



The White Rose

Study Guide by Nicole Sutphen

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“It is possibly the most spectacular moment of resistance that I can think of in the twentieth century... The fact that five little kids, in the mouth of the wolf, where it really counted, had the tremendous courage to do what they did, is spectacular to me. I know that the world is better for them having been there, but I do not know why.”

- Lillian Groag

About Lillian Groag



- playwright, director, and actor
- born in Buenos Aires, Argentina to a Viennese father and an Italian mother on June 24, 1945
- father fled to Argentina in 1938 when Austria joined Nazi Germany
- schooled in Catholic boarding schools growing up
- her family fled from Argentina to Montevideo, Uruguay, to flee from the military dictatorship in 1952
- went to Lake Forest College in Chicago and the University of Dijon in France
- masters and doctoral degrees in Romance Languages and Literature from Northwestern University

The White Rose

The White Rose is a historically based show about a group of students from the University of Munich in 1943 who chose to actively be a part of the Nazi resistance, the consequences of their actions, and the moral questions that were brought about through their actions.

Setting:

Munich, Germany

Thursday, February 18, 1943 –
Monday, February 22, 1943



“In 1942, a group of students of the University of Munich decided to actively protest the atrocities of the Nazi regime and to advocate that Germany lose the war as the only way to get rid of Hitler and his cohorts. They asked for resistance and sabotage of the war effort, among other things. They published their thoughts in five separate anonymous leaflets which they titled ‘The White Rose,’ and which were distributed throughout Germany and Austria during the Summer of 1942 and winter of 1943. They were apprehended and executed during February and April of 1943. All we know of the arresting officer is that, at the last moment, he tried to save their lives.

[This play] is not a biography, the domain of which I do not believe is the stage or screen, but an attempt to understand how certain catastrophes happen. We have all conveniently accustomed ourselves to consider "evil" as originating elsewhere: other people (preferably mentally imbalanced, but if pathology were not readily provable, then at least foreign), other places (never here, never with us, never next door), other governments (never our own). Most importantly, great national catastrophes are usually ascribed to amorphous masses of people, never taking into account that said masses are composed of individuals who, at one point or other are composed of individuals who, at one point or other must have had a moment of choice. Above everything else, in our ‘glamourizing’ or evil (by that I mean in our insistent placing it into the realm of the ‘exotic’ and out of the common place) we have accustomed ourselves to view it as a premeditated leap of the mind into the unfathomable abyss of the soul; never as the gradual, imperceptible sliding into the moral chaos responsible for great communal disasters. In other words, the work of monsters, never of people like you or me.”

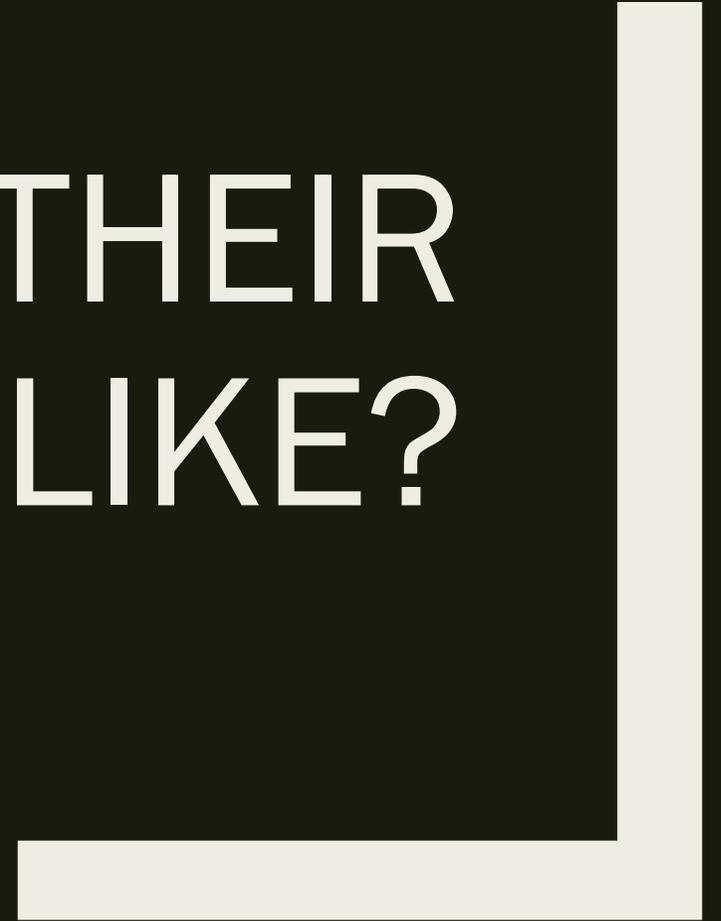
- Lillian Groag



Terms to Know

- Gestapo - the German secret police under Nazi rule. It ruthlessly suppressed opposition to the Nazis in Germany and occupied Europe, and sent Jews and others to concentration camps.
- Führer - German word meaning leader or guide. As a political title refers to Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler.
- Frauline - an unmarried German woman —used as a title equivalent to *Miss*
- Herr - —used among German-speaking people as a title equivalent to *Mr.*
- Seig heil - a victory salute used originally by Nazis at political rallies.
- Teutonic - like a member of an ancient probably Germanic or Celtic people
- Nazi - National Socialist German Workers'
- Defeatist ideas - an attitude of accepting, expecting, or being resigned to defeat, ideas about Germany losing WWII
- Mark - currency of West Germany from 1948 until 1990 and later the unified Germany from 1990 until 2002
- Prosit - to wish good health especially before drinking
- Bolshevik - a member of the majority faction of the Russian Social Democratic Party, which was renamed the Communist Party after seizing power in the October Revolution of 1917
- Swashbuckling - engaging in daring and romantic adventures with bravado or flamboyance
- SA - Nazi assault division
- RAF - Royal Air Force
- Wehrmacht - the unified armed forces of Nazi Germany from 1935 to 1945
- Demagogue - a political leader who seeks support by appealing to the desires and prejudices of ordinary people rather than by using rational argument

WHAT DID THEIR
WORLD LOOK LIKE?





