

## The Pyramid of Hate Exercise

### Target Audience:

Grades 9-12

### Materials for Lesson:

- *Have You Ever?* handout (one copy for each participant)
- *Genocide* transparency (attached)
- USC Shoah Foundation Institute testimony video (Can be viewed or downloaded via the USC Shoah Foundation Institute's website <http://sfi.usc.edu/education/pyramid>)
- Photographs of survivors with quotes (optional, can be downloaded via the USC Shoah Foundation Institute's website <http://sfi.usc.edu/education/pyramid>)
- *Pyramid of Hate* handout (attached)
- *Pyramid of Hate* activity sheet (attached)
- Chart paper, markers and push pins, or velcro
- Optional: easels

### Space:

Room for students to work in small groups

### Time Requirement:

45-60 minutes

### Introduction

This classroom exercise is designed to help educators teach students ages 14-18 about the effects and consequences of bigotry and intolerance. The exercise integrates first-person video testimonies from the USC Shoah Foundation Institute's archive with the *Pyramid of Hate*, a curricular tool developed by the Anti-Defamation League that provides students with an opportunity to explore the ways in which hate can escalate in society. Through this exercise, students will explore their own attitudes about, and experiences with, prejudice and bigotry; examine the individual's roles and responsibilities regarding ethnic, racial, and religious bias; and think critically about examples of prejudiced attitudes, acts of prejudice, discrimination, violence, and genocide.

### Rationale

History provides examples of the ways in which stereotyping, scapegoating, dehumanization, and discrimination can escalate to mass murders that have, in some instances, resulted in genocide. This activity provides participants with the opportunity to understand the pain caused by bias and the ways in which prejudice can escalate. It is designed to promote recognition of the value of interrupting that progression.

### Student Objectives

- Examine how discrimination based on bias can escalate into acts of violence.
- Discuss the impact of prejudice on individuals and on society.
- Recognize the role of individuals in interrupting the escalation of hate.

### Procedures

1. Distribute *Have You Ever?* handout to students and tell them that they are to answer "yes" or "no" to each of the questions in the handout. Assure the students that the handouts are for their eyes only. [3 minutes]
2. When students have completed their questionnaires, lead a discussion using some or all of the questions listed below. List students' responses on chart paper or on the chalkboard. [10 minutes]

## The Pyramid of Hate Exercise

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### Procedures (cont'd)

- Why do you think people tell ethnic jokes about other groups, insult others, or exclude them socially? (A possible response might be that “others” are different.)
- Why would these differences cause a person to “put down” someone else? (Possible responses might be that it makes the person feel superior or more important, that he/she is afraid of the “other,” or that he/she fails to understand another’s culture.)
- Where do people learn to disrespect people who seem different? (Responses may include home, school, friends, or the media--newspapers, television, movies, and music.)
- Can you give examples of a prejudice you have perceived and/or learned through the media?

### 3. Read the following case study:

*In one school, a group of four boys began whispering and laughing about another boy in their school that they thought was gay. They began making comments when they walked by him in the hall. Soon, they started calling the boy insulting anti-gay slurs. By the end of the month, they had taken their harassment to another level, tripping him when he walked by and pushing him into a locker while they yelled slurs. Some time during the next month, they increased the seriousness of their conduct – they surrounded him and two boys held his arms while the others hit and kicked him. Eventually, one of the boys threatened to bring his father’s gun into school the next day to kill the boy. At this point another student overheard the threat and the police were notified.*

(Description of school incident from “Sticks and Stones” by Stephen L. Wessler. Educational Leadership, December 2000/January 2001 (p. 28). Used with permission.)

4. Ask the students if something similar to this could happen at their school. How do they think a situation like this could affect the entire school? What could have been done to stop the situation from escalating? Who should have stopped it? [7-8 minutes for case study and discussion]
5. Tell the students that they have been discussing a situation that started out as “whispering and laughing” and became more intense, escalating to violence. A visual way of describing this type of progression is called a *Pyramid of Hate*.

## The Pyramid of Hate Exercise

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### Procedures (cont'd)

- Distribute the *Pyramid of Hate* handout or draw a Pyramid on chart paper or on the chalkboard. Briefly review each level of the Pyramid starting with Level I. Ask students to provide one or two examples to exemplify each level. [5 minutes]

Based on the case study, ask students the following questions:

