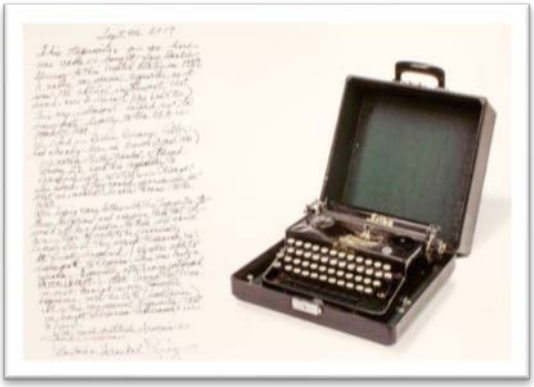
ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM
& EDUCATION CENTER





Stories of Survival

OBJECT · IMAGE · MEMORY

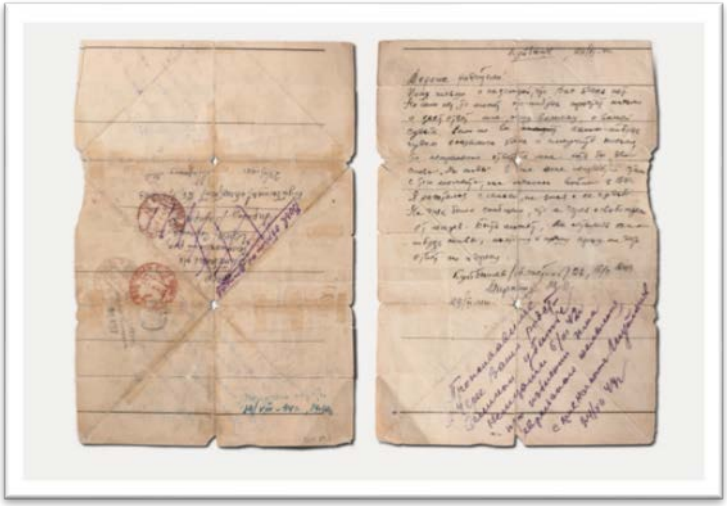


Docent Tour Guide

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

Object

The objects in this exhibition reflect the lives of their one-time owners: childhood, home, culture, and religious practice, but also the impact of war, trauma, displacement, exile, and migration. They have survived the Holocaust, genocides, and conflicts in Armenia, Bosnia, Cambodia, Iraq, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Syria. A snap decision or a stroke of luck resulted in what remains from a lost world.



Letter, written by Mikhail Mirkin, Chereya, Soviet Union, 1944.

Documents, a prayer book, a doll, a recipe book, or keys to your home—dislodged from their original surroundings, these seemingly ordinary objects are now storytellers. They represent futures that were forever altered.



(2014.39.2)
Mikhail, 1940, Soviet Union

Mikhail left the *shtetl* (village) of Chereya to study at the Belarussian State University, until he volunteered to fight the Nazis for the Soviet Army. His entire family was massacred by Nazis and local collaborators on March 6, 1942 in their hometown ghetto. He immigrated to the United States in 1983.

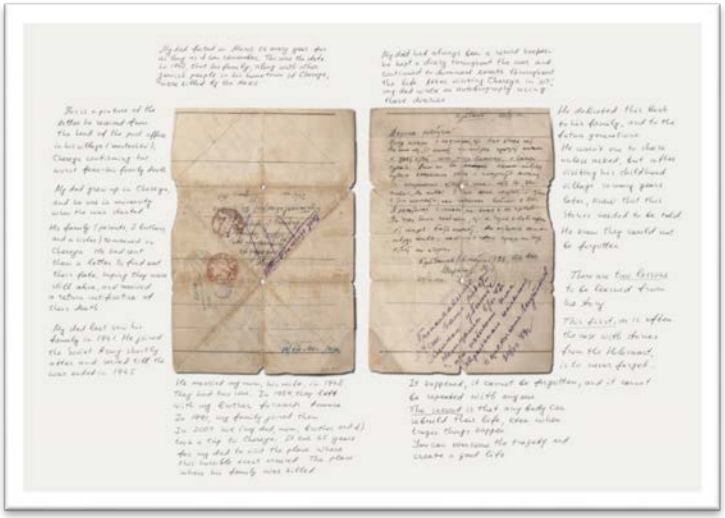
Image

The images in this exhibition were taken by photographer Jim Lommasson. Nearly a decade ago, Lommasson began working on a collaborative photographic and writing project with Iraqi and Syrian refugees to the US, based on the objects they brought with them to this country. In this exhibition, multiple victim and survivor groups, and their descendants, were asked to participate.

Lommasson photographed these items on a plain, white background. Alone in this open space, the object becomes elevated from the everyday to the iconic. The participants were then asked to engage with the photographs and express themselves however they felt comfortable, directly on the print.

Memory

Writings and creative expressions on the images attach memories to the objects.
Autobiographical narratives become collective history. These stories of survival resulting from incomprehensible inhumanity represent shared experiences despite differences of time and place: experiences of resilience, courage, the fragility of life, family history, and hope for the future. In some ways, these are experiences shared by all of us.



(Upper Right, Reading from Left to Right)
Reflections by Dmitry Mirkin, Son of Mikhail Mirkin.

My dad fasted on March 06 every year for as long as I can remember. This was the date in 1942, that his family, along with other Jewish people in his hometown of Chereya were killed by the Nazis.

