Stories of Survival
OBJECT · IMAGE · MEMORY
The origins of this coin and even its significance to my grandmother are unknown to me. What is known, Hripsime was a young girl when the Armenian Genocide began. She somehow found safety as a housekeeper with a wealthy Turkish family, while her friends, family and community disappeared. She never talked of her experiences but I was told she was reluctant to leave the safety of her situation, eventually persuaded to leave the safety of her situation, perhaps by force, by her brother and sister.

Hripsime came to America, to Racine, Wisconsin in an arranged marriage to Ayak Akgulian, a man who was nearly twice her age who was still dealing with the murder of his family in the Genocide. At Avak’s insistence, Hripsime took the name of his first wife, Zarouhy.

My grandmother gave this coin to her namesake, Laura Hripsime, who many of us believe, maintains a mystical embrace with my grandmother.

I’ve often imagined at what point did Hripsime acquire this coin? Was it a remnant of coins to secure her passage? Was it money given to her by her Turkish employer? Or perhaps she stole it from that same family?

Mark Akgulian
9/22/2017
The origins of this coin & even its significance to my grandmother are unknown to me. What is known, Hripsime was a young girl when the Armenian genocide began. She somehow found safety as a housekeeper with a wealthy Turkish family, while her friends, family & community disappeared. She never talked of her experiences but I was told she was reluctant to leave the safety of her situation, eventually persuaded to leave the safety of her situation, perhaps by force, by her brother & sister.

Hripsime came to America, to Racine, Wis., in an arranged marriage to Avak Aroutlian, a man nearly twice her age who was still dealing with the murder of his family in the genocide. At Avak's insistence, Hripsime took the name of his 1st wife, Zaraouny.

My grandmother gave this coin to her namesake, Laura Hripsime, who many of us believe maintains a mystical embrace with my grandmother.

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Made Aroutlian 9/22/2013
I brought this dominoes with me from Baghdad because it’s mean the great times I spent with my friends. I chose this dominoes from all other stuff because I know those old times may not back again. When I went to see my friends for last time before leaving my country, they gave this dominoes to me to keep it with me to remind me about all great times we spent together.
I brought this Dominoes with me from Baghdad because it's meant for great times I spent with my FRANDIS. I chose this Dominoes from all other stuff because I knew these old times may not back again. When I went to see my FRANDIS for last time before leaving my country, they gave this Dominoes to me to keep it with me to remind me about all great times we spent together.
Mariam Balian (née Kibarian)
Banderma, Ottoman Empire, April 17, 1897 - Melvindale, Michigan, December 1982

Elizabeth Knekleian (née Kibarian)
Banderma, Ottoman Empire, June 21, 1904 - Dennellon, Florida, January 15, 1995

Wrappers (Bohça)
Banderma, Ottoman Empire, late 19th century
On loan courtesy of Greg Bedian

Reflections by Greg Bedian, grandson of Elizabeth, great nephew of Mariam

They once wrapped the things
The girls took to the baths
Now they are sentinels
Preserving their memory
Shrouding their pain
Reminding us all
Of what life might have been

In memory of Elizabeth and Mariam Kibarian

(Translation from Armenian)
They once wrapped the things
The girls took to the baths
Now they are sentinels
Preserving their memory
Shielding their pain
Reminding us all
Of what life might have been

Δ Εισαγωγή
Εισαγωγή Εφετέρων
Εισαγωγή Επιστολών

@ {horse}
@ {horse}
@ {horse}
Family reunion: 20 years later!

On Wednesday, December 26, 2007, I stood among hundreds of my village children, waiting to be introduced to the students who warmly welcomed me to the village I had been gone for 20 years. As I stood with my left hand in my pocket, right hand with a pen on my chin, and attentively listening as beautiful school children singing and clapping as they welcomed me and two of my American friends namely Brandi Reissenweber and her husband Chris Curl, there was so much occupying my mind. First, I was happy for the reunion with my family and people of my beloved village and also excited for the fact that I was proudly standing from the field that reminded me about all my childhood.

Pongborong was occupied as a cattle camp during the rainy season. When the cattle are taken close to the River Nile during the dry season, children from the surrounding villages would gather there for activities. Second, those school children knew I was coming from America and expected me to help them with education. Finally, I knew my visit to the country that was set to gain independence in 4 years to come was the beginning of my long term responsibilities because I am a member of war survivors that was often referred as “seed of the nation” by our Southern Sudanese leaders who were fighting the Islamic-Arab led government of Sudan.