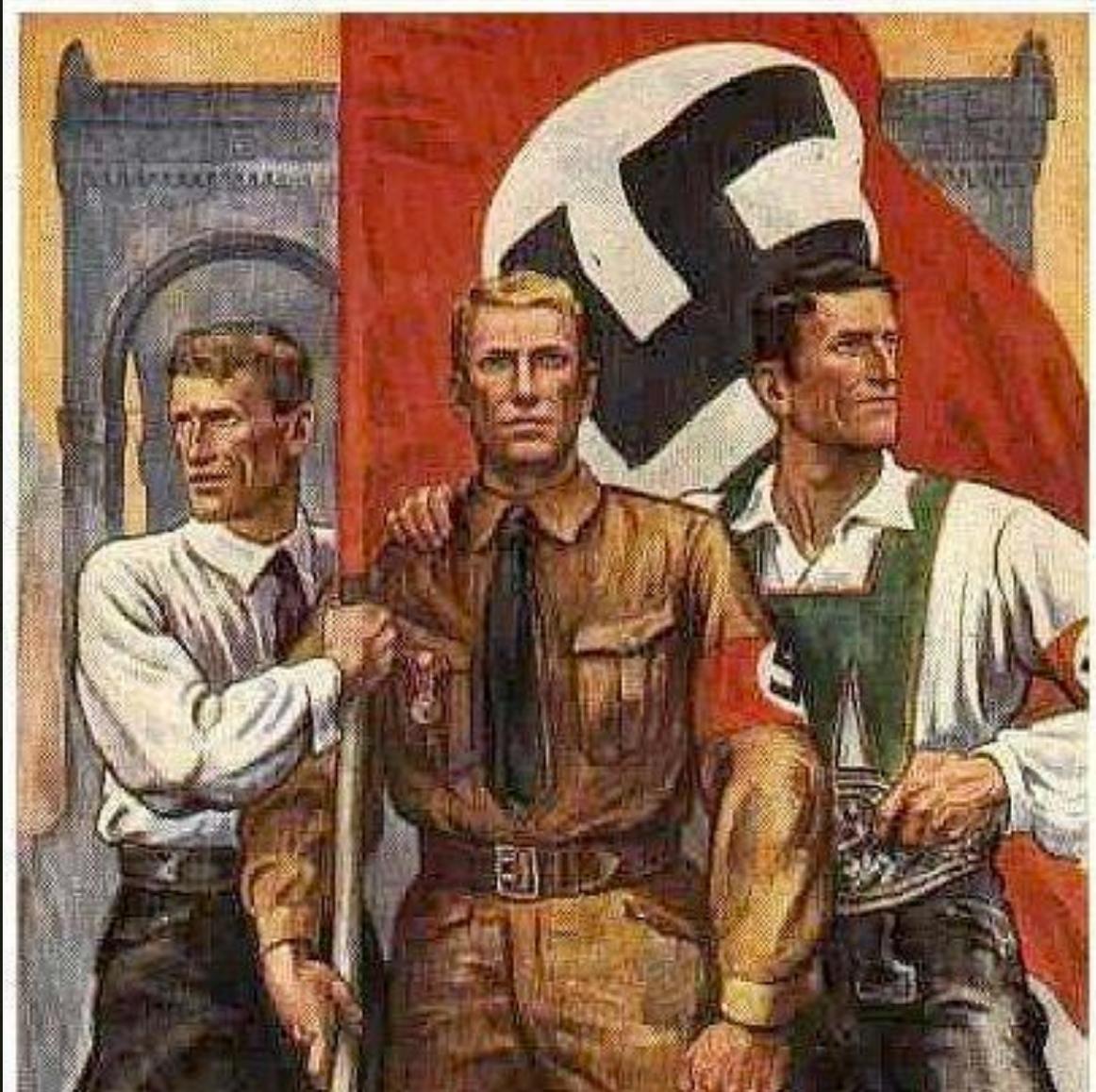
NAZI GERMANY, 1943



The Rise of the Third Reich

- The Nazi rise to power brought an end to the Weimar Republic, a parliamentary democracy established in Germany after World War I. Following the appointment of Adolf Hitler as chancellor on January 30, 1933, the Nazi state (also referred to as the Third Reich) quickly became a regime in which Germans enjoyed no guaranteed basic rights. After a suspicious fire in the Reichstag (the German Parliament), on February 28, 1933, the government issued a decree which suspended constitutional civil rights and created a state of emergency in which official decrees could be enacted without parliamentary confirmation.