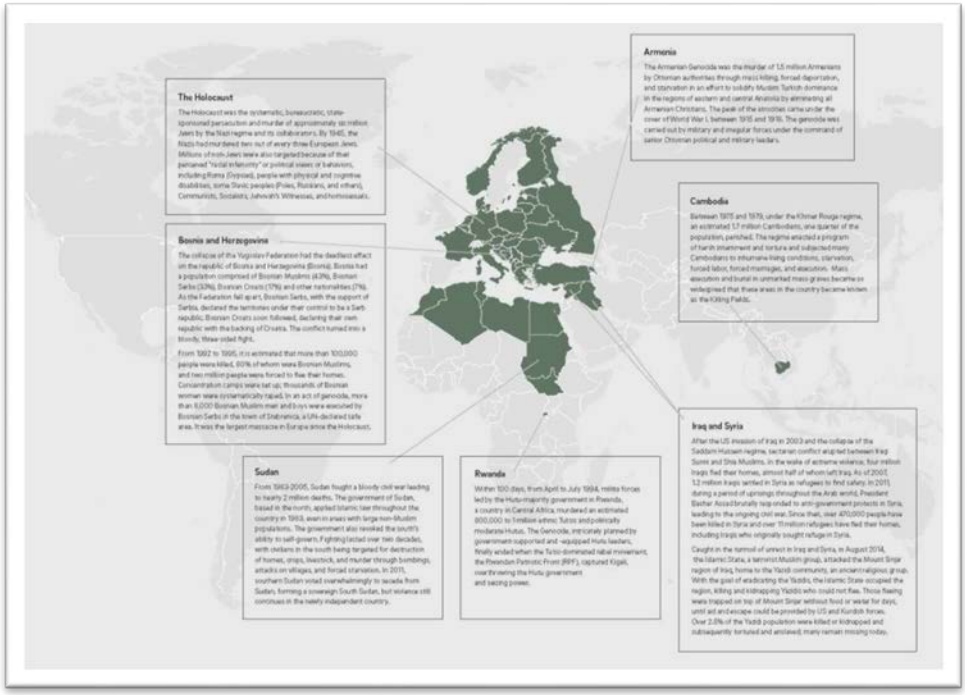
This is a picture of the letter he received from the head of the post office in his village ("Mestechko"), Chereya confirming his worst fear – his family death. My dad grew up in Chereya, and he was in university when the war started. His family (parents, 2 brothers, and a sister) remained in Chereya. He had sent them a letter to find out their fate, hoping they were still alive, and received a return notification of their death. My dad last saw his family in 1941. He joined the Soviet Army shortly after and served till the war ended in 1945.

He married my mom, his wife, in 1948. They had two sons. In 1989, they left with my brother towards America. In 1991, my family joined them. In 2007 we (my dad, mom, brother, and I) took a trip to Chereya. It took 65 years for my dad to visit the place where this horrible event occurred. The place where his family was killed.

My dad had always been a record keeper – he kept a diary throughout the war and continued to document events throughout his life after visiting Chereya in '07. My dad wrote an autobiography using these diaries.

He dedicated this book to his family, and to the future generations. He wasn't one to share unless asked, but after visiting his childhood village so many years later, knew that these stories needed to be told. He knew they could not be forgotten. There are two lessons to be learned from his story. This first, as is often the case with stories from the Holocaust, is to never forget. It happened, it cannot be forgotten, and it cannot be repeated with anyone. The second is that anybody can rebuild their life, even when tragic things happen you can overcome the tragedy and create a good life.

WHERE DO THESE STORIES COME FROM?



The Holocaust

The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. By 1945, the Nazis had murdered two out of every three European Jews. Millions of non-Jews were also targeted because of their perceived “racial inferiority” or political views or behaviors, including Roma (Gypsies), people with physical and cognitive disabilities, some Slavic peoples (Poles, Russians, and others), Communists, Socialists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and homosexuals.

Armenia

The Armenian Genocide was the murder of 1.5 million Armenians by Ottoman authorities through mass killing, forced deportation, and starvation in an effort to solidify Muslim Turkish dominance in the regions of eastern and central Anatolia by eliminating all Armenian Christians. The peak of the atrocities came under the cover of World War I, between 1915 and 1918. The genocide was carried out by military and irregular forces under the command of senior Ottoman political and military leaders.

Cambodia

Between 1975 and 1979, under the Khmer Rouge regime, an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians, one quarter of the population, perished. The regime enacted a program of harsh internment and torture and subjected many Cambodians to inhumane living conditions, starvation, forced labor, forced marriages, and execution. Mass execution and burial in unmarked mass graves became so widespread that these areas in the country became known as the Killing Fields.

Rwanda

Within 100 days, from April to July 1994, militia forces led by the Hutu-majority government in Rwanda, a country in Central Africa, murdered an estimated 800,000 to 1 million ethnic Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus. The Genocide, intricately planned by government-supported and -equipped Hutu leaders, finally ended when the Tutsi-dominated rebel movement, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), captured Kigali, overthrowing the Hutu government and seizing power.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The collapse of the Yugoslav Federation had the deadliest effect on the republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia). Bosnia had a population comprised of Bosnian Muslims (43%), Bosnian Serbs (33%), Bosnian Croats (17%) and other nationalities (7%). As the Federation fell apart, Bosnian Serbs, with the support of Serbia, declared the territories under their control to be a Serb republic. Bosnian Croats soon followed, declaring their own republic with the backing of Croatia. The conflict turned into a bloody, three-sided fight.

