



SARA CORNING CENTRE FOR GENOCIDE EDUCATION

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Unit Title

Twelve Ways to Deny a Genocide

Lesson Title

Research Project

Developer

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson students will be able to

- research genocides of the 20th and 21st centuries;
- identify, analyze, and explain Gregory Stanton's 12 ways to deny a genocide;
- understand the consequences of genocide denial for victims, perpetrators, and upstanders; and
- explain how denial can be considered part of the crime of genocide.

Materials

- "Twelve Ways to Deny a Genocide"

Background for Teachers

This lesson invites students to research 20th- and 21st-century genocides. Then, they apply their new knowledge about genocide scholar Gregory Stanton's 12 ways to deny a genocide to those cases. They thereby discover how genocide denial is often still a problem all around the world.

Assessment Strategies

- Observation
- Presentation
- Oral question & answer
- Demonstration or exhibition
- Work samples or essays

Activity

This activity is a research project. It allows students to work together, either in pairs or in small groups, to research a genocide of their choice.

1. Distribute and discuss the handout "Twelve Ways to Deny a Genocide."
2. Help students select a 20th- or 21st-century genocide (e.g., Native American, Armenian, Rwandan, etc.) that they'd like to research, and ask them to find appropriate scholarly sources about it.



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3. Ask students to compare their research findings to Stanton's 12 points. Who denies their chosen genocide, why, and how?
 - Optional: Ask them to create a chart, prepare an essay outline, or write an essay.
 - Optional: Review their work before moving to the next step.
4. Have students prepare a class presentation, including a handout that summarizes their findings.
 - Optional: Have them answer questions from their classmates after the presentation.
 - Optional: Have them revise their written component after their presentation.



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Twelve Ways to Deny a Genocide

This text paraphrases and quotes from Gregory Stanton's much longer article "Twelve Ways to Deny a Genocide."¹ In that piece, Stanton adapted Israel Charny's list of denial tactics² to explain how the Darfuri Genocide was being denied in 2005. The Corning Centre has summarized and generalized Stanton's article to make it useful for different topics.

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1. **Question and minimize the statistics.** Use false or misleading statistics to trivialize the events and distract from the real issues.
2. **Attack the motivations of the truth-tellers** by claiming that survivors and upstanders who tell the truth are disingenuous and have hidden intentions.
3. **Claim that the deaths were accidental.** For example, say that there was an epidemic or famine, not wilful murder.
4. **Emphasize the strangeness of the victims.** Insist that they are impossible to understand and, therefore, should be ignored.
5. **Rationalize the deaths as rooted in ancient hatreds**, meaning that they were inevitable.
6. **Blame out-of-control forces.** Say that the real criminals were rebels or extremists that the government could not possibly have controlled.
7. **Ask for patience with the perpetrators so that they don't walk out of a peace process.** Say that we shouldn't anger or upset them if they are genuinely trying to resolve the issue.
8. **Emphasize current economic interests.** Imply that economic relationships are more important than human rights or something that happened in the past. Use your economic position to blackmail or bribe influential people and countries.
9. **Claim that the victims were actually receiving good treatment.** Exaggerate or fabricate evidence to argue that genocide could not possibly have been taking place.
10. **Claim that what is going on doesn't fit the definition of genocide**, thereby muddying the waters, sowing confusion, and avoiding responsibility.
11. **Blame the victims** by accusing them of rebellion or mass violence. Make any actions that you do admit to seem fair and legitimate.
12. **Say that peace and reconciliation are more important than pointing fingers.** Try to sweep the issue under the rug by making an appeal to "more important things," thereby avoiding punishment and making denial permanent.

¹ <https://www.genocidewatch.com/twelve-ways-to-deny-genocide>

² *Encyclopedia of Genocide*, edited by Israel W. Charny (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1999), 168.