- Where would you place “whispering and laughing” on the Pyramid? (*Level I*)
  - Why do you think that what seemed harmless initially progressed into violence? (*Answers might include that nobody stopped it, that the perpetrators gained confidence that they could continue without interference or consequences, or that the victim did not seek help, etc.*)
  - Even if it seemed harmless to the perpetrators and bystanders, do you think it felt harmless to the victim? How do you think he felt?
  - At what level of the Pyramid do you think it would be easiest for someone to intervene? What would be some possible ways to intervene? [5 minutes]
6. Ask the students if they can think of examples of genocide in which groups were subjected based on their race, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, etc. (e.g., Native Americans, Aborigines of Australia, enslaved Africans, Rwandans, Armenians, Muslim Bosnians, and Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe.) Chart their responses. [2 minutes]
  7. Present the United Nation’s definition of “genocide” by using the Genocide transparency. [3 minutes]
  8. Ask the students what they have heard about the Holocaust and list their responses on chart paper or on the chalkboard. (*Make sure that the students are aware that this was the deliberate and systematic murder of 6 million Jews based upon their religious or cultural identity, as well as the death of thousands of political dissidents, Roma, Polish intellectuals, people with disabilities, homosexuals and other targeted groups.*) [3 minutes]
  9. Divide the students into groups of four or five. Explain that they are about to see some brief video clips of survivors of the Holocaust talking about

## The Pyramid of Hate Exercise

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### Procedures (cont'd)

their personal experiences during this period. Tell them that when the video is over, each group will be assigned the story of one survivor. The task of the small groups will be to decide where on the *Pyramid of Hate* that person's experience belongs. [2 minutes]

10. Show the first five video clips (note there are a total of six). [4 minutes] The video can be watched from the USC Shoah Foundation Institute website: <http://sfi.usc.edu/education/pyramid>.
11. Distribute to each group a photo of a different survivor. Have each group select a reporter and, when the group members have reached a consensus, instruct the reporter to bring the photo of the survivor to the large Pyramid and affix it to the appropriate level. Explain to the students that there is no one correct placement. When all the photos have been placed on the Pyramid, ask the reporters to explain why their group selected the level they did for the survivor they have been assigned. [3 minutes]
12. (Alternative procedure: Divide the students into groups of four or five and give each a *Pyramid of Hate* and individual photos of each survivor accompanied by a quote from his or her testimony. Have each group decide where on the Pyramid each survivor's testimony should be placed. Remind the students that there is no one correct placement. After 10 minutes, have the groups bring their Pyramids to the front of the room for display.)
13. After all of the photos have been put in place, ask if there is agreement with the placement of the photos. If students don't agree, have them explain their thinking. [4-8 minutes]
14. Ask students what they learned during this activity.
15. Recalling the testimony of Milton Belfer, ask the students what could have been done by individuals or groups to change the situation he recounted.
16. Conclude the activity by showing the testimony of Mollie Stauber (clip #6), which is a message for future generations.

## The Pyramid of Hate Exercise

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### Optional Activities

VARIATIONS: Distribute the *Pyramid of Hate*. Divide the whole group into small groups of 5 to 6 participants. Assign one level of the Pyramid to each small group and have the students brainstorm examples from history, current events, or their personal experiences that demonstrate the word.

Before showing the video, distribute the *Pyramid of Hate* activity sheet to each student. Tell students that as they watch the video to draw a line from each survivor's photo to the level on the Pyramid that they think he or she is describing.

### Follow Up Activity

Have students work in groups to research other genocides that have occurred in the 20th Century, such as in Cambodia, Rwanda, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Assign each group a genocide to research and present in the form of a case study using the Case Study Activity Sheet.

### Lesson Resources

To view the survivors' testimonies and download this lesson, visit <http://sfi.usc.edu/education/pyramid>.

**Student Handout  
Have You Ever.....?**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Answer YES or NO to each of the following questions (*Answer truthfully. This is for your eyes only!*):

**Have You Ever:**

1. Overheard a joke that made fun of a person of a different ethnic background, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation?
2. Been the target of name calling because of your ethnic group, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation?
3. Made fun of someone different from you?
4. Left someone out of an activity because he/she was different from you?
5. Not been invited to attend an activity or social function because many of the people there were different from you?
6. Engaged in stereotyping (lumping together all people of a particular race, religion, or sexual orientation? Ex: White men can't jump!)
7. Been threatened by someone who is different from you because of your difference?
8. Committed an act of violence against someone because that person was different from you?