From 1992 to 1995, it is estimated that more than 100,000 people were killed, 80% of whom were Bosnian Muslims, and two million people were forced to flee their homes. Concentration camps were set up; thousands of Bosnian women were systematically raped. In an act of genocide, more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were executed by Bosnian Serbs in the town of Srebrenica, a UN-declared safe area. It was the largest massacre in Europe since the Holocaust.

Sudan

From 1983-2005, Sudan fought a bloody civil war leading to nearly 2 million deaths. The government of Sudan, based in the north, applied Islamic law throughout the country in 1983, even in areas with large non-Muslim populations. The government also revoked the south's ability to self-govern. Fighting lasted over two decades, with civilians in the south being targeted for destruction of homes, crops, livestock, and murder through bombings, attacks on villages, and forced starvation. In 2011, southern Sudan voted overwhelmingly to secede from Sudan, forming a sovereign South Sudan, but violence still continues in the newly independent country.

Iraq and Syria

After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime, sectarian conflict erupted between Iraqi Sunni and Shia Muslims. In the wake of extreme violence, four million Iraqis fled their homes, almost half of whom left Iraq. As of 2007, 1.2 million Iraqis settled in Syria as refugees to find safety. In 2011, during a period of uprisings throughout the Arab world, President Bashar Assad brutally responded to anti-government protests in Syria, leading to the ongoing civil war. Since then, over 470,000 people have been killed in Syria and over 11 million refugees have fled their homes, including Iraqis who originally sought refuge in Syria.

Caught in the turmoil of unrest in Iraq and Syria, in August 2014, the Islamic State, a terrorist Muslim group, attacked the Mount Sinjar region of Iraq, home to the Yazidi community, an ancient religious group. With the goal of eradicating the Yazidis, the Islamic State occupied the region, killing and kidnapping Yazidis who could not flee. Those fleeing were trapped on top of Mount Sinjar without food or water for days, until aid and escape could be provided by U.S. and Kurdish forces. Over 2.5% of the Yazidi population were killed or kidnapped and subsequently tortured and enslaved; many remain missing today.

About the Photographer

Jim Lommasson is an award-winning photographer and author living in Portland, Oregon. He received the Dorothea Lange–Paul Taylor Prize from The Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University for his first book, *Shadow Boxers: Sweat, Sacrifice and The Will To Survive In American Boxing Gyms*. Lommasson's 2015 book *Exit Wounds: Soldiers' Stories – Life After Iraq and Afghanistan* and traveling exhibition is about U.S. veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars, and their lives after their return from war.

Lommasson is a 2012-2016 Oregon Humanities Conversation Project Grant Recipient for his public discussion "Life after War" and was awarded a Regional Arts and Culture Council Project Grant for his current project: *What We Carried: Fragments from the Cradle of Civilization*. *What We Carried* is an ongoing collaborative storytelling project with displaced Iraqi and Syrian refugees who have fled to the U.S. *What We Carried* was published in 2016 by Blue Sky Books, and was featured as an exhibition at the Illinois Holocaust Museum.

Lommasson is represented in the permanent collections at The Library of Congress, San Francisco Museum of Art, The Portland Art Museum, Yale University, Reed College, The George Eastman Museum, The New Orleans Museum of Art, Hallie Ford Museum and The University of Washington.

Tour Goals

The purpose of the tour is to provide an immersive inquiry-based learning experience; *Stories of Survival* invites visitors to engage with everyday objects that hold meaning of home, family, traditions, and also loss and displacement. Through a visit to *Stories of Survival,* visitors will explore the challenges of being a refugee or immigrant, and the human connections shared between us, whether a first generation American or 7th generation.

With more than 60 personal artifacts brought to America by Survivors of the Holocaust and genocides that occurred in Armenia, Bosnia, Cambodia, Iraq, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Syria, the exhibition creates a relationship between objects, their meaning to the original owner, and their significance over time.

Field Trip

Grades: 6th – 12th/ College and University
Length: 2 hours and 5 minutes
Times: Monday – Sunday 10:00 am; 12:00 pm and 2:00 pm; 5:00 pm (Thursdays only)
Group Size: 60 students maximum

Tour includes:

- *Stories of Survival: Object. Image. Memory. (45 minutes)*
- *Rescue and Renewal: The Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Collection of Hebrew Theological College (20 minutes)*
- Room of Remembrance (20 minutes)
- A hands-on classroom activity inspired by *Stories of Survival (30 minutes)*

