ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM
& EDUCATION CENTER





# Stories of Survival

## OBJECT · IMAGE · MEMORY



## Teacher's Guide

PRE AND POST VISIT PACKET

## ABOUT THE MUSEUM

Built with the leadership of local Holocaust Survivors, Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center is the largest facility in the Midwest (and the third largest in the world) dedicated to preserving the memories of those lost in the Holocaust and to teaching current generations to fight hatred, prejudice, indifference, and genocide in today's world.

Through world-class exhibitions and programs, the Museum inspires individuals and organizations and provides a universal call to action: Take history to heart. Take a stand for humanity.

*Stories of Survival: Object. Image. Memory.* is a project of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center and photographer Jim Lommasson.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Stories of Survival: Object. Image. Memory.* is supported by the Breakthrough Fund: An Innovation of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago.

The exhibition and associated publication are also made possible with funding from the Lester & Edward Anixter Family Foundation, The Chicago Community Trust, the Women's Leadership Committee of Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center, Abraham and Irene Horn, Nicor Gas, George and Judith Giddens, and Flyback Productions. The Golder Family Foundation supports all Illinois Holocaust Museum special exhibitions.

Thank you to the members of our Educator Advisory Committee for the gifts of your time, passion, and knowledge in contribution to this publication, and your steadfast commitment to the mission and work of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center.

A heartfelt thank you to Susan Berger (Jahn Elementary School), Susan Blaul (Hyde Park Day School), Gina Caneva (Lindblom Math and Science Academy), Jennifer Ciok (Sullivan High School/UMOJA Student Development Corporation), Amy Corey (Grayslake Middle School), Kristin Gottschalk (Iroquois Community School), Anne Hoverson (St. Paul of the Cross School), Stephanie Krzeminski (Oswego East High School), Leah Perez (CISC Northtown Academy), and Keisha Rembert (Crone Middle School).

# A MESSAGE TO OUR TEACHERS

Dear Educator:

Thank you for choosing to visit Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center (IHMEC) with your students. We look forward to welcoming you!

Your students will be exploring *Stories of Survival,* an immersive exhibition that will provide an object-, image-, and inquiry-based learning experience. Students will be invited to engage with everyday objects that hold meaning of home, family, and traditions, and also loss and displacement. Students will explore and think critically about the challenges of being a refugee or immigrant, discussing the human connections shared between us, whether a first generation or 7th generation American.

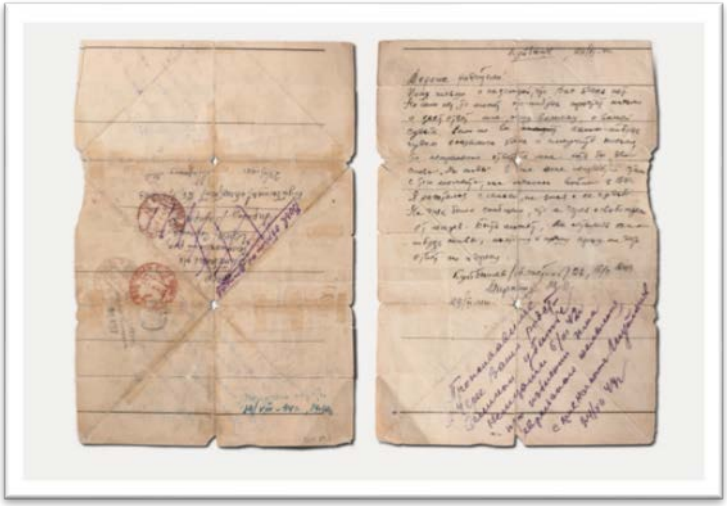
With more than 60 personal artifacts brought to America by Survivors of the Holocaust and genocides that occurred in Armenia, Bosnia, Cambodia, Iraq, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Syria, the exhibition showcases objects and written reflections on their meaning through the perspectives of Survivors or their family members.