- *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*

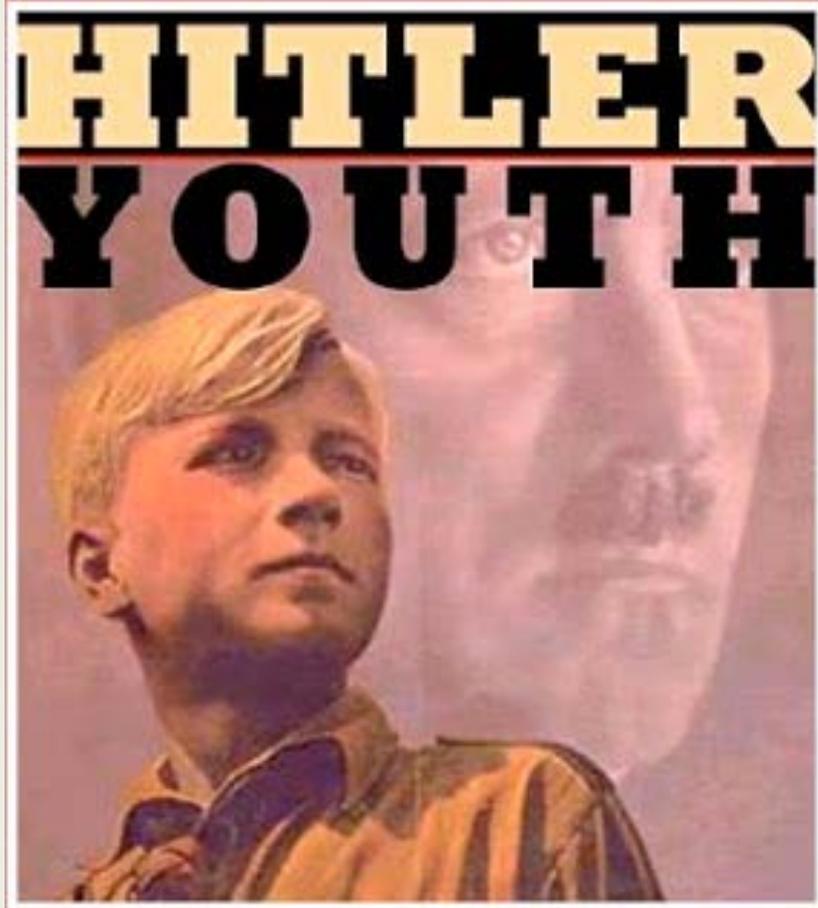


“Racial Purity”

Hitler was obsessed with the German peoples attaining “racial purity.” He believed that a person’s characteristics, aptitude, and behavior were determined by their “racial make-up.” He incorrectly used the word Aryan to describe his idea of the “pure German race.” The Nazi party believed that people of Aryan decent had the most pure blood and a duty to rule the world. It was also believed that non-Aryans were inferior or even evil. The Nazis linked the words “Aryan” with the German word “Ehre” which means honor.

These ideas justified genocide.

Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls



The Nazi Party tried to extend its influence over all aspects of German society. The Hitler Youth and the League of German girls were developed as Nazi Party youth groups to introduce children and juveniles to Nazi ideology and policy. Most members of the White Rose were involved in these youth groups at one point or another but left because they had conflicting values.

EINDEUTISCHE
FLUGBLATT

D... die die Zeit ihrer höchsten Produktion...
D... die die Zeit ihrer höchsten Produktion...
D... die die Zeit ihrer höchsten Produktion...



Hitler Youth

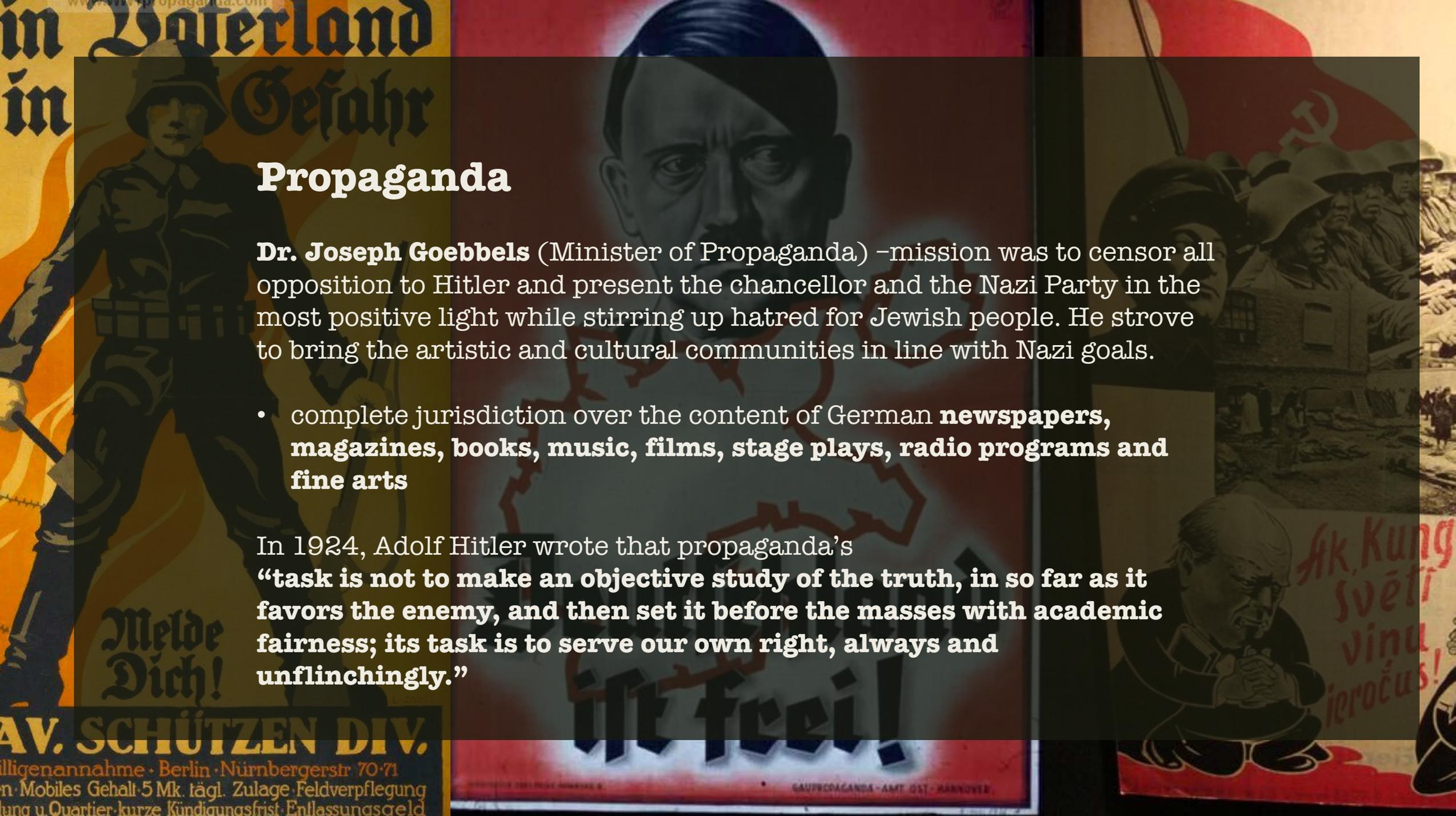


© Bundesarchiv/News Dog Media

League of German Girls



Sophie Schöckel
am 11. Mai 1945 im Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück
auf dem Boden des Konzentrationslagers Ravensbrück