Group Tour

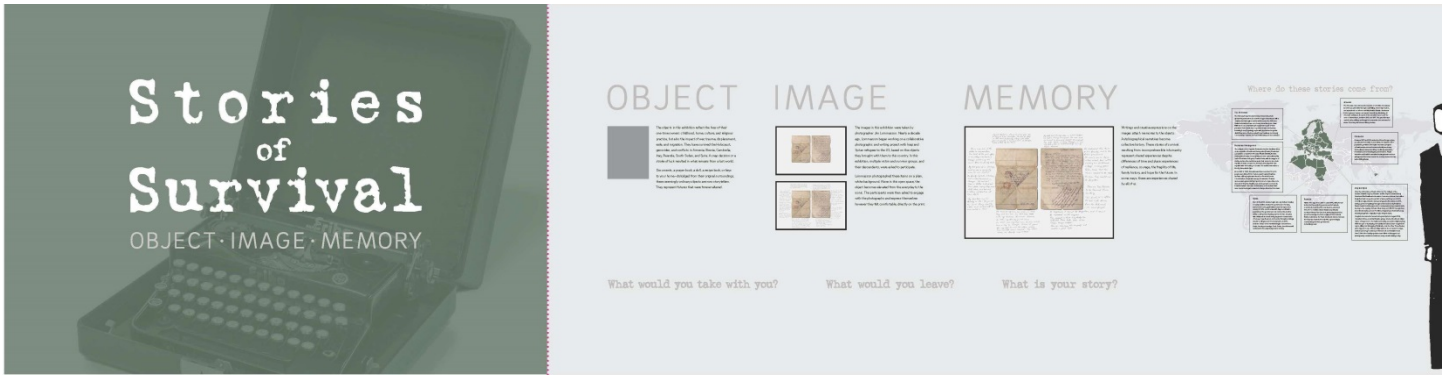
Length: 45 minutes
Times: Monday – Sunday 10:00 am; 12:00 pm and 2:00 pm; 5:00 pm (Thursdays only)
Group Size: 60 students maximum

Tour includes:

- *Stories of Survival: Object. Image. Memory. (30 minutes)*
- *Rescue and Renewal: The Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Collection of Hebrew Theological College (15 minutes)*

"Memory preserves the threads of sorrow and joys of people, and carries them forth. Forgetfulness betrays not only the past but also the present and future"

--Sam Bloch, speaking at the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, 2010



Introduction (5 min)

What they will see. What their experience will be like:
This exhibition showcases more than 60 never-before-seen personal items brought to America by Survivors of the Holocaust and genocide. You will engage with not only the actual objects, but paired with each artifact are oversized photographs with handwritten responses by Survivors or their family members.

We will spend about 45 minutes in this exhibtion*(customize time period according to tour length)*, and I will allow you time to explore different sections on your own, coming back together as group at different points for discussion.

Transition: "Today you will see everyday objects that hold meaning of home, family, traditions, and also loss and displacement. You will have the opportunity to read stories that address the challenges of being a refugee or immigrant, and we will reflect upon and have conversations about the human connections shared between us, whether a first generation American or 7th generation."

Ask: Tell me how an object can be a(n)...

- Memory
- Legacy
- Upstander
- Resistor
- Identity
- Storyteller

Exploration



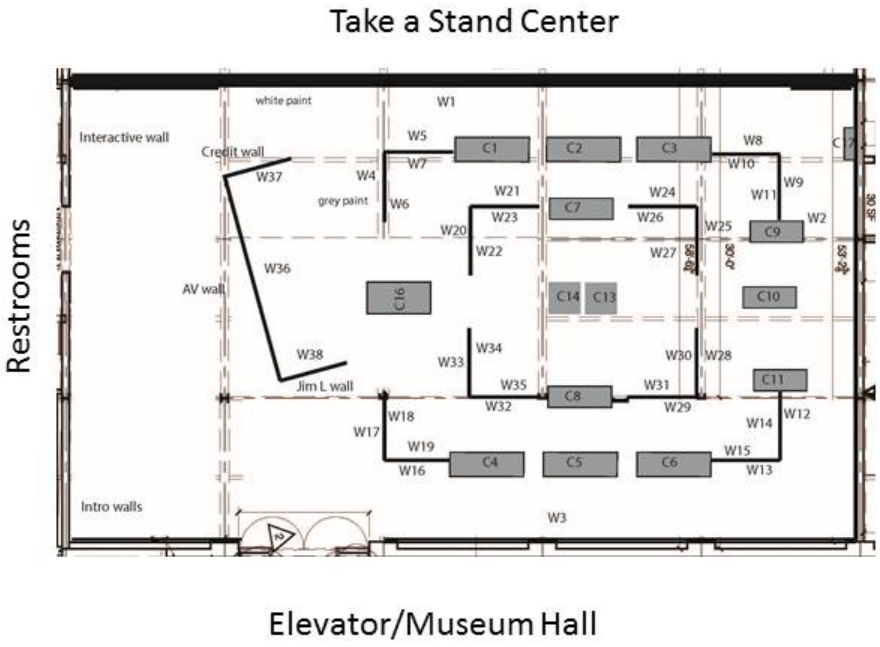
WALL 1 – GROUP 1



WALL 3 - GROUP 2

Rotation

One group can start at Wall 1. Another group can start at Wall 3. Rotate clockwise. Have the students work in small groups of 2 or 3.



Tour Approaches

Theme – Based (35 minutes)

- Depending on your theme, task each group with finding 2-3 objects and corresponding images that reflect the "theme," i.e.: Resistor, Upstander, etc. (11 minutes)
- Bring students back together and have them share what they found, and explain why the think it connects with the theme. (5 min)
- Chose a different theme, and in their groups task them to find 2-3 objects and corresponding images that reflect the "theme," i.e.: Resistor, Upstander, etc. (11 minutes)
- Share/Debrief (8 min)

Story-Based (35 minutes)

Tell your group that this exhibition explores layers of meaning in everyday objects, particularly the ways in which meaning can change over time.