It is our hope that the learning that follows enriches your students' lives and assists them in deepening the messages gleaned from the exhibit. The objects in this exhibition have travelled the world, sometimes seeing great tragedy, having narrow escapes, and representing fragments of everyday life. They are a reflection of their owners' journeys and family histories. And though the objects and memories start from very different origins, from Germany to Belgium to Armenia to Syria, common threads bind them all together. These are the threads that bind us all, the common story of moving to a new land, building a new life, yet holding on to the past. We are all connected to these stories; we have them in our own families.

We hope you and your students have a meaningful visit. We look forward to seeing you at the Museum.

The Education Team

# OBJECT. IMAGE. MEMORY.



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

## 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.

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.



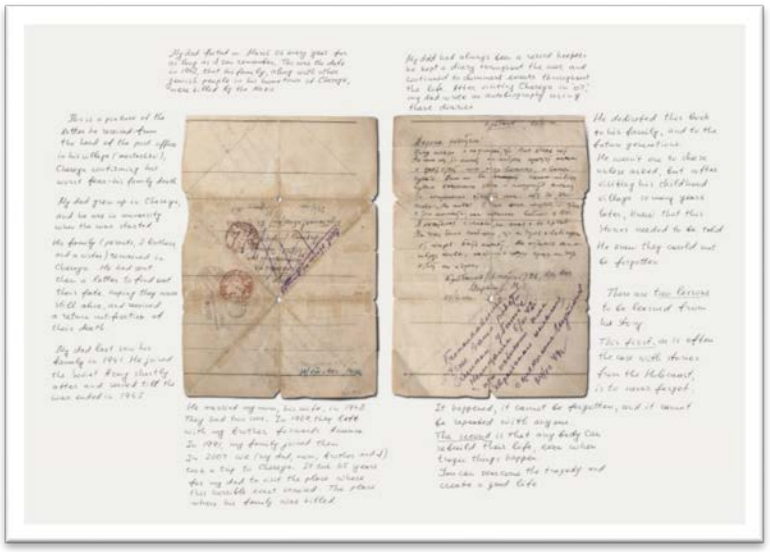
(2014.39.2)
Mikhail, 1940, Soviet Union

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, Lomasson 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.

Lomasson 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 the 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. The 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 6 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 2 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.

# PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES



## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What are the roles of objects and images as history? Objects and images as memory? Objects and images as storytellers?
- How do objects and images construct our understanding of a person/place/event?
- How do objects and images of the past contribute to the present and future?
- What can we learn about ourselves and humanity through the objects and images of others?
- How is humanity impacted by what is left behind?



## KEYWORDS INTRODUCTION

This could be done as a gallery walk or a dice game activity to do with a partner, with each number representing a different response.

### Vocabulary List

- Object/Artifact
- Memory
- Survival
- Genocide
- Refugee
- Immigrant

# ROLE OF OBJECTS IN HISTORY

A few years ago, the Smithsonian Museum ran an exhibit called *History of the World in 1,000 Objects* which was inspired from a very successful radio series and book that the BBC and the British Museum collaborated on called *A History of the World in 100 Objects*." [1] "The idea is to show there's a value in stuff that's not just monetary," said Richard Kurin, editor of the Smithsonian's 'History of America in 101 Objects,' published in 2013. "Navigating history on a chronological timeline suggests an artificial orderliness, like a film unspooled frame by frame: Looking at objects makes you think stuff wasn't necessarily obvious and overdetermined — someone had to put it together. It gets at a fundamental aspect: Why did that thing come into being?" In a sense, an object can tell a story, and provide us with the means to reconsider our past in light of what we value today.[2] Whether a family heirloom, an acceptance letter to college, or one's dining room table, objects have layers of meaning that could span generations.

## Activity Objective

Before your students embark on the exhibit, we want them to reflect upon their relationship to history and the objects or "stuff" that connect us to the past. Either intentionally or unintentionally, stories are being written in our minds or forming the assumptions we make about the world around us.