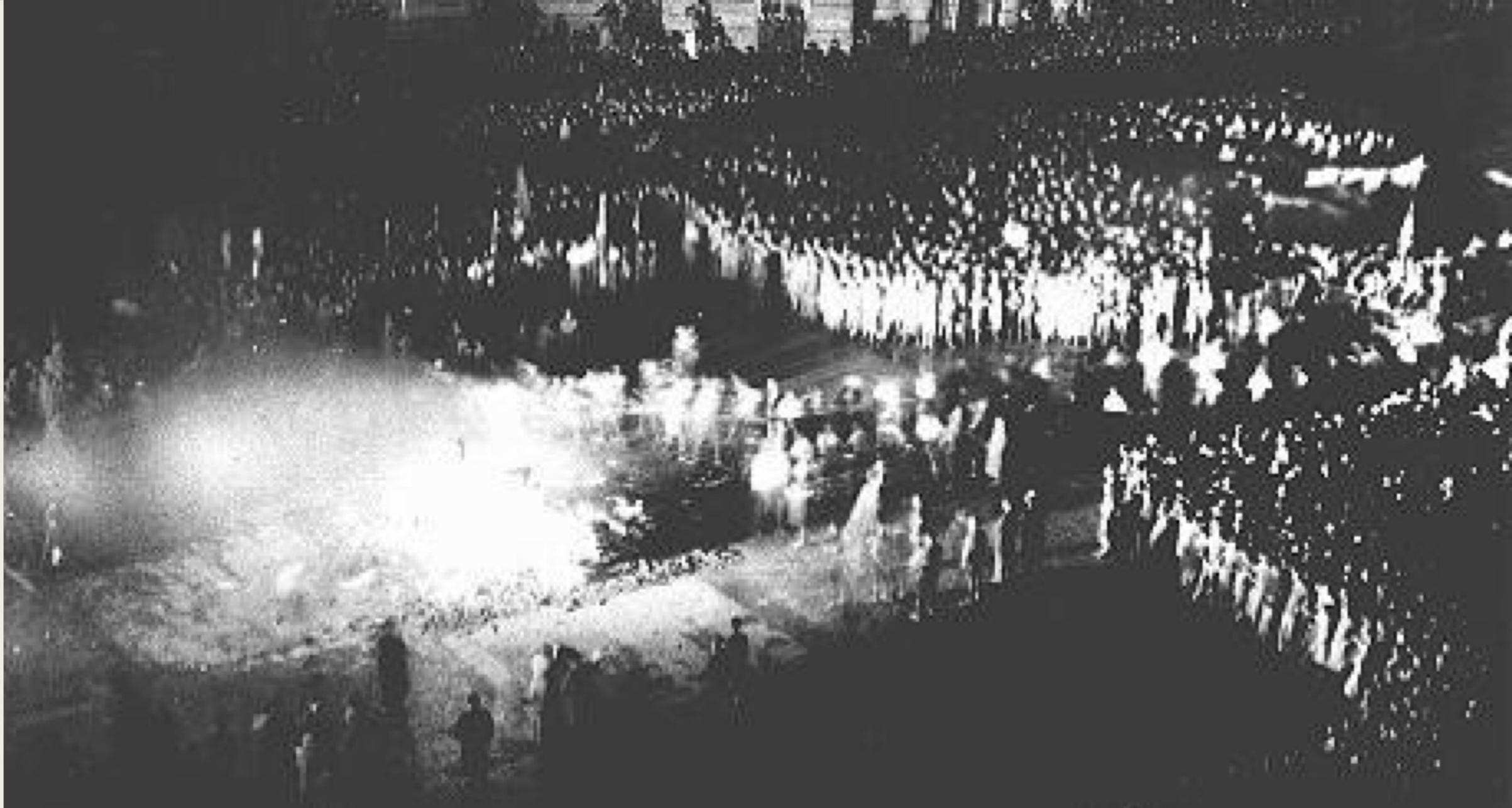


Propaganda

Dr. Joseph Goebbels (Minister of Propaganda) –mission was to censor all opposition to Hitler and present the chancellor and the Nazi Party in the most positive light while stirring up hatred for Jewish people. He strove to bring the artistic and cultural communities in line with Nazi goals.

- complete jurisdiction over the content of German **newspapers, magazines, books, music, films, stage plays, radio programs and fine arts**

In 1924, Adolf Hitler wrote that propaganda's **“task is not to make an objective study of the truth, in so far as it favors the enemy, and then set it before the masses with academic fairness; its task is to serve our own right, always and unflinchingly.”**



Nationwide book burning of books by “un-German” writers in Berlin Germany, May 10, 1933.



Through propaganda, Nazi Germany's leadership hid the true atrocities of the Holocaust and justified any criticism of actions made. From engineering a phony Polish attack on a German radio station to accusing the Allies and the Jews of spreading malicious lies and "atrocious stories," Nazi propagandists controlled the public's opinion and excused their actions. These same propagandists disguised the regime's genocidal policies against Europe's Jews, claiming that the Jewish population was being "resettled."



People's Court

- Nazi court with jurisdiction over treason and other politically motivated crimes. It dealt summary justice without right of appeal to all those accused of crimes against the Führer, Adolf Hitler, and against the government of the Third Reich.

Judge Roland Freisler – known for the amount of death sentences given while presiding in the people's court. Between 1942 and 1945 Freisler put to death 5,000 people – in three years he put as many defendants in front of the executioner as the People's Court had done in the years 1934-1945. He was known for his cold-blooded nature and vigor with which he ran his court room. 90% of the cases brought before the judge resulted in death or a life of imprisonment. He was also the man who introduced the death penalty for juveniles for the first time in his country's history.

The Battle of Stalingrad

- August 23, 1942-February 2, 1943
- Stalingrad stood firm
- 91,000 Germans were taken prisoner.
- Germany was defeated
- Historians believe that this was the turning point of WWII.