- Divide the group into small groups of 2-3 and task them with finding 1-2 objects that resonate with them. When they have identified their objects, they should learn the stories and be prepared to share with the group. (11 minutes)
- Bring students back together to discuss their objects and stories. How did learning the story enhance your understanding of the object you chose? (5 minutes)
- Have the students explore the exhibition in their small groups again, this time looking for objects that they would not expect to see in a museum. Learn the story of that object and why it was donated, and be prepared to share. (11 minutes)
- Share/debrief. (8 minutes)

Close/ De-Brief (5 minutes)

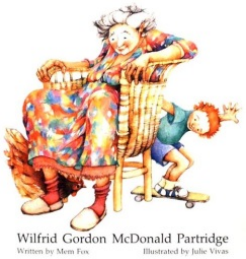
- Which artifact or memory did you most identify with? Why?
- If your family was moving away, what would you take? How does that describe who you are and why?
- What would you like people to know about you? What object would you choose to tell your story?

Alternative De-Brief and Close Question

- Why did a survivor/child of a survivor donate these objects? What story are they telling? Why is moving the object from the private family to the public impactful? Does it change the object's meaning? How?
- Why is it important to remember? Why are memories important?
- What additional information would you ask of the Survivor?
- Can you find an object in the exhibit that survived even though it was NOT the most important object to the survivor? It may have not have been essential to the survivor yet it is what remains. How does this play into memory and the importance of objects?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY (30 minutes)

GOAL:
Students will begin to sequence the journey of one object as it transforms from an object to a memory. Students will explore the idea that an object can spark a memory of a long ago event, and that spark will transport them back to the time, tastes, smells, and feelings of that memory.



Watch film of Survivors Reading *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge,* the story of *a* small boy who tries to discover the meaning of "memory" so he can restore that of an elderly friend.

<u>After Watching Film - Discuss:</u>

- What's a memory?
- What does it mean to "lose your memories?"
- Why do you think different people give different answers to "What's a memory?"
- How did the objects that WGMcP picked to share have different meaning to him than to Miss Nancy?
- What special item do you have that you associate with a memory? (share or pair/share)

<u>Fi ve Panel Poster:</u>
Distribute the poster handout to each student. Place supply boxes on tables for students to share. Have students use five panel poster handout to draw or use words to depict:

Panel #1: Object/Memory – Something warm.
Panel #2: Object/Memory – Something from long ago.
Panel #3: Object/Memory – Something that makes you cry.
Panel #4: Object/Memory – Something that makes you laugh.
Panel #5: Object/Memory – Something that is precious as gold.

<u>Project Implementation Option #1:</u>

- Instruct students to think about and then draw/write in panel #1 "something warm."
- Ask for volunteers to share their answers.
- Choose to play the survivors video response to the same question.
- Repeat for remaining panels until time is up
- Suggest to the teacher/students that they may finish any open panels back in the classroom or at home.

Project Implementation Option #2:

- Instruct the students to fill in all the panels with the appropriate memories.
- It is ok if they do not have a memory for each box, they should fill in as many as they can.
- Ask for volunteers to share ONE of their memories from the handout.
- If there is time, play a few of the Survivors' responses to the questions

(If there is time.....) play a few minutes of Survivors' responses to above.

JCR Judaica - Light Side Lobby (15 minutes)

Goals:

Visitors will be introduced to the history of these orphaned objects and explore how they serve as keepers of memory for individuals, families, and communities who can no longer speak for themselves.

Introduce the JCR, an organization established to find the owners of Jewish objects stolen during the Holocaust, and for objects whose owners could be identified or who had been killed, to entrust these objects to the care of Jewish organizations.

Questions:

- What do we know about these objects? How can we learn their stories, since their owners cannot tell us?
- How does the fact that these objects are "orphaned" change their stories?
- Most of these objects were used as part of Jewish religious practice, either in Jewish homes or within synagogues. They are sacred objects, but many of them have been damaged. How were these objects' meanings different to the people who damaged them, as opposed to the people who owned and used them? How does the meaning of a sacred object change, when it is no longer used for ritual purposes?
- Compare and contrast these objects and their stories with the objects you saw and discussed in *Stories of Survival*.
- Do you have a similar object in your home? What is it used for? Does it have a special story/memory attached to it? How have the different experiences of these similar objects changed its use and the object's future?

Room of Remembrance (15 minutes)

Goals:
Visitors will enter the Room of Remembrance. They will notice the names on the walls and the Book of Remembrance. They will walk away with understanding that names represent individuals. Sometimes, there are no objects to learn from, only names.

Questions:

- What is the significance of the book of names? The names on the walls?

- Why do you think the names go from small and dark to large and faded? What does this say about memory?
- What is the correlation of the Book of Remembrance to the objects in the exhibit?
- Do you find the contents of this room powerful? Why? Why not?
- Why do you think it is important to have a Book of Remembrance in a Holocaust museum?
- Why do you think some of our local survivors feel this is the most meaningful room in the museum?

Instructions:

- Think of people in your own life, how would they want to be remembered?
- How do you want to be remembered?

Stories of Survival with Younger Visitors/Miller Tours

When using SOS with Miller tours, you will focus on certain artifacts/stories along the south wall (closest to TAS) and the west wall (the back wall of the exhibition).

