The Nuremberg Laws Deprived Jews of Their Rights in Nazi Germany

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Maria (right), a 6-year-old girl of the Romanian Jewish community, wears a yellow Star of David badge bearing the word "Jude," a symbol of Nazi persecution, along with another girl during a ceremony at the Holocaust memorial in Bucharest, Romania, October 11, 2011. About 800,000 Jews lived in Romania before World War II. Half of them died during the war or were sent to concentration camps. Only about 6,000 Jews live in Romania currently, according to official statistics. AP Photo/Vadim Ghirda

The Nazis created laws to take away the rights of the Jewish people in Germany. They were called the Nuremberg Laws and were the idea of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler. The laws were passed in the city of Nuremberg, Germany, on September 15, 1935. The first law took away the citizenship of Jews. It was called the "Law of the Reich Citizen." The "Reich" was the name for the German empire. The other law was the "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor." It said that Jews and non-Jewish Germans could not marry. Jews were not
even allowed to fly the German flag. During World War II, Germany tried to destroy the Jewish people. They killed and imprisoned millions of them. It was called the Holocaust. The Nuremberg Laws were the beginning of that.

**Jews were separated from other people**

After the first two laws, the Nazis made 13 more rules that segregated, or separated, Jews from other people. The first one was announced November 14, 1935. The law said a Jew was a person with at least one Jewish grandparent. It said a Jew can’t be a German citizen. They could not vote or have jobs working for the government. Before long, the Nazis made sure that Jewish passports were stamped with a red “J” for Jude, the German word for “Jew.” Jews could not swim in public swimming pools or go to movie theaters. They could not act in movies. Jewish children could not attend public schools. The Nazis forced Jews to take “Jewish” names. Jewish men had to add the name Israel, and women had to add the name Sara. In a rule made on March 28, 1938, Jewish communities lost their rights.

The Nazis thought Jews were a race and not completely human. The Nazis conquered many countries and forced the Nuremberg Laws on those countries too. They used these laws to kill the Roma (once negatively called Gypsies), and other people who were not Aryan.
Origins of Germany’s “Aryan race”

Europeans came up with the idea of an “Aryan race” in the mid-1800s. Under this idea, the Germans were part of the Aryan race. Aryans were supposed to have light skin and Germans thought Aryans were responsible for all the good things that helped mankind. Germans thought they were superior to Jews, Asians and black people. By the time, Hitler came to power scientists said there was no Aryan race. Germans were not better than anyone else. Still, Nazis believed this idea, and used the idea of an Aryan race as a reason to kill Jews, Roma and other people who were not Aryan.

Hitler believed that races, nations, and individuals were not equal. The “Aryan race” was at the top and everyone else was at the bottom. Hitler thought that the most important group was the Volk (“the people”), and the German people were the greatest Volk of all. Nothing was more important than the German people, not truth or justice or even human life.

Family backgrounds used to define Jews

The Nuremberg Laws divided the German nation into Germans and Jews. It did not say who was a Jew. Germany eventually decided that there were two basic types of Jews. A full Jew was anyone with three Jewish grandparents. Part-Jews were called Mischlinge, which means “mongrels” in German, or mutt. First-degree Mischlinge had two Jewish grandparents but did not practice Judaism and did not have a Jewish husband or wife. Second-degree Mischlinge had only one Jewish grandparent.

Germans became worried. They had to show they did not have Jewish ancestors or their rights would be taken away. This created a new business. People hired researchers to make sure they did not have a Jew in the family tree.