	Solomon Etting/Jew Bill
8. Philadelphia: Feb. 1838	pp. 41-42	Rebecca Gratz
9. New York: Aug. 1840	pp. 46-49	The Damascus Affair
10. Washington, D.C.: 1851-1857	pp. 49-51	The Switzerland Affair
11. Philadelphia: Sept. 1853	pp. 39-40	Isaac Leeser
12. Washington, D.C.: Jan. 1858	pp. 42-45	Uriah Phillips Levy
13. Washington, D.C.: Dec. 1861	pp. 62-64	Arnold Fischel and Lincoln
14. Paducah, KY: Dec. 1862	pp. 55-61	Cesar Kaskel and Grant
15. New York: July 1902	pp. 76-79	Rabbi Jacob Joseph Funeral
16. New York: July 1905	pp. 82-83	Marshall v. Dewey
17. Atlanta: Aug. 1915	pp.87-93	Leo Frank
18. Washington, D.C., June 1916	pp. 93-98	Louis Brandeis
19. Detroit, Apr. 1925	pp. 101-108	Sapiro v. Ford
20. Massena, NY, Sept. 1928	pp. 117-119	Blood Libel
21. New York: Mar. 1933	pp. 121-125	Anti-Nazi March

22. New York: Feb. 1939	pp. 126-132	Anti-Bund/Nazi March
23. Des Moines: Sept. 1941	pp. 136-138	Charles Lindbergh
24. New York: Nov. 1942	pp. 138-140	Wise and Bergson
25. Washington, DC., Dec. 1943	pp. 141-143	Dubois and the WRB
26. Atlanta: Oct. 1958	pp. 170-171	The Temple Bombing
27. Washington, DC., July 1964	pp. 172-177	Summer of '64
28. New York: Nov. 1975	pp. 192-194	Zionism/Racism Resolution
29. Skokie: June 1978	pp. 210	Skokie March
30. Billings: Dec. 1993	pp. 210-212	Menorahs in the Window
31. New York, July 2005	pp. 198-204	BDS
32. Charlottesville:, Aug. 2017	pp. 215-218	Unite the Right Rally
33. Pittsburgh: Oct. 2018	pp. 218-220	Tree of Life Massacre
34. Washington, DC, Jan. 6, 2021	pp. 223-225	Insurrection
35. Colleyville, TX, Jan. 2022	pp. 231-233	Standoff
36. Israel: Oct. 7, 2023	pp. 234	Hamas Massacre