In the first part of this lesson, students view a variety of historical images. Students provide their observations and assumptions about the object.

Students learn and discuss the observations and assumptions they make and stories they weave based on objects.

## Set- Up & Materials

Print out the image worksheet in Appendix A, double-sided. Alternatively, you could project the images provided through PowerPoint.

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[1] https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/28/sunday-review/object-lessons-in-history.html

[2] Ibid.

**Step-By-Step Procedure**

a. Distribute image worksheets to each student.

b. Ask students the following. Give them no more than 30 seconds for each question.

- OBSERVE – What do you notice first? What do you notice that you didn't expect? What do you notice that you can't explain? Look again; what do you notice now that you didn't before?
- REFLECT – Where do you think this came from? Why do you think someone kept this object? What event do you think is reflected through this object? Why do you think this object is important? What can you learn from examining this object?
- QUESTIONS – What do you wonder about – Who? What? Where? Why? When?



## IT'S ALL ABOUT THE STORY

Prior to this class, students will be asked to bring in one object that is very important to them.

Objective: Have students discuss/write about a meaningful object. Discuss the difference between monetary value and personal value.

Procedure:

1. The teacher will place an important object in front of the room. Students will have five minutes to discuss the object.
    a. What is it?
    b. What is the value of this object?
    c. Is it important?
2. After the five minutes, the teacher will share the "story" behind the object and explain the value of the object.
3. Students will then share their objects with their small groups. Each student should be given 2 minutes to explain their object and why it is important to them.

4. After each student has had the opportunity to share their object with their group, the class will discuss the difference between monetary value and personal value. Have the students discuss which type of value is more important.

5. After the discussion, have each student write a short story about their object.
   - Why is it so important?
   - What does this object say about you as a person?
   - What symbolic or historical meaning does this object contain?



## QUICK WRITE & DISCUSSION

Writing prompt: Pick an object you have that would tell the story of you. Write "your story" from the point of view of this object.

1. Provide 5-10 minutes of writing time.
2. Give students time to read what they wrote and make any edits.
3. Share with a peer.
4. Class discussion of what gives an object power. How and what do objects communicate about us?



## CHALK TALK

1. Teacher prints images of a few of the objects/images from the exhibit and glues onto butcher paper. (See Appendix B for suggested objects/images)
2. Teachers put this question on the board: How is humanity impacted by this object and its story?
3. Students will silently rotate through the images and answer the question on the board on the butcher paper.
4. After completion, students will now go back around and read the comments of their peers and follow up with a comment or a question.
5. Debrief with students. What did they read that impacted them the most?

# POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES



## REFLECTION PROTOCOL

1. Break the students into pairs.
2. Each member of your student pairs should speak for one minute in response to the prompt: ***"What were the two to three most meaningful objects and stories you learned about in the Stories of Survival exhibition? Why?"*** Even if your students can't think of anything else to say, they must keep talking about the exhibit.
    - The other members of the pair must listen closely, but may not speak. It is very important for the listener to pay attention, as at the end of the activity the listener will be asked to share a part of what his/her partner said with the class.
3. After about a minute, have students switch and the other partner will speak.
4. When you ask the partners to switch, repeat the question.
5. After both members have had a turn, ask students to repeat the activity, this time with the prompt, ***"How do these objects and stories help to reinforce or challenge your thinking about the time period, the people, and event?"***
6. When you ask the partners to switch, repeat the question.
7. After both members of the pair have had their turn, bring the class back together.
8. Debrief with the class as a whole, going around the room and asking students to share one thing their partner said that struck them most deeply or was surprising.

*Connect and Extend:* From the object and story students found most meaningful they should think about how it connects to their own lives. How does someone else's object fit into their life? Connect to the object through their own narrative.