This defeat made the German people uneasy. It sparked general unrest and underlying questioning of the Nazi rule among the people. The authorities knew this so they began to tighten their grip on anyone threatening Nazi rule.





WHO WERE THEY?

THE CAST: SOPHIE SCHOLL, HANS SCHOLL,
ALEXANDER SCHMORELL, CHRISTOPH PROBST,
WILLI GRAF, ROBERT MOHR, ANTON MAHLER, BAUR

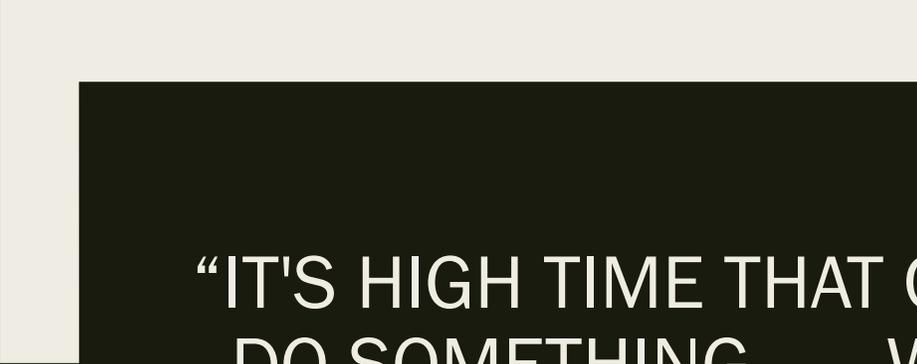


Hans Scholl (brother of Sophie Scholl) was a 25 year old student at the University of Munich who is remembered for creating and distributing anti-Nazi leaflets during WWII. He was extremely intellectual and valued literature and music from different cultures. Hans was a founding member of the White Rose resistance group.



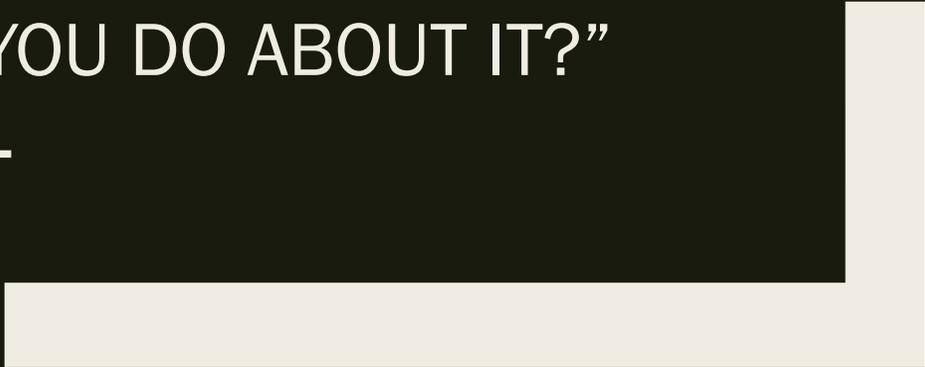
Hans Scholl 25

September 22, 1918 –
February 22, 1943



“IT'S HIGH TIME THAT CHRISTIANS MADE UP THEIR MINDS TO DO SOMETHING . . . WHAT ARE WE GOING TO SHOW IN THE WAY OF RESISTANCE - AS COMPARED TO THE COMMUNISTS, FOR INSTANCE - WHEN ALL THIS TERROR IS OVER? WE WILL BE STANDING EMPTY-HANDED. WE WILL HAVE NO ANSWER WHEN WE ARE ASKED: WHAT DID YOU DO ABOUT IT?”

— HANS SCHOLL



Sophie Scholl 21

May 9, 1921 –
February 22, 1943



Sophie Scholl (sister of Hans Scholl) was a 21-year-old student at the University of Munich who was executed along with her brother and three friends because of their peaceful protest called The White Rose. She was studying biology and philosophy. She loved music, poetry, landscapes, her dog Freddie, and her family.



“The more I learn about Sophie and The White Rose, the more I find this story to be deeply relevant to our current societal issues. Living in America and coming from a middle class family, I can’t help but find myself falling into a place of complacency. I could go my entire life comfortably, disregarding any type of moral structure that the core of my being knows to be true. I could forget about God, and still have enough food to eat and a warm place to sleep. The White Rose shows what happens when you keep your spirit alive and stand up for what is wrong and evil in this world. Sophie's ability to accept her own death with grace and a peaceful heart is something that I struggle to empathize with. I think that’s why this story so deeply proves the existence of God. It really goes against the human condition to do what she did, but she did it anyway.”

– Carly Carroll, portraying Sophie Scholl in ACU Theatre’s production of The White Rose

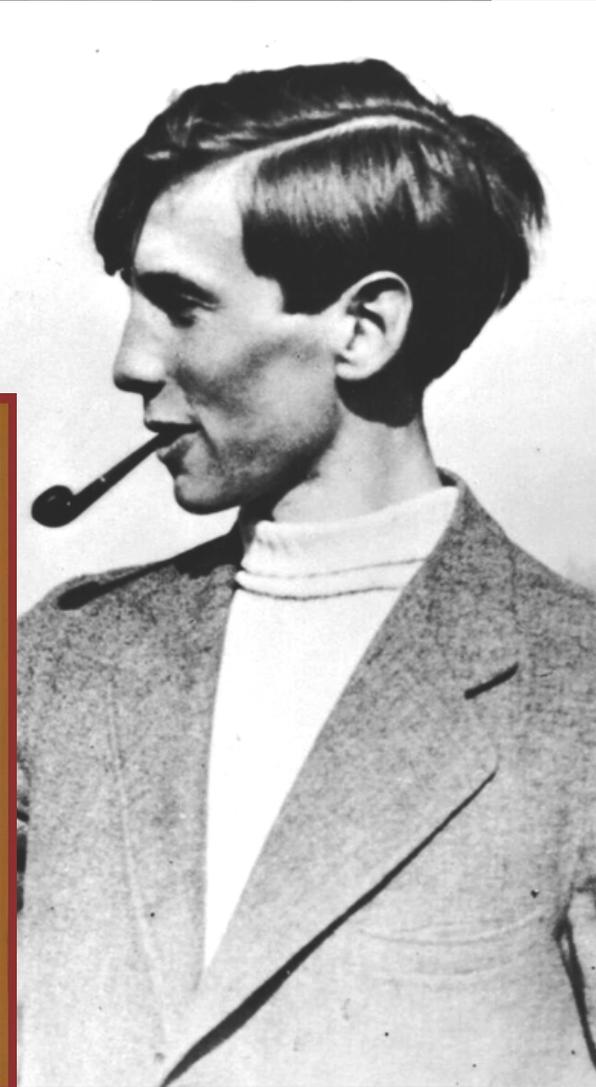
“I CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHY TODAY
‘RELIGIOUS’ PEOPLE ARE WORRIED ABOUT
THE EXISTENCE OF GOD JUST BECAUSE MEN
ATTACK HIS WORKS WITH SWORD AND
INFAMY. WE MUST FEAR FOR THE EXISTENCE
OF MANKIND ONLY BECAUSE MEN TURN
AWAY FROM HIM WHO IS THEIR LIFE.”