Stand Up, Speak Out tours (20 mins)
Themes: family, memory, traditions

Objects/stories:

- The two sets of dominoes (Iraqi survivor Ohtman, Holocaust survivor Olga)
    - What do these two stories have in common? How are they different?
    - Two children who came from very different worlds both played the same game. Why might that be? What does that tell you about games and how children play?
    - Why are these dominoes so special to Ohtman and to Olga?
- Arthur Loeb's wallet
    - What is this wallet's story? How did it come to have a bullet hole in it? What does this wallet represent?
    - Why did this family choose to keep Arthur's wallet?
    - Do you have any possessions that have meaning beyond their function? Please share your story if you would like to.
- Cantor Fleischer's tefillin
    - What are tefillin? How are they used?
    - Why are these tefillin so important to this family?

Make a Difference (20 mins) and Be An Upstander (15 mins) tours
Themes: same as above, plus: change, loss

Objects/Stories:
Same as above, plus:

- Dominoes
    - These domino sets represent bittersweet memories for Ohtman and Olga. Games are usually fun. Why are these dominoes associated with sadness?
- Wallet
    - Arthur's wallet was damaged when he was injured fighting for Germany in World War I. Just 20 years later, he and his family were forced to flee Germany because they were Jewish. How do you think Arthur felt about this? What do you think this wallet represents to him?
- Tefillin
    - Connect this object/story to Judy Kolb/the little red dress in the suitcase activity
    - Cantor Fleisher and his family fled Germany and lived in the Shanghai ghetto for 8 years. They had to leave their home in Germany because they were Jewish. Tefillin are an visible sign of Jewish religious practice. Why were these tefillin so important to Cantor Fleisher? What do you think they represent to his family? Did the meaning/importance change when they got to Shanghai? What about when they got to the US?
- Cipora Katz, Queen Esther photo
    - Connect to Cipora Katz's story in the suitcase activity
    - Who was Queen Esther? What does she represent in the Purim story?
    - Why would Cipora, who survived the Holocaust as a young girl, dress as Queen Esther? What do you think Queen Esther represented to Cipora?
    - What qualities/characteristics do you think Queen Esther and Cipora might share?
    - How might dressing in this costume have inspired Cipora? How might it have inspired her friends and family?

Group Tours

Introduction

What they will see. What their experience will be like:

This exhibition showcases more than 60 never-before-seen personal items brought to America by Survivors of the Holocaust and genocide. You will engage with not only the actual objects, but paired with each artifact are oversized photographs with handwritten responses by Survivors or their family members.

Transition: Today you will see everyday objects that hold meaning of home, family, traditions, and also loss and displacement. You will read stories that address the challenges of being a refugee or immigrant, and we will reflect upon and have conversations about the human connections shared between us, whether a first generation American or 7th generation."

I am going to give you time to explore the galleries on your own but highlight a few object, images, and stories along the way. When you want to know more about something, please feel free to ask a question.

Tour Approach

The purpose of the adult group tour is to share a story with visitors. Guide visitors through the exhibition choosing 6-8 images and corresponding objects you wish to highlight. After you highlight an object/image in each section allow visitors to explore the rest of the area on their own before moving group forward. *See Appendix A for suggestions for key objects/images*

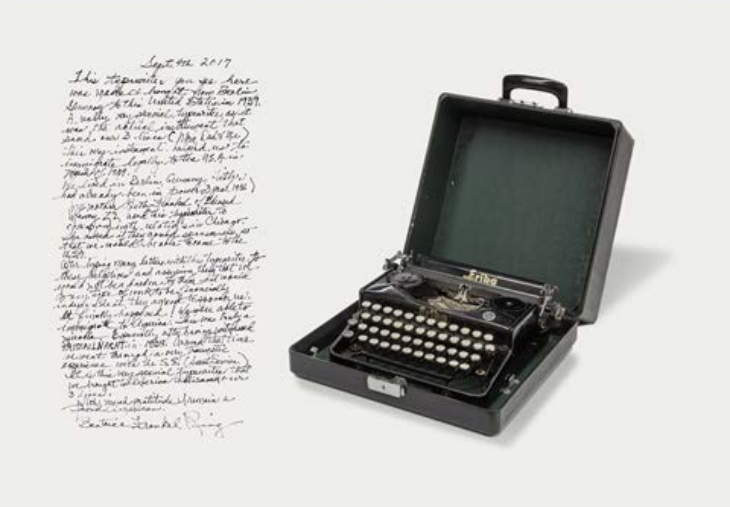
Close

- Have members of your group talk about one picture, object that made the biggest impression on them, and why?
- What would you like people to know about you? What object would you choose to tell your story?

Remind them of "Your Story, Our Story "and encourage them to participate at home.

