

Shoah Business: Hip-Hop and the Holocaust

a lesson plan written by Charlie Schwartz

Recommendations:

This lesson plan is an excellent supplement for students studying the Holocaust. The lesson plan itself deals with a dispute between two Israeli hip-hop artists around Holocaust education and seeks to find out what these two rappers were fighting about, and how this feud reflects the role of the Holocaust in forming Jewish-Israeli identity.

Target Age Group:

High School through Undergraduate

Objectives:

- Students will engage with Israeli culture and society through the medium of hop-hop.
- Students will lean reflect on the place of the Holocaust in Jewish-Israeli cultural identity.
- Students will reflect on the role of Holocaust education in forming their Jewish cultural and/or religious identities.

Supplementary Material:

Appendix #1-Background on Subliminal and Sagol 59

Appendix #2-New York Times Article on Holocaust Education

Appendix #3-“Adom Olam, Ad Matai?” Lyrics

Appendix #4-“Shoah Business” Lyrics

Note to Teacher

This lesson requires listening to music and watching videos with the help of an LCD projector and screen. Make sure you have good speakers in addition to your computer speakers to make sure the room is filled with music.

OPENING ACTIVITY - Lining Up Opinions

Goal: Have students start thinking about and reflecting on the role of the Holocaust and Holocaust education in forming their identities.

(a) The Line Up

Have the students stand up. Read a selection of the following statements having the students stand in a line according to how much they agree or disagree with the statement. Ask one or two student every question why they are standing where they are standing.

- The Holocaust is a central part my Jewish identity.
- I think the Holocaust is a central part of Jewish-Israeli identity.
- I think the Holocaust should be a central part of my Jewish identity.

1

- I think I get the correct amount of Holocaust education in my religious school.
- I think I get the correct amount of Holocaust education in my public school.
- I think it is important to learn about the Holocaust.

(b) Debrief

Ask students if anything surprised them when lining up with their classmates.

SECOND ACTIVITY – Video #1: Adon Olam, Ad Matai?

Goal: To have students determine the message of the Subliminal video “Adom Olman, Ad Matai?”.

(a) Watching the Video

Hand out the lyrics for Adon Olam, Ad Matai while giving the background to the dispute between Subliminal and Sagol 59. Ask the students to think about the portrayal of the Holocaust and Holocaust victims while watching the music video. Play the Adon Olam, Ad Matai video found here: <http://bit.ly/ShoahBusiness1>

(b) Discussing the Video

Ask the students if there is anything in the video/song they didn’t understand. Have the students break into pairs to discuss what they felt the message of the video/song was. Gather the students into one large group and briefly discuss what was talked about in the pairs.

Note to Teacher

Read appendices #1 and #2 to get context on the debate between Subliminal and Sagol 59 and the critiques that might surround a video/song like “Adom Olam, Ad Matai?”

THIRD ACTIVITY – Video #2: Shoah Business

Goal: To have students express what Sagol 59’s problem is with Subliminal enabling a deeper conversation about how students have been educated about the Holocaust.

(a) Watching the Video

Hand out the lyrics to Shoah Business, and show the video by following this link:

<http://bit.ly/ShoahBusiness2>

Ask the students to break into pairs and try to determine what Sagol 59’s is so angry about.

(b) Discussing the Video

In a large group ask the students what Sagol 59’s critique of Subliminal is. Ask the students if this video teaches us anything about the Holocaust in Israeli society and/or if it reflects anything occurring in our own communities and lives.



APPENDIX #1- Background on Subliminal and Sagol 59

In commemoration of Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) in spring of 2007, mainstream Israeli rapper Subliminal released the single and video, Adon Olam, Ad Matai? (Lord of the Universe, Until When?), featuring Grammy award winning Israeli violinist Miri Ben Ari. Furious with the portrayal of the Holocaust in the video and lyrics, underground Israeli rapper Sagol 59 recorded a response track entitled “Shoah Business.”

Subliminal and Sagol 59 represent two sides of the Israeli hip-hop coin. Born and raised in Tel Aviv, Subliminal’s (whose real name is Kobi Shimoni) parents came to Israel as refugees from Tunisia and Iran. Subliminal pioneered what has been called “Zionist Hip Hop,” a rather hard line, hawkish form of rap that focuses on boosting national moral and pride in the modern state of Israel. Known for his signature bulky magen david necklaces Subliminal has had commercial success both in Israel and among Jewish communities abroad.

In contrast, Jerusalemite rapper Sagol 59 (Khen Rotem), and has been at the forefront of The Holy City’s hip-hop scene since the mid-90s. Sagol 59 has received much acclaim for his intelligent rhymes, inventive rhythms and liberal politics, however this acclaim has yet to manifest in mainstream success.

APPENDIX #2- NYT Article on Holocaust Education

For more information on Holocaust Education, and “Holocaust Burnout,” read “Holocaust Classes Are Seldom Easy on Children” by Susan Dominus, which appeared on February 25, 2008 in The New York Times. This article can be found at the following link: <http://bit.ly/ShoahBusiness3>

APPENDIX #3-“Adon Olam, Ad Matai?” Lyrics

God...
God Almighty, when will it end?
A moment of silence is not enough for six million
We can never comprehend the magnitude of this atrocity.
They conceived the idea of a “final solution”
Everyone is to die, to live their final days.
One by one, an entire people almost perished
Even the bravest did not survive..
No one was a person-everyone was a number
Standing in line with no tomorrow.
So much crying without a single tear...
So many endings that was just the beginning...
We prayed, we screamed yet we had no voice.
Why couldn't the Messiah come to save us?

