

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Pascale R. Bos Part 1

JVN [00:00:00] Welcome to "Getting Curious", I'm Jonathan Van Ness. And every week I sit down for a 40 minute conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something curious. Today, I'm very excited to be bringing you "Getting Curious" first ever two part episode. I'm joined by Associate Professor Pascale R. Bos, from the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas, Austin, where I ask, "Do we understand how the Holocaust happened"? Welcome to "Getting Curious", I'm Jonathan Van Ness. Welcome Pascale Bos. Our guest who is a PhD, honey. She's an associate professor at the University of Texas at Austin. And you specialize in the Holocaust genocides, specifically with gender and specifically like Germany. Germanic studies.

PASCALE R. BOS [00:00:44] Yes. And I'm really interested in memory, so I'm less of a historian than somebody who really looks at the after effects of the Holocaust on culture, individuals, all of that.

JVN [00:00:56] Now, one of the startling thing that I was just reading is this, this article that NPR did back in 2018, April of 2018 that said that 22 percent of millennials say they haven't heard of the Holocaust. Which to me is a shocking statistic. It's something that I've like obviously learned about, known about, I think since I've learned about like history, like I think like fourth, fifth grade, I was starting to learn about what the Holocaust was. And I think, you know, part of the question that I had and that I've wanted to cover is what happened to Germany and Germans, German soldiers, the higher ups of like the Third Reich, like what happened to a lot of those people that perpetuated like, you know, one of the worst genocides like in the history of the ever? And so that was kind of what I wanted to ask. And I think, you know, you have such an incredible, diverse background and ability to speak to these things. So I am just so excited to talk to you. Thank you so much for coming to and giving us your time. I'm so grateful. But yeah, so I think there's just so many areas where we can link into this. But in setting the scene of World War Two, if you're one of those 22 percent of millennials who freakishly have not heard about the Holocaust, World War, actually, I don't want to hear myself talk. Tell us what, set up World War 2 for us, if you will.

PASCALE R. BOS [00:02:21] Well, let me start with your sort of being startled at those statistics. What I have found over, I taught for about 25 years in the U.S. now. I'm originally from Amsterdam, the Netherlands, is, yes, compared to Europe, obviously, Americans have very little general sense of European history and geography. It's not you know, it's not your country. I get it. And so what I've seen here is that the Holocaust sort of gets rolled in either in English class and people read, you know, "Diary of Anne Frank" or maybe Ellie Wiesel's "Night" at some point or maybe sort of social studies or something. And what we see is like there's a real peak in the 1990s of adding the Holocaust more to the curriculum and teaching much more in middle school and high school, where you actually have a little subsection of a history class or something. And what you're seeing right now is I think really we're at 75 years since the end of the war. Right? Dismay, where we're sort of, yeah, that's the big anniversary. And I think the knowledge instit-, need is starting to drop off. And you're also going to have more and more teachers for whom this is also not such an important topic. So as the Holocaust recedes from living memory into eventually purely history, I think we're going to see more and more of this. It's a bit of a shock that it's coming so quickly. I have to say, because as you're pointing out, like your generation still got this in school quite a bit. And up until recently, I would say really almost until 10 years ago, I think this was a bigger thing. And now I don't know, maybe it has to do with the particular wars the U.S. is involved in itself. But however, the irony is, I think maybe your question also comes about right now, at this particular moment in

time, politically in the U.S., the question of what fascism is and how that the Nazis ever got to do what they did, which is to me is a historical question. Right? My students are like, "Ah, it's hard to imagine". Right now it's more pertinent than ever. The students come into my class and when I talk about this day, they hear echoes everywhere. I talk about propaganda. I talk about misleading the public. I talk about scapegoating. Those used to be historical topics. And now, without even doing this deliberately, I realize, oh boy, all these echoes into present and the students are extremely engaged with it. So I think in the longer run, hopefully more and more kids will become interested again in learning about it and knowing about it. So.