— SOPHIE SCHOLL

Alexander Schmorell

25

September 16, 1917 –
July 13, 1943



Alexander Schmorell was a member of the White Rose resistance group. He was born in Russia in 1917. He studied medicine at the University of Munich and was a part of the medical auxiliary on the Russian front in WWII. In 2012, Schmorell was glorified as a saint by the Russian Orthodox church.

Christoph Probst 24

November 6, 1919 – February 22, 1943



Christoph Probst was a German student of Medicine and member of the White Rose resistance group. He was a husband and a father of two sons and one daughter. He was noted as being more mature than the other members of the White Rose. This is possibly due to his roles as husband and father as well as the roles that he had to take up within his family when his father committed suicide when he was 17 years old.



Willli Graf

25

January 2, 1918 –
October 12, 1943



Willli Graf was a student at the University of Munich and a medic in the German military. He was also a devout Catholic who lived his life prioritizing his faith.

“Playing Willli has allowed me to explore my own faith and grow closer to God. I have been researching his faith walk through his personal writings in his diary and letters, as well as the diary entries of his close friends and family. I am so overjoyed to be performing as Willli and to be able to spread the beautiful message this play has with ACU.”

-Hayden Casey, portraying Willli Graf
in ACU Theatre’s Production of The
White Rose

Robert Mohr 46

April 5, 1897 –
February 5, 1977



Robert Mohr was a police investigator for the Gestapo in Munich during the end of WWII. He was a man disillusioned with Nazism, but unwilling to resist it. He interrogated the members of The White Rose, and wanted to save their lives, but let his fear of “the beast” get the better of him.

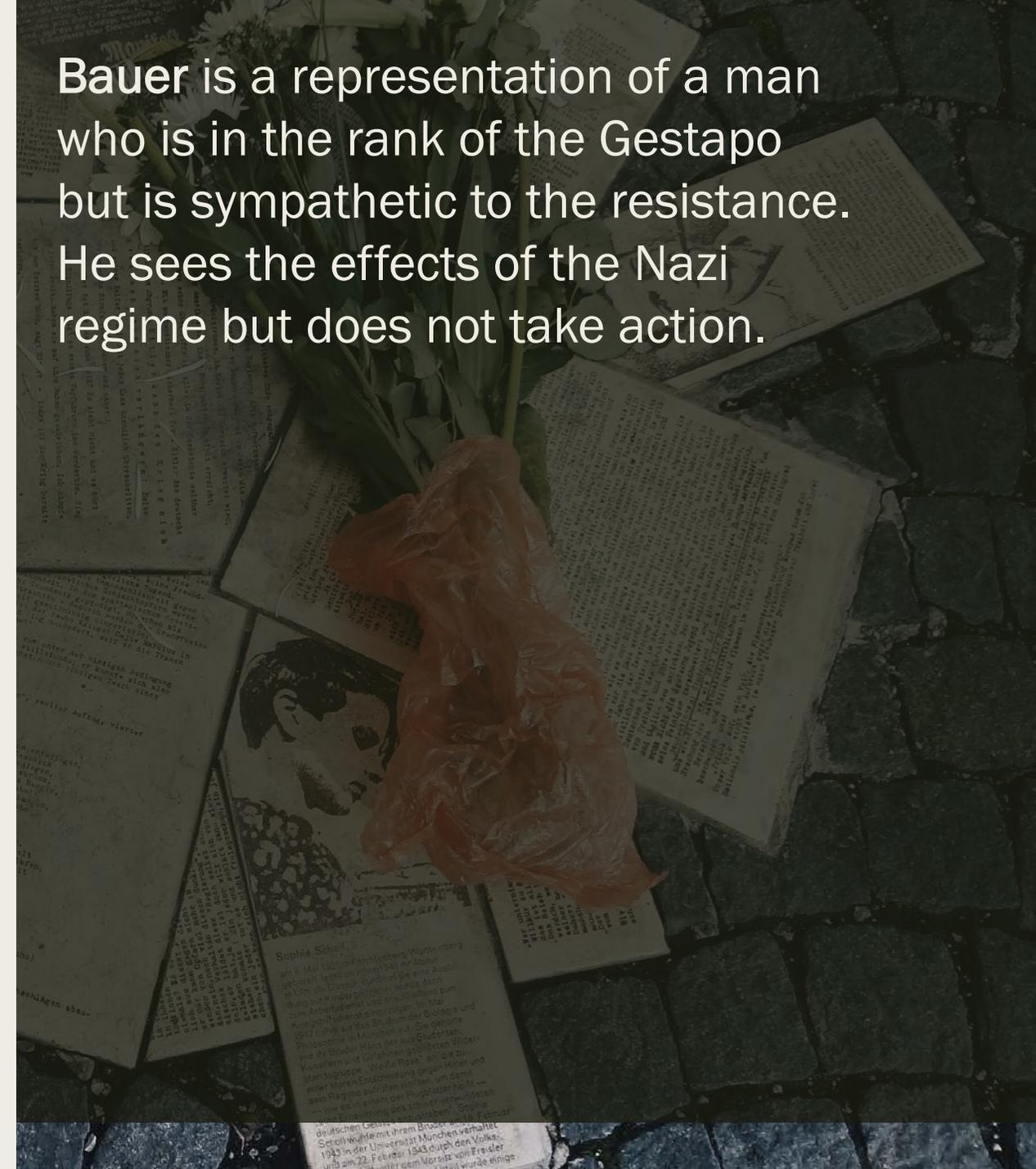
”It means a lot to get to play this role and explore the ways in which fear and indecision can wreck our lives if we allow them to have control over us.”

