



Not in Our Town

Topic

Hanukkah, religious freedom, anti-Semitism, *Ometz Lev* (Courage)

Grade Level

Intermediate

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will gain familiarity with...

- Modern examples of anti-Semitism and those who stood up for religious equality
- The idea of religious freedom is one of the themes of the Hanukkah story
- Heroes, especially in comparing modern-day heroes with the heroic deeds of the Maccabees

Materials needed

- *Hanukkah* worksheet (copied for each student)
- Pens or pencils

Description of Activities

This activity can be used as a whole-class activity or as 1 of several self-guided stations. If you are using this as a station, provide students with the Student Guide.

Share the story about the events that took place in Billings, Montana:

On December 2, 1993, a brick was thrown through 5-year-old Isaac Schnitzer's bedroom window. Luckily, Isaac was not in his room and was not hurt. The brick was thrown in response to a menorah and other Jewish symbols decorating the windows as part of the family's Chanukah celebration. A police officer told Isaac's mom to remove the symbols, fearing that more bricks might be thrown at the house. Isaac's mom was upset by this. How would she explain this to her Isaac?

Margaret McDonald, another mother in Billings, MT, was deeply touched by that question. She tried to imagine explaining to her children that they couldn't have a Christmas tree in the window because it wasn't safe.

Margaret McDonald phoned her pastor and asked what he thought of having Sunday school children make paper cut-out menorahs for their own windows. The pastor got on the phone with his clergy colleagues around town, and the following week, menorahs appeared in the windows of hundreds of Christian homes. Asked about the danger of this action, the police chief told callers, "There's greater risk in not doing it."



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Five days after the brick was thrown at the Schnitzer home, the *Gazette* published a full-page drawing of a menorah, along with a general invitation for people to hang it in their windows. By the end of the week, at least six thousand homes (some accounts estimate up to ten thousand) were decorated with menorahs.

A sporting goods store got involved by displaying "Not in Our Town! No hate. No violence. Peace on Earth" on its large billboard. Now, new friendships have formed, new traditions have started, and greater understanding has been achieved.

Ask students to explore the main ideas from the story by completing the prompts in the *Hanukkah* worksheet.

Share students responses as a basis for discussion.