Peter Magai Bul
October 10, 2017
In front of me from right is my niece Abul Kuer Bul
Family Reunion: 20 Years Later!

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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 eating this food.

Mirsad Causevic
Bosnia and Herzegovina

On July 20, 1992, Mirsad was captured by Serb forces and was sent first to Omarska concentration camp and then a second camp at Manjaca. After the Manjaca that camp was closed under pressure from the UN, Mirsad spent six months in Croatia until he was able to immigrate to the US and settled in Chicago. Both of his brothers were killed in the war; one is still missing.
Things I managed to save from the camp:
writing recipes, learning German, saving letters. 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, we tried to occupy our minds as we waited away the time inside the barn. Someone came up with the idea to use paper from cigarette boxes to write culinary recipes. Writing recipes of various dishes, we tried to feed our psyche and our hungry stomachs. While doing so, we imagined eating the food.
Mirsad Causevic
Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina, January 24, 1969

Handmade Playing Cards
Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992
On loan courtesy of Mirsad Causevic

Reflections by Mirsad Causevic

We would use whatever we could to create distractions from our current situation—an empty box of crackers became a chessboard or a deck of playing cards—anything to help to pass the time.

Of course, all this had to be done secretly. Nevertheless, this has helped as to draw attention, at least in short moments, from our cruel reality.

Mirsad Causevic
Bosnia and Herzegovina
We would use whatever we could to create distractions from our current situation – an empty box of matches became a chessboard or a deck of playing cards – anything to help to pass the time.

Of course, all this had to be done secretly. Nevertheless, this has helped us to draw attention, at least in short moments, from our cruel reality.
This necklace pendant is an inheritance by my grandmother from my father’s side, given to me. It is a representation of my family for generations.

Duong Siyin

(Translation from Khmer)
Siyan Duong
Cambodia, January 30, 1975 -

Ceremonial Urn
Cambodia, 20th century
On loan courtesy of Siyan Duong

Reflections by Siyan Duong

This Khmer copper urn is a gift from my great-grandparents who had kept it for generations.

It is the souvenir I love most because my great-grandparents gave it to me before they passed away.

Duong Siyan
(Translation from Khmer)
My name is Gabriel Dut. I took this picture of my father and I in Juba, Republic of South Sudan in the year 2007. My father name is Atem Dut. He was my hero and role model in life. I only spent a very short time at home with my father and mother and soon were separated by the civil war in Sudan which forced me to leave my village at a young age of seven years old. For the next 20 years I lived in various refugee camps in East Africa. I walked for 3 ½ months from South Sudan to Ethiopia in 1987. I didn't know if my parents were dead or alive since I left them. I was in the refugee camps with thousands of other kids from all around the country living and taking care of ourselves. The United States decided to bring some of us to America as part of their group called "The Lost Boys of Sudan." After so many years of not knowing what became of my parents and younger siblings, I heard that after I left, the war reached our villages and they had to flee too and eventually settled in Uganda border with South Sudan. They spent years there while I was in Kenya with the rest of the lost boys. When I became a citizen of the United States in 2007, my first priority was to go and visit my parents who were living in Juba at the time. The picture of my dad in my head was of a younger person but he was now older in age after 20 years. The excitement was unbearable and could not sleep on the plane on the way to see them. My mom could not recognize me when she saw me for the first time after 20 years and thought she told me later I look like a person she knew in the refugee camps where she was. As customary the picture is just me and my dad sitting while he is having his favorite drink. The words of advice that my dad told me were unforgettable. He told me to be a good man and treat others with dignity and respect. Told me to get married and find a wife. This ended being the last time I saw my dad because in the year 2010, my dad was killed by cattle rustlers in our village. He didn’t want to live in refugee camps anymore and want to go back home. We decided that we should respect his wishes although we knew the villages had insecurity. He was a man who makes his decisions and live by them. Although that was the last time I saw him, I was in peace that my dad did not pass away before we saw each other. I remember only the good times when I was five or six and the good stories he used to tell me. Life is what it is. I now have children of my own, I hope my 2 boys have some of the qualities of my dad. There are no words that describe the love between parents and their children. It is a universal language that everyone feels. I love you dad.