JVN [00:04:48] So will it-? So I think that's actually looks super duper interesting. So just to give people an idea like who you are. It's like your day in and day out for the last 25 years as you teach college students about?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:05:00] Different aspects of the Holocaust. So one course is called the "Holocaust After Effects" where I look by decade, really, how the Holocaust came to be understood the way it is now, because most people don't know that that's something that didn't come about till really the 1980s and on. So before that it was really seen just as part of World War 2 and not so much as a separate thing. And that also means that the survivors weren't really considered to be an important group. Very few memoirs were published. People weren't paying attention to them so much. So the focus really was more on the Nazis and then from the 1980s on and that's still sort like the space in which we are now. So I would say for the first 35 years or almost 40 years after the war, people weren't that interested. And then you get this bigger realization, "Wow, this is a enormously important thing that happens". So that was more in Europe. Of course, people knew a little more about that, and in the U.S. that awareness came pretty late. And so from that moment on, really, you get more and more interested and more and more interest in it. And again, the teaching.

JVN [00:06:08] Like why is it that people weren't interested for the first 35, 40 years after the war? Is it just because people were inundated with it and like cities were destroyed and they were like rebuilding and stuff? So no one wanted to talk about mushy feeling stuff, even though surviving a fucking holocaust is not mushy feeling stuff. But I'm paraphrasing.

PASCALE R. BOS [00:06:25] Yeah, I think there's sort of different answers. I think in Europe what you get is certainly a focus on rebuilding. Most European cities are bombed to smithereens. People really have suffered certainly from hunger and war. And the majority of people around and of course, in all of these countries are not Jewish. Jews are already tiny minority in Europe to begin with, particularly in Western Europe. Little bit more sizable minority certainly in a country like Poland. So the moment that they disappeared, because either they were murdered or because before it got too late, they went into exile elsewhere or because after the war they didn't want to return to their countries of origin and so they left, for example, for the U.S. or for Palestine, later Israel. At the moment, those people are not around to tell their stories. Everybody's just talking about how they were victimized in the war. And so even the Germans and this is hard to imagine everybody would think, well, the Germans were the perpetrators. Right? So the Germans too have a narrative of victimization. So their story basically is like this is what the Nazis did to us. So there's almost like a disowning of that this was part of their legacy. And then it's like, well, look at what the, what America and the British did to us. So they'll talk about the firebombings and indeed, some of these war acts are, in fact, more crimes. Firebombings of cities in, in Germany. And then, of course, a few years after the war, after the first occupied by both the Western and the eastern

allies, they get a split. Right? By 1949, West and East Germany split, which of course, really, if you think about it, is a really dramatic event. You have family members living in East Germany, in West Germany, who do not get to see each other for decades. You do not get to cross border. So they actually think of themselves as victims. And it takes them decades before they ever start to sort of change that paradigm and look at the Jews and go, "Oh", in this larger story, they are truly the victims. And the interesting part, and hopefully we can get back to that at some point, is that this awareness comes about not through all the education that certainly the West Germans really do get, but actually through this American public culture products. You have in 1978, the mini series "Holocaust" comes out on American TV. It's actually a mini series just designed to compete with the readings, the ratings, of the previous year of the mini series "Roots" that came out in 1977. So it's purely designed as a commercial product that tells the story of the Holocaust by way of a German Jewish family and a German family that turns Nazi. And it's a, it's a gripping mini series. Meryl Streep is in it, Moriarty, I mean, the stars of the day. People got really engrossed in it. Hundreds of millions of people saw it in the U.S. and then it was dubbed to German and was shown in Germany and in a number of other European countries. That mini series on its own did more than all of the scholarly and memoir publications up to that point, because it made it possible for people in the safety of their own home to listen to these gripping stories, to identify with the characters, because that's what mini series do, right? You sort of get sucked into them, empathize with them, and kind of have the sense, "Oh, my goodness, this is what happened". And of course, it's four episodes, so people really started rooting for these characters and of course, it all does not end well. Nearly everybody, all, all the family members of this particular family die. And so it is after that that you get this much more intense interest in the topic. You get, for instance, the United States, the discussion over creating a national Holocaust memorial that later on became the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and initiatives in education, video archives, memoirs that maybe were published right after the war of Holocaust survivors, but never reprinted, were now reprinted. It becomes slowly part of the school curriculum. That all happens as a product of that mini series. That's incredible. And in Europe, people complain about how American the show was, but at the same time, it's very much had the same effect. And even in Germany. And maybe even particularly in Germany, where nobody really ever had identified with the Jewish side of it. I mean, how could they have? Most of the Jews were gone, or do, went underground. They certainly weren't speaking up. This was sort of a moment where they got to see, "Oh, my goodness". And so that's the moment it changes from "We are the victims" to "Wait a second. The victims of this genocide are truly the victims. We in the best-case scenario were the bystanders and for the most part maybe not us, but certainly our parents and grandparents were perpetrators". That's a difficult realization to have. And my personal experience is that that generation is a fantastic one to deal with as both as a, as colleague scholarship and so forth. I find-