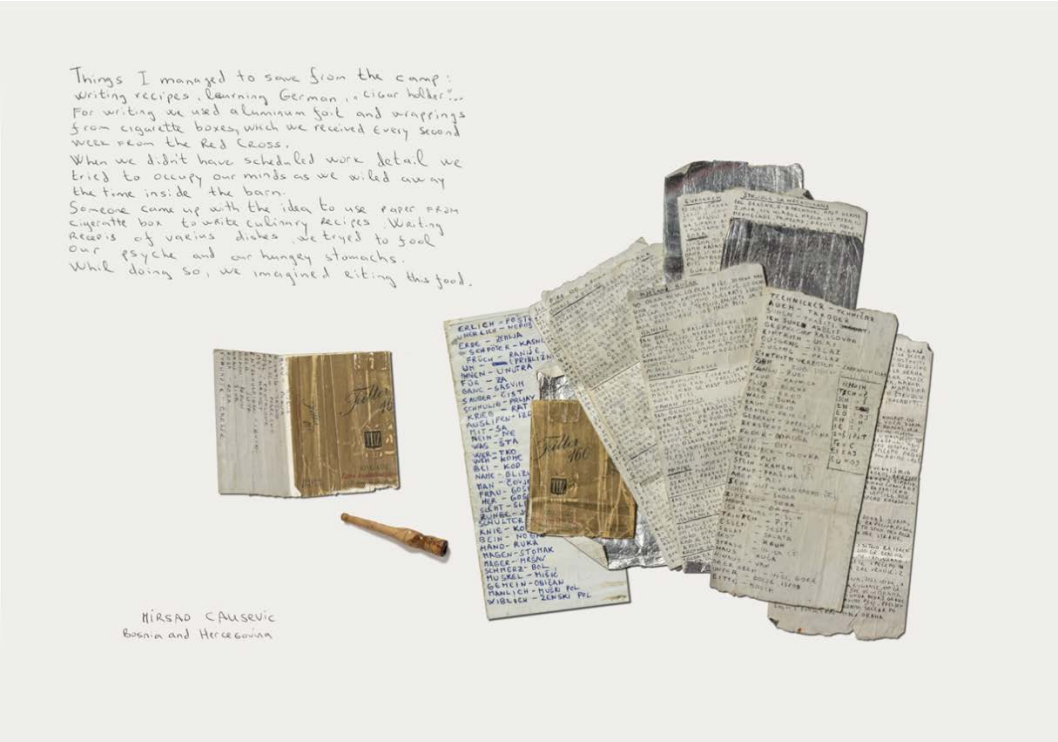
The Illinois Holocaust Museum has partnered with the Tenement Museum on *Your Story, Our Story*. The project features objects that tell personal stories of American immigration and migration. Share your story with us!

1) Take A Photo at home of an object that carries meaning for your or your family.
2) Go to https://yourstory.tenement.org/partners/ilholocaust to view the project and get started on your story.
3) Click on "Add Your Story +" and you will be able to upload the object and story to be part of this national project.



September 4, 2017

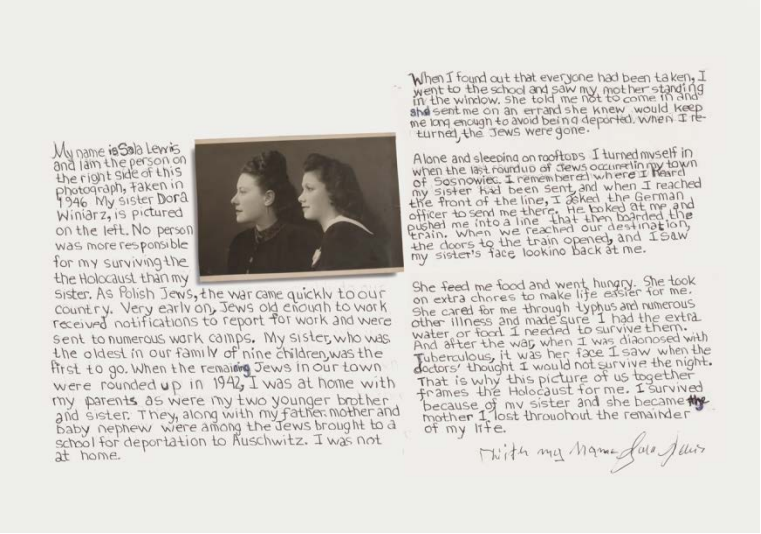
This typewriter that you see here was made and brought from Berlin, Germany to this United States in 1939. A really very special typewriter, as it was the actual instrument that saved our 3 lives (Mom, Dad, and Me). This instrument helped us to immigrate legally to the USA in March of 1939. We lived in Berlin, Germany, Hitler had already been in power for three years (1936). My mother, Betty Frankel, of blessed memory Z''L, used this typewriter to correspond with relatives in Chicago. She asked if they could sponsor us, so that we would be able to come to the USA. After typing many letters with this typewriter, to those relatives and assuring them that we would not be a burden to them but would do any type of work to be financially independent, they agreed to sponsor us. It finally happened! We were able to immigrate to America. This was truly a miracle. Especially after having witnessed Kristallnacht in 1938. Around that time we had a very traumatic experience with the S.S. (Secret Service). It is this very special typewriter we brought to America that saved 3 lives. With much gratitude I remain a proud American, Beatrice Frankel Ring



Things I managed to save from the camp: writing recipes, learning German, “cigar holder”... For writing we used aluminum foil and wrappings from cigarette boxes, which we received every second week from the Red Cross. When we didn’t have scheduled work detail we tried to occupy our minds as we wiled away the time inside the barn. Someone came up with the idea to use paper from cigarette box to write culinary recipes. Writing recipes of various dishes, we tried to fool our psyche and our hungry stomachs. While doing so we imagined eiting (eating) this food.