## Genocide

Genocide as defined by the United Nations in 1948 means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, including:

- Killing members of the group
- Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
- Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part
- Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
- Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group

Student Handout  
Case Study: Genocide in \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary of the event**

*(Present the basic facts: what happened, by whom, when, and where.)*

**The background**

*(Prepare a summary of the political, economic, social, and geographic factors that contributed to the problem.)*

**Organizers**

*(What group or groups of people were responsible for the mass killings? Motives?)*

**Victims**

*(What group(s) of people were victimized? What survival tactics were used? What was the ultimate death toll?)*



Student Handout  
Case Study: Genocide in \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**World Response**

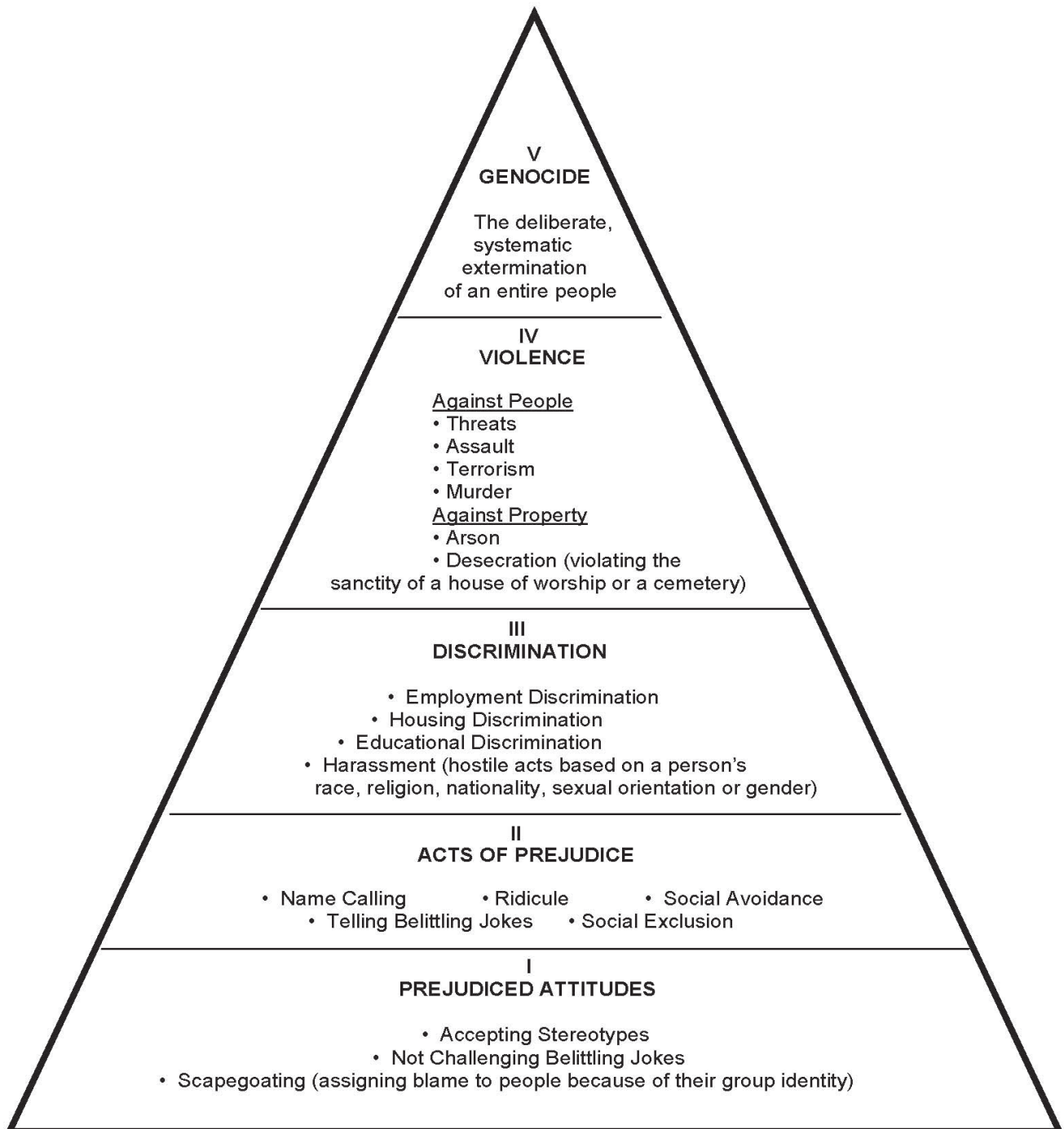
*(What was the response of the other countries to the mass killing? Could this genocide have been prevented?)*

**Aftermath**

*(How has this genocide affected both perpetrators and victims and their families? What is the general situation in this country at the present time?)*

Student Handout  
ADL's Pyramid of Hate

Name \_\_\_\_\_



Student Handout  
Pyramid of Hate Activity

Name \_\_\_\_\_

This activity integrates first-person testimony from the USC Shoah Foundation Institute with the *Pyramid of Hate*, a curricular tool developed by the Anti-Defamation League. **DIRECTIONS:** First familiarize yourself with the terminology associated with each level of the pyramid. Then watch the first five brief clips via the link found at <http://sf.usc.edu/education/pyramid>. Draw a line from each interviewee's photo to the level on the pyramid that you think he or she is describing. After you have discussed your choices, finish this activity by playing the testimony clip of Mollie Stauber.