Gabriel Atem Dut
My name is Gabriel Dut. I took this picture of my father and I in Juba, Republic of South Sudan in the year 2004. My father's name is Atem Dut. He was my hero and role model in life. I only spent a very short time at home with my father and mother, and then I was separated by the civil war in Sudan which forced my family to leave my village. I was a young boy of seven years old. For the next 20 years, I lived in several refugee camps in East Africa. I walked for 3½ months from South Sudan to Ethiopia in 1987. I didn't know if my parents were dead or alive since I left them. I was in the refugee camps with thousands of other kids from all around the country living and being cruel to each other. The United States decided to bring some of us to America as part of the government's policy to repatriate the last of the Sudanese. After so many years of not knowing what became of my parents and younger siblings, I heard that after I left, the war reached our village, and many people had to flee the war and eventually settled in Uganda under the United Nations. They spent years there while I was in America with the rest of the last group. When I became a citizen of the United States in 2004, my first priority was to go and visit my parents who were living in Juba at the time. The fashion of my dad in my head was to a younger person, but he was now older in age after 1985. The excitement was unbearable and couldn't wait to see my parents. She saw me for the first time after 20 years and forgot me. She told me later I look like a peasant. She knew in the refugee camps where she was. As customary, the picture is just me and my dad sitting while he is having his favorite drink. The words of advice that my dad told me were unforgettable. He told me to be a good man and treat others with charity and respect. I told me to get married, start a family, and find a job. This made history. This last time I saw my dad because in 2010, my dad was killed by cattle raiders in our village. He didn't want to live in refugee camps anymore and went to go back home. We decided that we should respect his wishes although we knew the vilager had sanctions. He was a man who makes his decisions and lives by them. Although that was the last time I saw him, I was in peace that my dad didn't give up before we saw each other. I remember my father's good times when I saw him. We used to play cards and read stories, he used to tell me life is what it is. I must have children of my own. I hope my two sons have many more children of my own. The memories of my dad: he made me realize the love between parents and their children. It's a universal language that everyone feels. I love you dad.

GABRIEL ATTEM DUT
Elyse Gasigwa
Rwanda, November 24, 1958 -

Swahili to English Phrase Book
Rwanda, 1994
On loan courtesy of Elyse Gasigwa

Reflections by Elyse Gasigwa

This “English & Swahili Dictionary” helped me to learn English.
Elyse Gasigwa
This "English & Swahili Dictionary" helped me to learn English.
Kasim Hamo
Sinjar, Mosul, Iraq, January 1, 1989 -

Airline Ticket
Iraq, 2012
On loan courtesy of Kasim Hamo

Reflections by Kasim Hamo

This is my ticket from when I first traveled from Iraq to the United States on July 4, 2012. I have kept this ticket in my wallet for the past 6 years because it reminds me of when I first left my country. I stayed one day in Jordan and the second day I went to New York then Chicago and finally arrived in Nebraska. Now I study Biochemistry and Pre-Pharmacy at UNL. I will graduate in May of 2018.

Kasim Hamo, 1/1/2018

In 2010, after graduating high school, Kasim began working with the US Army in Iraq as a translator. His work made it possible for him to move as a permanent resident to Nebraska in 2012. Hoping to be the first in his family to graduate college, Kasim began studying biochemistry at the University of Nebraska. In 2017, he became a US citizen, and in May 2018, graduated with his bachelor’s degree.
للطائرة الطائرة التي سافرت بها لأول مرة من العراق
الإيرل لو بوم لا/17، نعمة هفاك للطائرة في الممثلة
سلم مارون 7 سنوات ون أول منظمة عصر بالنسبة إلي
نادر بلمج الوشري ويعيد بوم كاملا في لاورن
وفي الثاني存在于 السفر إلى نيويورك ون نيويورك
دا شيكو ومي شيكو ون. وعلاوة عصر
نادر بوم وادرس في جامعة البحيرات.
ابراهيم يسري، جزين تزوج في بناء شكل البحيرة
18، ودارت في الدورة المبكرة. ون محمد كشوف
ألفيري اعتنى بعد دنياهم علوم ليس獭.
Diyar Al Khalo
Bozan, Nineveh, Iraq, January 1, 1987 -

Photograph
Iraq, 2013
On loan courtesy of Diyar Al Khalo

Reflections by Diyar Al Khalo

This picture was taken back on Feb 11, 2013 while I was praying at Lalish temple. I prayed for the whole world to be safe and sound. We as Yezidis always pray for all human kind and call for peace and safety.