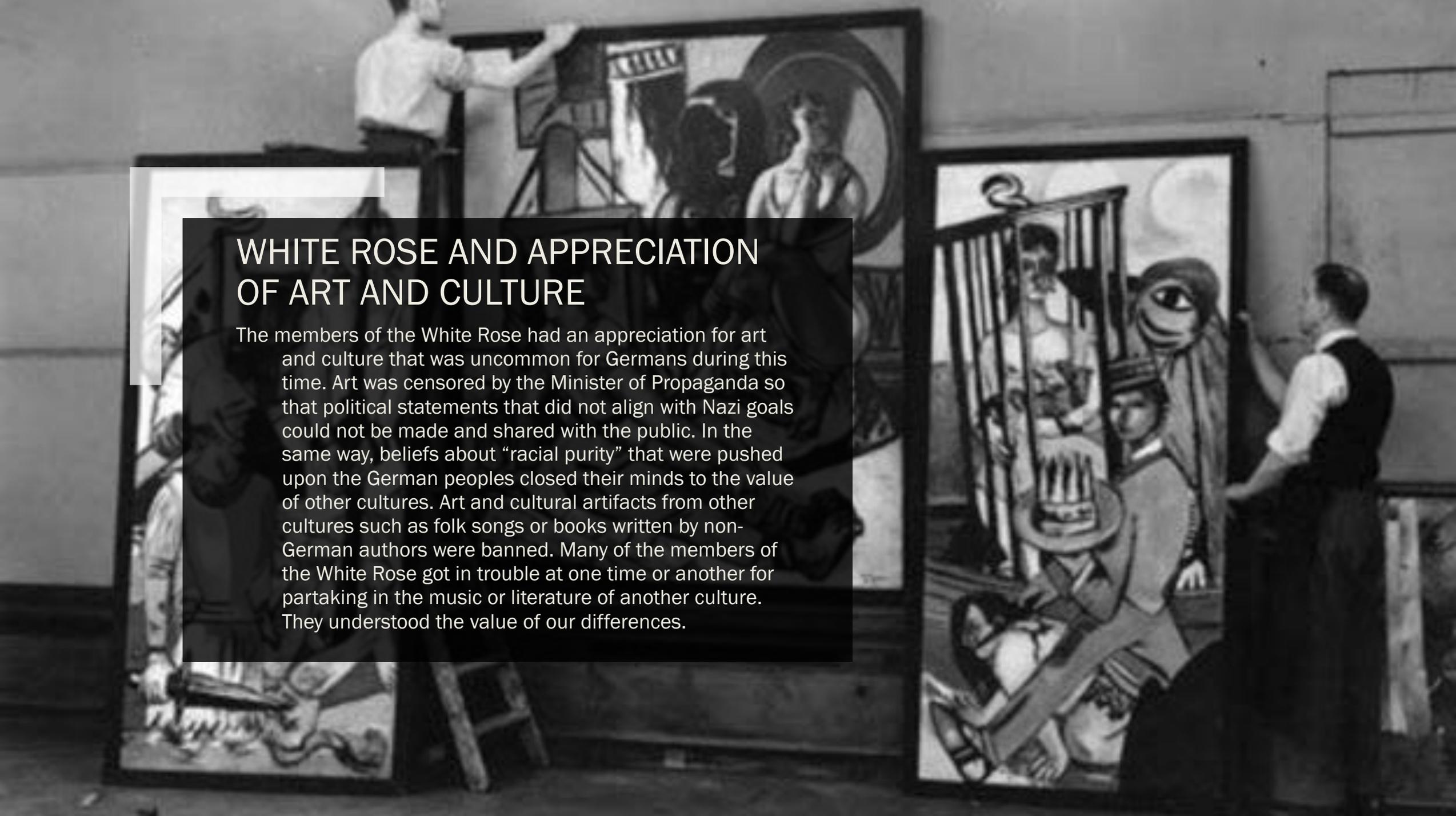
– Griffin Jones, portraying Robert Mohr in ACU Theatre’s production of The White Rose

Anton Mahler is a representation of a Nazi who believes in the cause of the regime and stands for that cause without question. He is blind to the effects of the Nazi regime. He is the ideal Gestapo officer. He is ambitious and will stop at nothing to do his job.

”I feel like I have an opportunity with this character to show how a person can become blinded by authority and show how it can happen to anyone.”
-Corban Gililand, portraying Anton Mahler in ACU Theatre’s Production of *The White Rose*

Bauer is a representation of a man who is in the rank of the Gestapo but is sympathetic to the resistance. He sees the effects of the Nazi regime but does not take action.





WHITE ROSE AND APPRECIATION OF ART AND CULTURE

The members of the White Rose had an appreciation for art and culture that was uncommon for Germans during this time. Art was censored by the Minister of Propaganda so that political statements that did not align with Nazi goals could not be made and shared with the public. In the same way, beliefs about “racial purity” that were pushed upon the German peoples closed their minds to the value of other cultures. Art and cultural artifacts from other cultures such as folk songs or books written by non-German authors were banned. Many of the members of the White Rose got in trouble at one time or another for partaking in the music or literature of another culture. They understood the value of our differences.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE WHITE ROSE



“What would you have to believe
about life and the world to
have seen Nazism as evil
during the Holocaust itself?”
-Steven Garber

According to Elisabeth Scholl, the White Rose group was formed because of the execution of members of the resistance: "We learned in the spring of 1942 of the arrest and execution of 10 or 12 Communists. And my brother said, *In the name of civic and Christian courage something must be done*. Sophie knew the risks. Fritz Hartnagel told me about a conversation in May 1942. Sophie asked him for a thousand marks but didn't want to tell him why. He warned her that resistance could cost both her head and her neck. She told him, *I'm aware of that*. Sophie wanted the money to buy a printing press to publish the anti-Nazi leaflets."