JVN [00:11:45] Did that generation in the 70s that saw this mini series and-?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:11:48] Yeah. And so those are people were maybe a little bit older than me. But, but from that moment on, I felt like I could talk to other Germans my age or slightly older and not feel uncomfortable with the thing that they usually didn't know upfront, which is that I wasn't just Dutch, but I'm Jewish myself. And so from my age, they could probably figure out, well, your family history must have something to do with that. And so up to that point, people would just be very uncomfortable and silence it and from that moment on, they would tell me about their family.

JVN [00:12:22] Holy shit. Wait. Oh, my God. Yeah. Okay. So you are. Thank you for sharing that. It's a major lightbulb moment for me. So you are born in Amsterdam. You are Jewish. You come from a

Jewish family. And so before 78, it's like this really uncomfortable thing where people don't really talk about it. But you notice like a shift culturally there as like having grown up there that like once that series, which will you tell me the name again?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:12:47] Just called "Holocaust".

JVN [00:12:49] "Holocaust".

PASCALE R. BOS [00:12:49] In fact, the interesting thing to realize is that in Europe, up to that point, we did not use the term Holocaust. So in the Netherlands, you used the Dutch equivalent of the persecution of the Jews during World War Two. It's the same term you use, this whole long sentence, you used that in German and French, too. That was a term we didn't have a one word term for all those events. So it's actually the mini series, this, again, this cultural, you know, this mass produced, you know, cultural product from the U.S.

JVN [00:13:21] But prior to that, never had, so Holocaust was never a word that was really talked about until that mini series?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:13:26] Nope. In Europe we never used it. In the U.S. it's used somewhat more commonly as of the 60s on. But it's important to remember that even until the 60s, there wasn't really clear term for it either. People would speak about the war crimes of the Nazis or sort of a nice euphemism was atrocities, but that could mean anything. And so this understanding even of of the genocide of Jews, Roman Sinti and a number of other groups which are smaller in numbers, but not certainly less important to think about and mention, wasn't really understood as events separate or even worthy of separate investigation from World War 2. It was this kind of this thing that also happened during World War 2. That's how it was taught. That's even how it's talked about when you have the Nuremberg tribunals from 1945 to all the way lasting the last trials of roughly '48, '49. It's the war and it's the crimes that the Nazis have committed. And that is just literally a chapter. And it's only over time that it becomes clear. Keep in mind that the history of the Holocaust wasn't written, that historians have to do that work. So the first history of the Holocaust as such, which is Raul Hilberg's work, doesn't come out until 1961. And in fact, his advisors are all like, "Oh, that book is not publishable. Nobody's going to want to read that". And that's, so it takes to 1961 that you have that book. At that moment, you also have a very notorious Nazi criminal finally tracked down in Argentina, brought back to, in this case to Israel to be put on trial. It is at that moment that sort of the first big blip on the radar screen like, "Oh, my gosh, this is a separate, separate event from World War 2 with very unique crimes".