# SIX WORD MEMOIRS

In 2008, a book entitled *Not Quite What I Was Planning: Six Word Memoirs by Writers Famous & Obscure* (edited by Smith Magazine) was published. The book is a compilation of hundreds of 6-word memoirs that were submitted to the book's publisher. *Not Quite What I Was Planning* remained on The New York Times best seller list for six weeks. This book demonstrates that:

- Everyone has a story to tell!
- It doesn't take a lot of words to communicate emotion and ideas.

Through this activity students should synthesize their learning by examining the power of word choice as they write six-word memoirs either on a chosen object from the exhibition or from their own lives.

Students' writing should:

- BE CONCISE. Concise writing expresses a lot in a few words.
- CONVEY TONE. The reader should know the writer's attitude toward the subject. Writing style can be informal or contain slang.

Students' writing may:

- Utilize literary terms
- Describe personality/values
- Describe hobbies
- Refer to an experience or action
- Include strong verbs, adjectives, or specific nouns

Debrief - Discuss the memoirs and their effectiveness related to the object and story.



## OBJECT POEM

Have your students choose an object from the exhibition or their own lives for the subject of their poem.

Begin the word gathering steps below. Word gathering involves gathering words and ideas to use later in writing their poem. Let the words flow, and write as much as possible for each step in the time allowed.

Word Gathering

Step 1: Where did you find the object? Where did it come from? Describe place and setting.

Step 2: Describe the object. What is its size, shape, color, texture, etc.?

Step 3: Alter perspective and describe the object further. For example, your student might turn the object inside-out, wear a blindfold as they examine it, look at it from a distance, hold it close to their face or stand over it and look at it from above.

Step 4: Describe how the object is like you. What do you have in common? Think about personality traits, physical characteristics, experiences, etc.

Step 5: Describe how the object is like a family member. What do they have in common? Think about personality traits, physical characteristics, experiences, etc.

Step 6: What does this object mean to you? What does it represent or symbolize? Out of all the objects you could have chosen, why did you choose to write about this particular one?

Step 7: Name the object. Simply state what it is.



## FEATURE STORY

**Part 1.** Your students are young reporters. The editor gives them their next assignment: write a feature article "interviewing" an object. The interview can either be with an object from the exhibition or an object in their own lives.

Tips for writing story:

- Have a strong lead that grabs readers and makes them want to read on.
- Have a strong narrative. Highlight the object's story. Use quotes from that object. How do you think the object changed over the course of its life? How is it different after its survival then beforehand?

- Combine facts and opinion, with a focus on the human interest side of the story.
- Organize the story in a variety of ways (i.e., chronologically, narrative fashion).

**Part 2.**

1. Have students pair up, share their story, and receive feedback.
2. Have the students help each other create a meaningful or memorable headline.
3. Have students help each other and photograph the object for their story. They can use one that already exists or take one on their own.
4. When all the students receive their feedback, have them revise and rewrite their story till they reach the final stage of their story.

**Part 3.** Encourage student publication!

- Hang with accompanying photographs on a classroom wall or on a school-wide bulletin board.
- Collect in a class publication.
- Submit to the high school or local newspaper.
- Share via social media on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter with IHMEC - @IHMEC #IHMEC #StoriesOfSurvival



## YOUR STORY, OUR STORY

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 or school 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.

# Appendix A – Role of Object in History

| OBJECT | OBSERVATIONS, REFLECTIONS & QUESTIONS |
|---|---|
|   | |
|  | |
|  | |


Bell & Howell
ZOOMATIC


조 월 친 선
TRIỀU VIỆT
HỮU NGHỊ


LADDER 3
© AP

# Appendix A - Object Key

| | |
|---|---|
|  | In 1787, responding to an ongoing shortage in official coinage, some British merchants and tradesmen began producing their own privately minted coins and tokens for local circulation. Cheap and accessible, these objects proved an ideal vehicle for political propaganda. Abolitionist and antislavery designs proliferated in London and British Territory. This halfpenny token, which was manufactured in Birmingham, bears the seal of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade on the obverse (or front). A pair of clasped hands with the inscription “May slavery & oppression cease throughout the world” appears on the reverse. |
|  | The enameled mug was one of more than 12,000 pieces of kitchenware that Nazis stole from people sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp in occupied Poland<br><br>A false bottom concealed a gold necklace and a gold ring inlaid with stones. |
|  | Civil Rights activist Rosa Parks was also seamstress. This is the dress Parks was sewing before she was arrested for not giving up her seat on a segregated bus on Dec. 1, 1955.<br>Parks’ dress is part of the Black Fashion Museum Collection that was donated to NMAAHC. |