Mirsad Causevic

Bosnia and Hercegovina



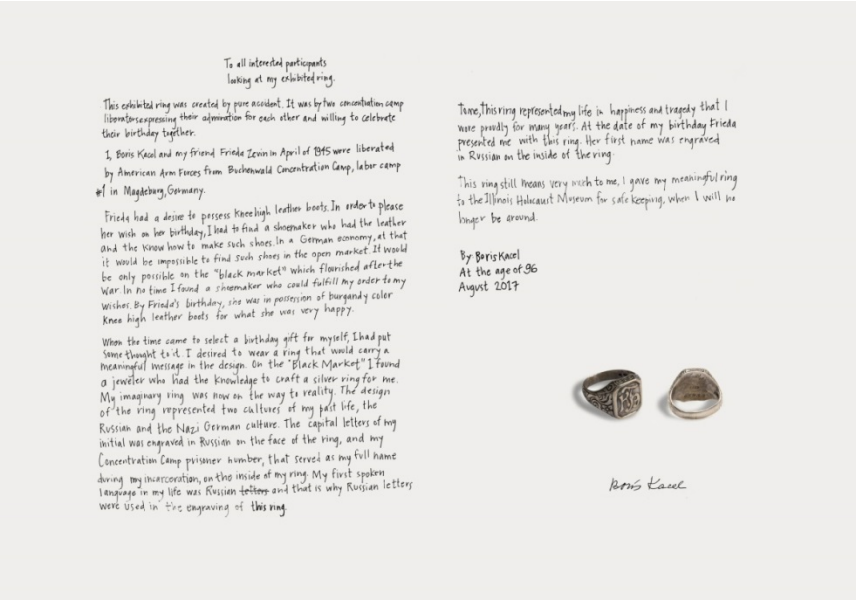
My name is Sala Lewis and I am the person pictured on the right side of this photograph, taken in 1946. My sister, Dora Winiarz, is pictured on the left. No person was more responsible for my surviving the Holocaust than my sister.

As Polish Jews, the war came quickly to our country. Very early on, Jews old enough to work received notifications to report for work and were sent to numerous work camps. My sister, who was the 3rd oldest in our family of nine children, was one of the first to go. When the remaining Jews in our town were rounded up in 1942, I was still at home with my parents as were my two younger brother and sister. They, along with my father, mother and baby nephew were among the Jews brought to a school for deportation to Auschwitz. I was not home.

When I found out where everyone had been taken, I went to the school and saw my mother standing in the window. She told me not to come in and sent me on an errand she knew would keep me long enough to avoid being deported. When I returned, the Jews were gone.

Alone, and sleeping on rooftops, I turned myself in when the last roundup of Jews occurred in my town of Sosnowiec. I remembered where I heard my sister had been sent and when I reached the front of the line, I asked the German officer to send me there. He looked at me and pushed me into a line that then boarded the train. When we reached our destination, the doors to the train opened, and I saw my sister's face looking back at me.She fed me food and went hungry. She took on extra chores to make life easier for me. She cared for me through typhus and numerous other illnesses and made sure that I had extra water or food I needed to survive them. And after the war, when I was diagnosed with Tuberculosis, it was her face I saw when the doctors thought I would not survive the night.

That is why this picture of us together frames the Holocaust for me. I survived because of my sister and she became the mother I lost throughout the remainder of my life



To all interested participants looking at my exhibited ring.

This exhibited ring was created by pure accident. It was by two concentration camp liberators expressing their admiration for each other and willing to celebrate their birthday together.

I, Boris Kacel and my friend Frieda Zevin in April of 1945 were liberated by American Arm Forces from Buchenwald Concentration Camp, labor camp #1 in Magdeburg, Germany.

Frieda had a desire to possess knee high leather boots. In order to please her wish on her birthday, I had to find a shoemaker who had the leather and the know how to make such shoes. In a German economy, at that it would be impossible to find such shoes in the open market. It would be only possible on the "black market" which flourished after the war. In no time I found a shoemaker who could fulfill my order to my wishes. By Frieda's birthday, she was in possession of burgundy color knee high leather boots for what she was very happy.

When the time came to select a birthday gift for myself, I had put some thought to it. I desired to wear a ring that would carry a meaningful message in the design. On the "Black Market" I found a jeweler who had the knowledge to craft a silver ring for me. My imaginary ring was now on the way to reality. The design of the ring represented two cultures of my past life, the Russian and the Nazi German culture. The capital letters of my initial was engraved in Russian on the face of the ring, and my Concentration Camp prisoner number, that served as my full name during my incarceration, on the inside of my ring. My first spoken language in my life was Russian and that is why Russian letters were used in the engraving of this ring.

To me, this ring represented my life in happiness and tragedy that I wore proudly for many years. At the date of my birthday Frieda presented me with this ring. Her first name was engraved in Russian on the inside of the ring.

This ring still means very much to me. I gave my meaningful ring to the Illinois Holocaust Museum for safekeeping when I will no longer be around.

By Boris Kacel
At the age of 96
August 2017



(Sweater)

Raissa Umutoni's dress (6/12/1994)

Raissa was three when the 1994 took her life.

This dress was white and Raissa wore it when she dressed nicely for event that happened in the evenings. This reminds how my husband was a provider to our family. My children were always dressed properly and nicely. Their dad travelled a lot and would buy clothes and shoes for them and I. Today, when I go to the mall, I feel so desperate to not have them and spoil them with nice dresses. At a certain point, I could spend a year without going to the mall. Why go? To do what? Raissa and Clarisse, my daughters were always neat and loved to dress up and enjoyed it. Their dad allowed them to do so; probably God knew they needed that attention. They had 3 years/5years to be spoiled.

Dear friends attending this exhibit;

Please let your children enjoy your love and presence! Let them know you love them. Spend enough time with them; do not let any occasion without making them happy. They need it, deserve it. Because, there is the thing God never tells us: "how long we have them or we are with tem!!" Thank you Thaddee, Love you!

Immaculee