JVN [00:15:18] We're going to take a pause there for a moment, but we'll be right back with more from Pascale after the break. OK. But if, so in the trials of Nuremberg for the Nazis, if you weren't prosecuting the Nazis for the killing of 11 million people between like the Jewish people, gays, do we call Gypsy? I mean, that's what I learned in school.

PASCALE R. BOS [00:15:40] Sinti and Roma.

JVN [00:15:40] Sinti and Roma like, but for all those people, what else could you, would they have been on trial for? What else did they do? I mean, isn't that enough?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:15:48] Well, we would talk about war crimes much more in terms of certain war acts that are against the Geneva Convention of what the Nazis, for instance, also did is absolutely their standard procedure in the Soviet Union. Right? The Eastern Front was to not take Soviet prisoners of war. They murdered them and particular anybody in the higher ranks. So those are all war crimes. So those are the part, things that we're talking about. And of course, the difficulty originally with trying to figure out how the Nuremberg Tribunal, which is the first international criminal tribunal of its kind. Right? So it's trying to create laws around something that they haven't had before. So the difficulty for them to prosecute the Nazis for the murder of the Jews, specifically, is that the Nazis, of course, between '33 and '45 had passed all of these laws that made it possible. And in fact, legal to discriminate against, isolate, segregate, then deport and eventually murder Jews and other so-called groups of either unwanted or right? Not worthy of life. All these particular euphemistic terms. So that is within the jurisdiction of Germany. It's very difficult legally later on to say, "Well, it was legal for that period. But actually, no, of course, you can't do that". So they came up with a specific new legal concept, which are "crimes against humanity", which allows an international tribunal to say even if you government X commit these acts against a population that is your own. So within your sort of autonomous state, we international criminal tribunal can still say those are crimes against humanity and we can hold you accountable. And that's important because otherwise, for example, even a civil war like Rwanda or Yugoslavia. You can't hold anybody accountable. So "crimes against humanity" was a really important term that came up with the Nuremberg. However, they weren't able to successfully use it. They use it during the Eichmann trial in 1961 to convict Eichmann. But they're not very good at it during Nuremberg. The other thing that's really fascinating and odd about Nuremberg is that at that point they thought these are the allies, the Soviets, the Americans, the French and the British. That the best way to get these Nazis prosecuted would be through archival documents and by putting the Nazis on the stand. What they did not do, a very, very little is actually put victims on the stand. There's one, I believe, maybe two Jewish victims. And they do not speak as Jews and they do not speak about the Holocaust specifically.

JVN [00:18:47] What did they speak about?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:18:49] Oh, like of a particular incident where, you know, they're trying to get this one person convicted and so as one witness is speaking about a very specific incident. I think of murder, which she witnessed or was privy to. So it's very isolated. It's very, the legal standards are complicated. So there, people are just left to think like "Wow, Nuremberg". And what did that do? Nuremberg in terms of conviction of actual Nazis is deeply disappointing. They only take the top echelon of Nazis. Nobody really below it while we're dealing with millions of people who were actually involved in the daily of the enterprise of Holocaust.

JVN [00:19:32] Yeah, because if you think about like I mean, the mass incarceration system that we have here in the United States that would, that feels, I mean, obviously, stick with me before I ruin anyone's feathers in a ruffle. But if you think about, you know, the system of mass incarceration and how many guards wardens, prison boards, all of the levels that things would have to be run up. You know? Like for things how work in prisons, that is tens of thousands, twenty, hund-, maybe six figures worth of people that are in that system. But it seems like that would be that same amount of people in that German system that was dealing with like the Holocaust, like that's, I mean all those people how to know what they were doing.