On November 22, 1963, the day of President John F. Kennedy's visit to Dallas, Abraham Zapruder initially left his camera at home. But his secretary convinced him to return home for this 8mm Bell and Howell Zoomatic movie camera to record the Presidential visit. Around noon, Zapruder left his office with the camera and went to nearby Dealey Plaza. At 12:30 P.M., he filmed the Kennedy motorcade just before, during, and immediately after the shooting. The 26 seconds of footage shot on this camera constitute the only complete film record of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.




Sam Johnson, a decorated Air Force Colonel who spent seven of his 29 years of service detained as a prisoner of war in the brutal northern Vietnamese detention complex called Hỏa Lò. The facility is now best remembered as the "Hanoi Hilton."

For the duration of Col. Johnson's time in Hỏa Lò, the cup was of one of the only worldly possessions he could claim. The cup in particular became a cherished symbol of hope in his sustained struggle against creeping despair.

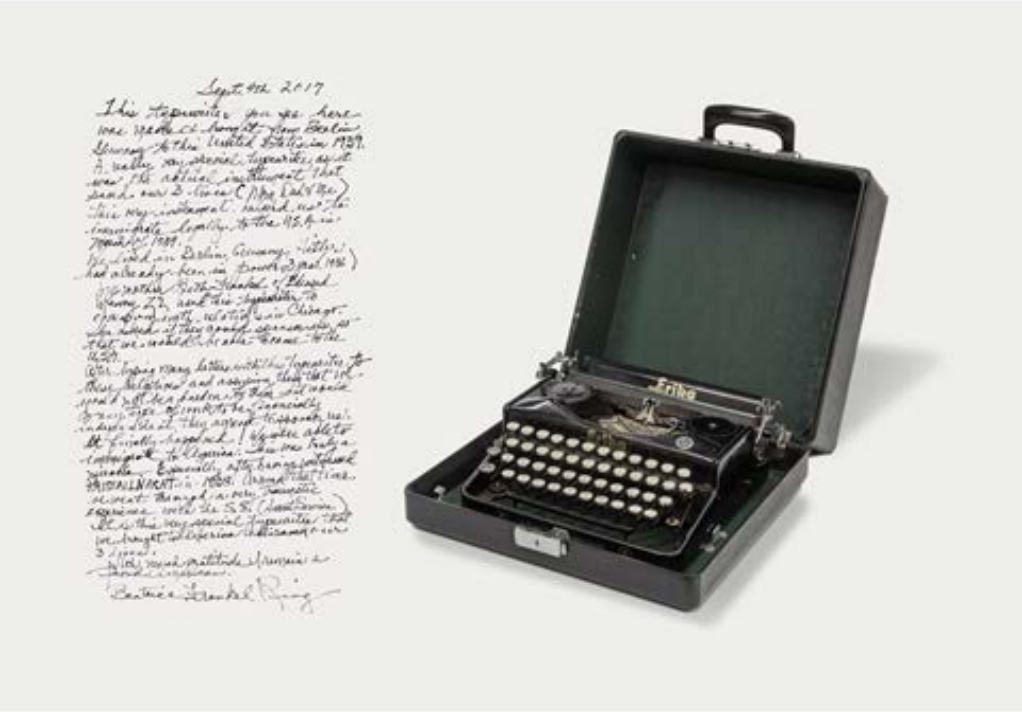
"We would hold our cups against the wall," Johnson said, "and they served as amplifiers to hear the tap code." The tap code was a system of Morse-like finger taps that allowed the prisoners to communicate whole sentences to each other, one painstakingly transmitted letter at a time."




