



CONNECT STUDENTS WITH THE PAST; ENGAGE THEM IN THE PRESENT  
AND MOTIVATE THEM BUILD A BETTER FUTURE

*“Imagine if there was a voice that spoke for a generation and could guide us through the dark chapters of human history. Imagine if that voice could help us think about our values, our society, and our own behaviors. Imagine if we could take that voice of human conscience and transform the way a generation learns. Well, we do have that voice; in fact we have 51,696 voices. And with IWitness, our educational website for secondary-school teachers and their students, we have made more than 1,300 of those voices available to inspire students to act to overcome prejudice, intolerance and bigotry – and the suffering they cause.”*

Dr. Stephen D. Smith  
Executive Director

USC Shoah Foundation  
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IWitness ([iwitness.usc.edu](http://iwitness.usc.edu)) is an educational website developed by USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education. IWitness brings the human stories of the Institute’s Visual History Archive to secondary school teachers and their students via engaging multimedia-learning activities.

Designed to be participatory, academic and student-driven, IWitness addresses education standards from the Common Core State Standards Initiative (United States) and the International Society for Technology in Education, among others.

IWitness provides access to more than 1,300 full life histories, testimonies of survivors and other witnesses to the Holocaust and other genocides for guided exploration. Students can watch testimonies and use them in individual or group multimedia projects; teachers can assign activities as classwork or homework, and can even custom-build their own lessons and activities. The testimonies are searchable by more than 9,000 keywords, enabling students to pinpoint exact moments of interest within each testimony, which averages two hours in length. The IWitness video editor gives students the freedom to integrate testimony clips together with footage from other sources as well as photos and maps, voiceover audio, music, and text. In a

way that transcends traditional print materials, the interactive, audio-visual form of IWitness connects learners with contextualized first-person views of history while training them to master the digital and media literacies necessary for the future.

To help teachers and students use IWitness to their greatest advantage, the site also features short, informative videos that introduce the concept of testimony, the basics of archival research, and guidelines for ethical editing.

IWitness is highly scalable and can be adapted for a broad array of learning environments and cultural needs. The web site, currently in beta, is being tested in classrooms in the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Rwanda, and Australia. To date IWitness has been accessed by over 20,000 high school students and over 5,700 educators in 58 countries and all 50 U.S. states. The American Association of School Librarians recognized IWitness as one of the “Best Websites for Teaching and Learning” in 2012.

By integrating testimony-based education with the development of digital literacy and other 21<sup>st</sup>-century competencies, IWitness encourages critical thinking and self-reflection, and helps students get a sense of their own place in history and of the profound impact their words and actions can have on the lives of others.

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