PASCALE R. BOS [00:20:11] Well, the interesting part is, what is the "it" that we're talking about? Did everybody from the bottom to the top of the hierarchy within that system know that the end goal was to murder Jews? Some Nazis certainly also during these trials would argue "No, we did not know". Really hard to really put your finger on it. What they all knew from the certainly that propaganda and all of the speeches with the larger goal was to get, quote unquote, rid of the Jews. Initially to go, up to about 1939, when Germany gets involved in this war, or actually starts this war, I should say, is to get rid of the Jews in Germany proper. So initially the goal is not to murder them. And you can see this clearly. They make every effort to make it impossible for Jews in Germany to continue living there, even though they've lived there for over a thousand years. These are not recent immigrants. These German Jews are as German as anybody else. They're generally assimilated. Fifty percent is intermarried with non-Jews. They are just like everybody else. And all of a sudden they're expected to pack up and leave. To go where? Right?

JVN [00:21:24] So how does that happen in '33? Or like how does that start to happen?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:21:27] Well, what happens in '33 is people sometimes also think that Hitler was voted into office. Right? He was not. It's interesting that the last Democratic election that was held to Nazi Party still never gets more than around 30 percent of the vote. And what you have in Germany still to this day in most European democracies is that you have a system of coalition. So the parties need to together create a majority. You don't just have a two party system. You have lots of political parties and they together have to create a compromise with another political party and then they can rule. And then usually the party that has gained the largest votes gets gets assigned a prime minister or the chancellor, as it's called in Germany. And Hitler actually gets assigned to that position because the previous guy dies. And so you have a power vacuum. And so initially, there are a lot of people who are very politically engaged on the left who realize this is trouble. I need to get out, but nobody else. And then it isn't until 1935 that the Nuremberg laws are passed, which are these really strict race laws which all of a sudden make it impossible to be married to a Jew. You can't at that point create new marriages between Jews and non-Jews.

JVN [00:22:48] What if there was an intermarried family at that time? Like what if there was like a Jewish-? I mean, so was there interfaith families at that time?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:22:55] Yes, lots of them. So yeah, actually about literally 50 percent of German Jews were married to non-Jews.

JVN [00:23:01] Would it be as much as today? Like where like, you know, maybe one family, they like you, like "Hi, like I'm a Jewish lady. We go celebrate Hanukkah at my family's house, but then we do Christmas that my husband's". Like would it have been that modern? But back then?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:23:14] Yes. Although you have to realize and this is always a little bit hard for I think Americans particular to grasp is that Europeans on the whole on particular Western Europeans are not nearly as religious as Americans are. So I would think if Judaism not that dissimilar to Christianity at the time in many countries already in Western Europe is much more of a cultural identification with the Jewishness than a particularly religious one. And particularly Germany, Judaism, actually, that's sort of the the birthplace of Reform Judaism.

JVN [00:23:49] Oh.

PASCALE R. BOS [00:23:49] So what, what most people are familiar with in the U.S. So whereas most of much of the world, the only Judaism that you have was Orthodox. Like quite a strict and people familiar with that, you know, men wear hats and all of that and the women are sort of in deference to them. In Germany, you already had a very modern Jewishness since the Enlightenment. You have a Jewish kind of enlightenment called Haskalah that had made huge inroads. In fact, the first female rabbi doesn't come about in the United States in 1970s, but in the 1930s in Berlin. So they were actually quite progressive. Those families were very progressive and all of that. So in any case, they may have done holidays, but mostly it was sort of, again, almost more like an ethnic identification. Like "Oh, so you're also Jewish" and maybe they celebrated Hanukkah, but one of the things that I found in my research and found kind of interesting actually is that much like American Jews today is that most German Jews then actually celebrated Christmas just because everybody did. But keep in mind that in Europe, that is not a holiday with presents so much. But it's just kind of, it's a little bit more like Thanksgiving, like you get together with your family, you have a nice meal, that kind of thing.