Twelve members of Ladder 3 were lost while evacuating civilians from the North Tower on Sept. 11, 2001.

The front of the apparatus was shorn off in the collapse of the towers. Its main body and ladders were damaged beyond repair and some of the company's rescue tools are entangled in the vehicle.

# Appendix B




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,

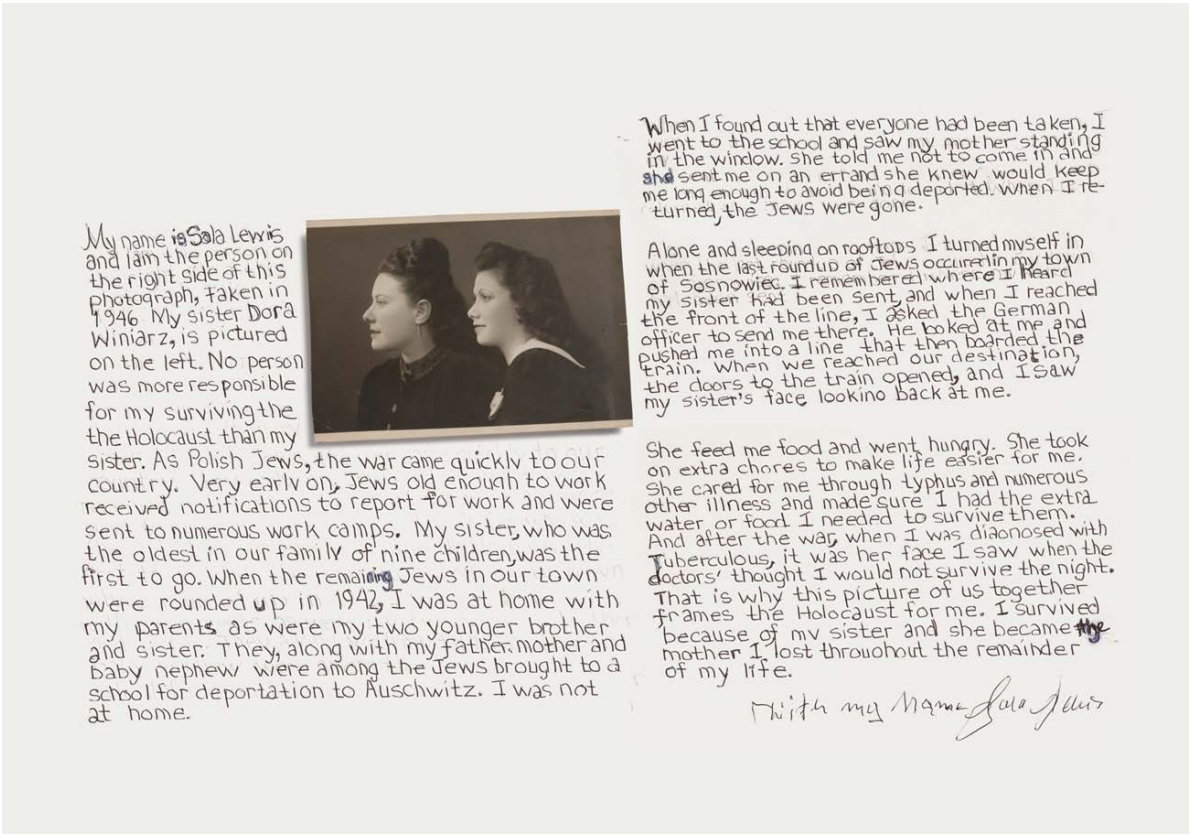
Beatrice Frankel Ring




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 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 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 oldest in our family of nine children, was the first to go. When the remaining Jews in our town were rounded up in 1942, I was 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 at home.