- The members of the White Rose saw the cost of standing up for their beliefs as the cost of discipleship. Through digging into scripture in light of the challenge presented by their culture, having conversations with friends about the world and finding their place in it, and meeting older, wiser people who offered their time and insight, Sophie and Hans developed an opinion of what is right and wrong.

EIN DEUTSCHES
FLUGBLATT

Dies ist der Teil eines deutschen Flugblattes von dem die Widerstandskämpfer der Weißen Rose im Sommer 1942 in München verurteilt wurden. Es enthält sechs von ihnen und das Datum ihrer Hinrichtung. Die Flugblätter wurden in der Kaserne der Wehrmacht in München gedruckt.



Sophie Scholl
geb. am 19. März 1921, Fochberg/Württemberg
gest. am 19. April 1942 in München
wurde am 19. April 1942 in München
erschossen. Letzte in der Gruppe der Weißen Rose.

“Perhaps their greatness lies in the fact that they committed themselves for the sake of such a simple matter, that they were strong enough to give their lives in defense of the most elementary right... Perhaps genuine heroism lies in deciding stubbornly to defend the everyday things, the trivial and the immediate after having been bombarded with so much oratory about great deeds.”

-Inge Scholl

THE WHITE ROSE CALLS
US TO ASK QUESTIONS
OF OURSELVES.

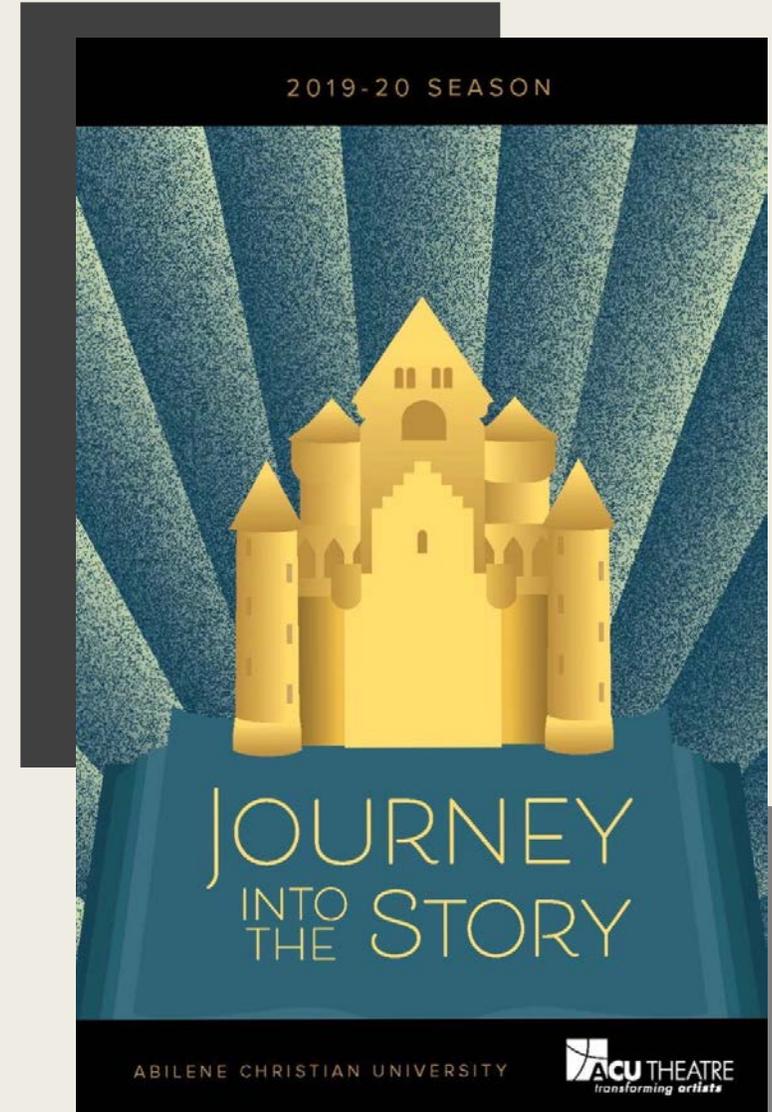
“What can we do? How far must we tolerate what superpowers enforce on us? Is it enough to sign petitions, to march in mass rallies in order to make the peace movement heard in the media and to influence political leaders? What else can be done?

...

All of us know. We do know, and we have to act in one way or another. That is the legacy of the White Rose.”

-Dorothee Solle

THE ACU THEATRE DEPARTMENT IS THRILLED THAT YOU'RE COMING TO SEE OUR PRODUCTION. WE PRODUCE AN AVERAGE OF 8 SHOWS A YEAR, AND THEY'RE ALL OPEN TO STUDENTS.



Theatre Etiquette

As you prepare to attend The White Rose, remember that there is certain etiquette appropriate for live theatre performances.

A live play is different than a movie. It is inappropriate to talk, text, or use any mobile device during the show. It is inappropriate to bring food or drink into the theatre or make loud noises (chomping on gum, crumpling paper, etc.). Not only is that kind of behavior distracting to your fellow audience members, but it is also distracting to the actors. They do “feel” your energy, so, it’s appropriate to laugh when something is funny or clap at the end of a scene or when the entire play is done. Your focused attention actually makes the performance better for everyone.

On behalf of ACU Theatre, we would like to thank you for providing both the actors and audience with a pleasant atmosphere and experience. **Thank you!**



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