JVN [00:25:01] We're gonna be right back with more of Pascale Bos right after the break. So welcome back to "Getting Curious". We have Pascale Bos So in 1933, does the guy-? So was the Nazi Party like in existence before like the guy dies? So the Nazi party is like around, then the guy dies, but they had won the election so they were like leading the coalition and then they just appoint Hitler because they had already had like the most, like so, so then Hitler becomes that and 33 and they start passing all these like terrible, like draconian-?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:25:34] Yeah, the laws. Keep in mind that the first laws are not so much directed at Jews, but all at political enemies. And people always think like the Nazis, they hated the Jews. Absolutely true. However, their focus was just as much on the political left. So they immediately start isolating and creating also concentration camps in Germany proper to imprison political enemies. Those tended to be male and socialists or communists. So that's why you see such an exodus at this point of that group, where they're like, "Oh, you know, we better get out because it's not going to end well". So he uses then the so-called the Reichstag fire, which is the big government building to this day, we don't know exactly who lit a fire under it. It's supposedly this Dutch communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, but who knows? And he uses that and he creates this or he declares a state of emergency. And from that moment on, he is able to slowly start suspending all the other laws and creates new laws in its place. And because Germany has gone through enormous financial crises, because they've suffered from the stock market crash of '29 in the U.S., but they were still suffering from the after effects of the loss of World War 1. We're at the Treaty of, through the Treaty of Versailles that all the allies put together, the Germans were made to pay reparations for that war to everybody else. And so they were suffering that, their economic crisis was more severe and more sustained than in the rest of Europe and even in the US. And that produces fertile ground for "Sure. Whatever. Give us an answer. Tell us what to do. Create a new order". And the other reason I think what was important to understand how Hitler comes to power is that Germany had a very young democracy. Younger than most other countries in Europe. So the country doesn't become unified into one nation. All these different lands and provinces and so forward till the late 19th century. So the first democracy they have is after World War 1 in the Weimar Republic. So they're 30 years into democracy when all fails. Stock market crashes, all of that. And people actually still want-

JVN [00:27:59] So in World War One. Germany was only like 19 years old or 20 years-?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:28:03] Well, if you think about it, it's 30 years old-. Well, when it started, roughly 25 year old as a nation. So if you look at the larger map of Europe, you have all these sort of regional lands. So, for example, most people probably have heard of Prussia because of Prussian military.

JVN [00:28:20] Yes.

PASCALE R. BOS [00:28:20] That was a-, today maybe you can't really say "state". It's almost more like a province of Germany and all of these places, had individual governments and extremely strong regional identities. And so that does not get united under one banner till 1870 something and that also leads just to a very late sense of like "Ah, this is how democracy works. Everybody has a say". Germany is also a country that industrializes really late. So people really urbanize, the urbanization is late and all these other forms of emancipated, emancipation that come with urbanization. So the role of women, people moving into the workforce, this sort of uncoupling of people, people's habits from the church and the local and so forth. That all happens really late in Germany and then extremely rapidly. So you get in Germany is sort of this crisis of modernity. Younger people who often embrace this are like, "This is fantastic". And the older generation, which is still much larger at that point, who is like, "What is this"?