When I found out that 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 she 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 feed 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 illness and made sure I had the extra water or food I needed to survive them. And after the war, when I was diagnosed with Tuberculous, 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.

With my Name Sala Lewis

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.

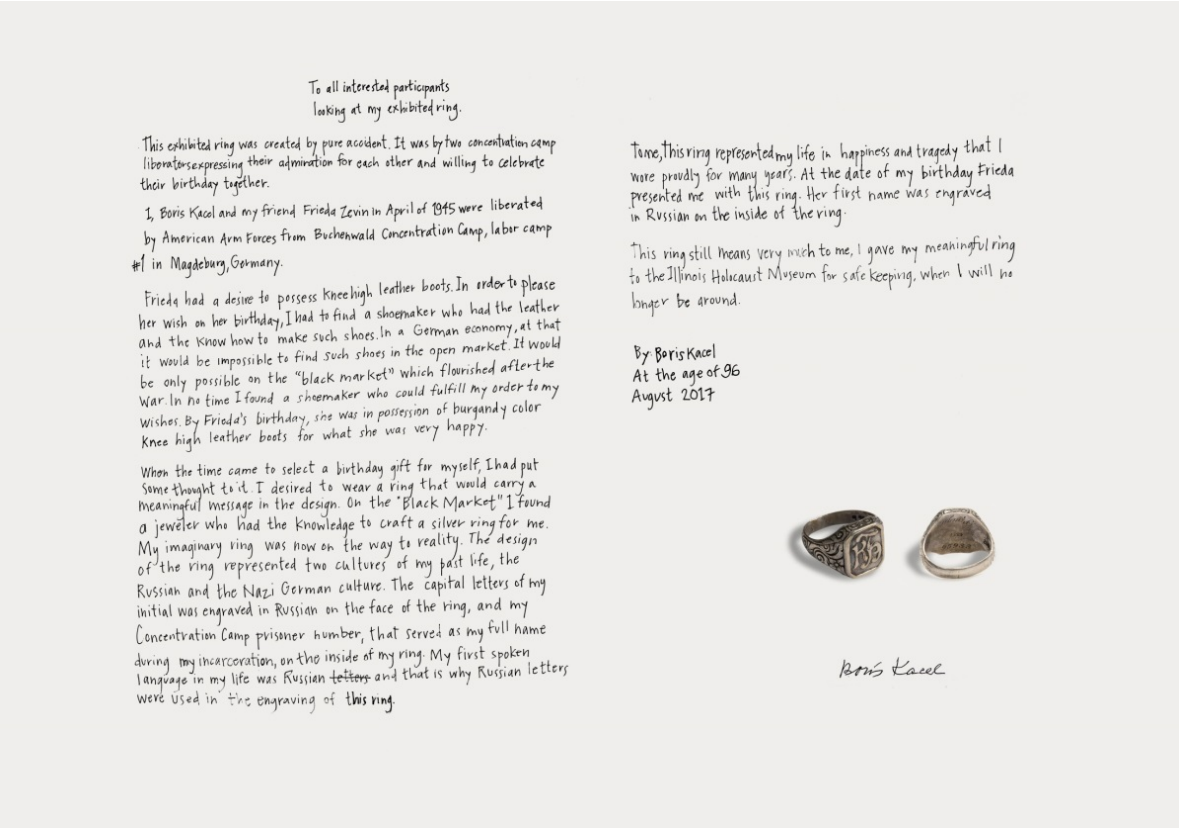
When I found out where everyone had been taken, I went to the school and saw my mother standing in the window. She told me not to come in and sent me on an errand she knew would keep me long enough to avoid being deported. When I returned, the Jews were gone.

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 burgandy 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 ~~tettors~~ and that is why Russian letters were used in the engraving of this ring.

Tame, 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 safe keeping, when I will no longer be around.

By Boris Kacel
At the age of 96
August 2017

Boris Kacel

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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