We were moving targets in the devil's shooting gallery...
No place to hide or escape...
The temperature is rising our feet stick to the ground
Dust to dust, our souls go to heaven.
The death trains, the web of lies
Helpless still struggling for their life
They were robbed, murdered, their souls faded out...
Identified only by numbers...but we'll remember their names!
Freedom vanished, but there was still hope
Our spirit stirred deep in our hearts our eyes looking toward Zion

A massacre without a reason...so many victims
Those who had yellow stars on their shirts were thrown into the fire
Why exterminate children's dreams, adults' memories?
What wrongs did I do to deserve this?
I always said Amen after every prayer!
Thoughts are running through my head welcoming death
Please, tell me, how did we lose our identity as human beings
Feel what we have been through in the Holocaust
sixty years later it never left our souls

A big scream is stuck inside me,
Six million! Never left my memory!
Anti-Semitism- how could that happen?
Who has the right to extinguish a culture?
Though they left almost nothing of the Star of David...
I will wear it and never take it off as long as I live!
It will remind me in the future not to repeat the same mistakes
And to keep my eyes open!
To lean not to become bait for the hunters
Not to be afraid and scared to stand up!
To live in dignity and die in dignity
The path to heaven is “Survival...”
The sun will rise, the sun will set
The rain will come and wash everything away.
This is the eternal cycle of life
And if there is life after death we will be waiting for them there!

Appendix #4-“Shoah Business” Lyrics

Yo, man, I got something I gotta get off my chest
I ain't hatin', it's all love here, but listen...

She ran away just so she won't get killed,
No husband, carrying twins and a baby who died along
the way
Got to the promised land and was deported right back
Then they stuck her and the kids in Jaffa in a tiny
fucked up flat,
60 Years went by, she turns on the TV
And watches her memories being sold so cheaply
Well, she's seen it all so it may not bother her really
But any normal human being can notice it's downright
silly,
And some people may say “let it slide, it's just a song”
“They trying to reach the youth, is this that wrong?”
But as an M.C, it is my duty to state my point of view
Do it for the father that my own father never knew,
You need to be careful to write it down in a song,
Stop using blood to erase the writing on the wall,
Because eternal suffering is no jingle or game,
We've burned the shame, threw our tact down the
drain.

First of all, I'm declaring this is no dis song,
Just a little something about what's been wrong,
And I can't really recommend a track,
Whose only purpose is to pile money in stacks,
And Israeli hip hop sounds like Naomi Shemer,
Who gave permission to turn the Shoah to Broadway?
Yo man, this is really uncalled for,
That's not why my granny fled the hell out of Warsaw,
And I'm truly sorry, miss, and with all respect due to
those Grammys,
That tune is filled with blood ,
And one has to wonder, who authorized that?
Take the Holocaust and chop it into salad,
Slick campaign ready even before the studio “on air”
light is out,
Little by little, tainting the genre,
Want publicity? buy an ad or a some kinda banner,
Mister Macgyver, this one comes from the heart,
Next time take a minute to think before you start.

יו, יש לי משהו על הלב שאני חייב להוריד
תקשיב לא בשנאה, הכל באהבה, אחי

היא ברחה רק כדי לא למות או לעבוד בפרך
ילד שמת לה בדרך בלי בעל, שני תאומים ועם
הגיעה כבר ארצה וגורשה חזרה
תינוק בעריסה ואז בדירה קטנה ביפו עם עוד
עברו בדיוק שישים שנה והיא פותחת טלוויזיה
הזיכרונות שלה קונים בוויזה רואה איך את
והיא שראתה הכל, אולי זה לא מזיז לה
אדם נורמלי זה מביא את הקריזה אבל לכל
ואנשים אומרים, עזוב בסך הכל שיר
כאן את הדור הצעיר תן קצת לחנך
אבל בתור אמ.סי ישיר אולי יורשה לי להעיר
שהאבא שלי אף פעם לא הכיר בשביל האבא
צריך להיות זהיר בשביל למכור את זה בשיר
תשתמשו בדם למחוק את הכתובת על הקיר אל
כי הסבל האדיר, זה לא תשדיר ולא משחק
שרפנו את הרגש, שוב איבדנו את הטאקט

קודם כל אני מדגיש שזה לא שיר דיס
רק רציתי להכריז כאן על משהו שמרגיז
כי קשה להמליץ על שיר שמכעיס
רק להכניס עוד שטרות אל הכיס שנועד
וראפ בעברית נשמע כמו ראפ של נעמי שמר
שעשה מהשואה מחזמר מי זה
גבר, זה לא בסדר, אל תגיד שלא ראית
ברחה מוורשה לליטא לא בשביל זה סבתא שלי
אז סליחה לוליטה וכל הריספקט לגראמי
עדיין אנמי הטרק מלא בדם אבל
ואני תוהה מי נתן מנדט לעשות מהשואה סלט
שהשיר מוקלט קמפיין מטוקטק עוד לפני
לאט לאט, מבזבזים פה את הז'אנר
איזה באנר רוצים פרסום? תשימו פה שלטים או
מיסטר מקגיוור אני בא בקטע טוב
בפעם הבאה אולי תיקח דקה לחשוב