JVN [00:29:33] Was that like, the Hitlers, the older ones?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:29:34] They want to get back to something that is really a mythical Germany in which somehow the people belong to the land and are part with the, you know, part and parcel with the land. And so you get this notion of German blood and German soil and the connectedness and German culture with a big K. Right? "Kulture" of "This is our joint heritage". And that is a moment that Jews become the perfect scapegoats because German Jews were integrated everywhere, but they could not because of discriminatory church laws in the Middle Ages, own lands, become farmers. And so this idea precisely of the connection to the land and all of that, sort of, creates a mythical idea of naturalness the Jews could not claim. And of course, they weren't Christian, even if they were assimilated. They weren't Christian, so their otherness, now all of sudden becomes emphasized. More over in this sort of modernized world. They for once historically had done well, whereas they had been at a disadvantage, living, you know, really in these tiny little hamlets called shtetls, near bigger cities were made to do the worst kind of work, like tax collecting and things like that. Now, all of a sudden they were at an advantage because generally speaking, because of their religious traditions, they tended to be really sort of positive, positively associated with learning. So Jews on the whole in Germany had higher levels of education. Also, the first group that starts doing family planning, they sent their girls to school, first Jewish doctors that are female in Germany and much all over Europe, actually, then to be Jewish girls. So you have a sort of a different profile that that you think is good, but it also makes them stand out. So that leads to the accusation that maybe they caused the economic crisis. Makes no sense. But you don't need to have a rational argument to scapegoat someone. So the focus really becomes on who is to blame for this crisis and who, by the way, is to blame for the fact that we lost his first war. No, we can make sense of that. It must be the Jews. The quote unquote, foreign elements. They are not loyal to us. They must be part of sort of a global movement. And I'm just kind of have to stop myself here, because, of course, this is the same anti-Semitic rhetoric we hear again today. For me, that was like a historical topic. I'd be like, wait, that's what they thought about the Jews. I haven't heard this stuff in, you know, the last 40 years. Now it pops up again. All this old stuff is of, you know, thrown again on the Internet to see if it's, all right, recent the stuff about it you

hear about George Soros or this is all the same kind of anti-Semitic idea that all Jews somehow are connected in the world and out to get us the non-Jews. So that's kind of how the, that's the kind of propaganda that gets thrown around in Germany and then by little by little passing laws that isolate Jews from German life. The idea is still we will get them to leave and a good number of families do. But we do also get and that's a kind of an interesting thing that most people don't know about, is that you get a very uneven distribution in gender. But families tend to do is send their sons abroad or sometimes the fathers leave to maybe get themselves established. They may leave for the U.K. or for the United States or the Netherlands or France with the hope that, you know, the rest of family will come. So what you have by the time things get worse and worse and worse. So 1938, '39, just before the war breaks out but of course, nobody knows this yet, is that, for instance, in the city like Berlin, if you look at the demographic profile, what you have left is women taking care, either of they're children or of their elderly parents or sometimes both. And the the majority of men, in fact, have already left. And this was also the miscalculation of the Jewish community thinking the Nazis are going to go after our husbands. If this is going to be a, quote unquote, war. Right? You worry about your sons and your husbands, not about your daughters. And so the miscalculation to not understand that the Nazis eventually would go after everybody, female, male, the infirm, children, the extremely elderly. That is something that just nobody had thought about that. That-

JVN [00:34:30] They didn't think they could be that evil?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:34:32] No, but also, like it's like it's, that will be genocide. Keep in mind, even the word "genocide" is coined in 1943 or '44. We don't even have this concept yet. So the advantage that the Nazis had is that everything they come up with, in, was in some way in the modern world unprecedented. So maybe you could look at the Bible and go, "Oh wait, this looks a little bit like this". But nobody has seen that unfold. So most people in Germany, whether you were Jewish or not, kind of like, "Yeah, this is probably gonna last. This Hitler guy". And instead, of course, he manages to, to amass more and more power. And as Germany, once it ramps up, its war industry starts doing better economically. The Germans overall are like, "Oh, this guy is not so bad. We're good".

JVN [00:35:23] So he starts to get a better approval rating more and more?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:35:27] Yeah.

JVN [00:35:27] So in and it actually, and because that was one of the thing I started off asking you about is I think, you know, for a lot of the millennials, like the 22 percent that haven't heard of the Holocaust. I think there's probably a fair amount of Americans who don't even know why or how World War 2 started and or what our role was in it. And so I think just very briefly, if I could just do a fast recap of that, then you with your literal PhD-ness on, feels it. I mean, I know that your, you study, you know, more of like Germanic studies and the things that the fallout and the gender and how gender involved in all of those things. But you have a very, you know what happened. So just especially for like a layman. So which is me, not you. So I just want to, tell, tell me if this is correct. So as Hitler does all this and '40 the war, or '39, '40, the war breaks out. But that war is between the United Kingdom and Germany.

PASCALE R. BOS [00:36:18] And Poland.

JVN [00:36:20] And Poland. And we still aren't in it. Like being Americans, or America isn't, because the, Roosevelt I think is like trying to like stave it off and stave it off and doesn't want to get us involved. But the Jewish concentration camps are happening.

PASCALE R. BOS [00:36:32] Well, actually, what happens is so these concentration camps that I mentioned, mentioned, that he creates for his political enemies. They first start being used for Jews after so infamous Kristallnacht or Crystal Night, as we say, in in the U.S. So that happens in November of 1938. That's a so-called spontaneous but really in reality, orchestrated pogrom or attack of on the streets in many, many of the big cities of Germany, of so-called ordinary people who rise up against such a Judeo Bolshevism. Right? So because Jews are both thought to be capitalists and communist, kind of hard to combine those. But hey, you know, no logic to prejudice. So what they do at that point actually is they round up large groups, still of Jewish men, and put those in camps like Mauthausen and Dachau. And so that's when a number of Jews end up in these camps. But the camps that we associate with the Holocaust, these large concentration camps, had mostly held Jews. Obviously, the camp that everybody knows is Auschwitz. And then we have at least four actually extermination camps like Treblinka, Sobibór and so forth. Those camps were all in Poland and they are not really set up and created till after '41, some cases after '42. Because that plan is hatched a little later on, once Germany has invaded Poland very successfully, very quickly, and then happens upon its next quote unquote "problem", which is that in Poland you have millions of Jews living. Because, well, we really haven't talked about it yet, is that the number of Jews living in Germany is actually really tiny. It's one of the things I always ask my students when we, when we talk about the Holocaust in my courses is, "Well, what do you think the percentage of the German population was Jewish"? If I would ask you, what do you think? Say, 1933? Give me random number.

JVN [00:38:33] 10 to 20 percent? 10 percent?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:38:35] I often, like my students will say something like the lowest maybe they'll say five and some of them will say 25 percent because you think.

JVN [00:38:41] What was it? 2? 1?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:38:42] It's three quarters of one percent.

JVN [00:38:45] Wow.

PASCALE R. BOS [00:38:46] It's less than one percent of the population.

JVN [00:38:47] So in '33, 0.75 percent.

PASCALE R. BOS [00:38:50] Yes.

JVN [00:38:51] And that is how Hitler whipped up all that hate?

PASCALE R. BOS [00:38:56] Yeah, yeah. So the interesting part is that in people who, for example, did not live in cities, most of them had never actually met anybody Jewish. And if you lived in larger cities and the Jews were also relatively invisible, because, again, as I mentioned, the majority of German Jews were not Orthodox. So they weren't visible. They weren't wearing in particularly

religious clothing. They were just like anybody else. They look like anybody else. They were your neighbors. So, in fact, to isolate Jews that were already so assimilated is there was also Nazi rule that made every Jew take on a Jewish middle name so they could be identified.

JVN [00:39:32] Easily identified.

PASCALE R. BOS [00:39:33] Yes.

JVN [00:39:34] Pascal, we have to have you back. There's so many other things that we have not got to that I really want to get to, but I can honestly talk to you for like seven and a half hours about this topic. So give it up for Pascale. This episode is amazing. Thank you so much.

PASCALE R. BOS [00:39:45] You're welcome. Thank you.

JVN [00:39:46] Yes. You've been listening to "Getting Curious" with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was Pascale R. Bos. And be sure to tune in next week for the conclusion of our incredibly informative conversation if I do say so myself. You'll find links to her work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. Our theme music is "Freak" by Quin. Thank you so much to her for letting us use it. If you enjoyed our show, introduce a friend and show them how to subscribe, if you please. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter at CuriousWithJVN. Our socials are run and curated by Emily Bossak. "Getting Curious" is produced by me, Julie Carrillo, Emily Bossak, Rae Ellis, Chelsea Jacobson and Colin Anderson.

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