Diyar Hazim Farhan Al Bozani
Lincoln, Nebraska, 2018

(Translation from Arabic)
تم سنة 1439 هـ كان زيارتي إلى
مجدالله. أنا كنت فيه في الحرم ذات
السماح على جميع الدنام العالم نحن جميع
الله الدانام لأجل جميع العالم نحن جميع نحن نحن
إلى جميع الدنام العالم. صحة الله يلاشي
ما صعبه ما عننا. أثر الله لجني
انتظر الله الدانام لأجل جميع الدنام وعالم العالم

ديه دعاء فرحان
البرافعي

12018

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

إيام دنيتي إلى مجدالله للاجتهال في العراق
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 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 the 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.

With my name Sala Lewis
My name is Sara 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 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.

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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 my mother. I lost throughout the remainder of my life.

With my Name Sara Lewis.
With storm clouds gathering on the horizon, my aunt’s teddy bear was buried in a backyard for safekeeping.

My aunt and grandfather weathered the torrent and returned to Germany after three years in Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia.

After learning of the damage caused by the deluge, my aunt and grandfather wrote to my mother in America informing her that Tante Regine, Onkel Siegfried, Georg, Tante Toni, Hugo and his two sisters and Onkel Moritz and his family had been engulfed by the surge.

In the aftermath of the storm, my aunt was reunited with her childhood teddy bear.

Marianne Hesse
With storm clouds gathering on the horizon, my aunt’s Teddy Bear was buried in a backpack for safekeeping.

My aunt and grandfather weathered the torrent and returned to Germany after three years in Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia.

After learning of the damage caused by the deluge, my aunt and grandfather wrote to my mother in America informing her that Tante Regina, Onkel Sigfried, Tante Toni, Hugo (and his two sisters) and Onkel Moritz and his family had been engulfed by the surge.

In the aftermath of the storm, my aunt was reunited with her childhood teddy bear.

Marianne Beck
Immaculee Mukantaganira  
Muko, Rwanda, December 3, 1954 -  

Raissa Umutoyi’s Cardigan  
London, United Kingdom, ca. 1994  
On loan courtesy of Immaculee Mukantaganira  

Reflections by Immaculee Mukantaganira  

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 got 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/5 years 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 them!!”  

Thank you Thaddee,  
Love you!  
Immaculee
This shirt was white and Raisa wore it when she dressed nicely for events that happened in the evening. This reminds me of how my husband was a provider for our family. My children were always dressed properly. Raisa's dad traveled a lot and would buy clothes and shoes for them. Today, when I got the shirt, I felt so desperate to not have them and feel them with nice clothes.

At a certain point, I couldn't live without going to the mall. Why go? To do what? Raisa and her children were always neat and loved to dress up and enjoyed it. They didn't allow them to do so. Probably God knew they weren't doing it. They needed them to be appreciated.
Immaculee Mukantaganira
Muco, Rwanda, December 3, 1954 -

Family Photo Album
Rwanda, 1990s
On loan courtesy of Immaculee Mukantaganira

Reflections by Immaculee Mukantaganira

Dear Thaddee,

These photos are remains from your dedication to our family. Do you remember how you came from work, put on your shorts and played with our children! They loved that time and you loved taking their photos. When I miss you, when I think of you, when I am lonely, I look at them and cry. Thank you so much for loving me until your last day! Thank you for leaving behind a legacy of love. You were an exceptional husband and I love you dearly. To Raissa (she was 3) and Clarisse (she was 5), you have been a blessing and I thank God for the few years you gifted me with your love. I would never imagine myself living without you. Even today, you are a driving force in my life. I want to be able to see you again.

Love you so much!

Mother; Wife; Immaculee Mukantaganira

Clarisse Uwonkunda learning to walk. Her cousins had spent the night in our home visiting in 1990.

Thaddee Ruzirabwoba was also killed in the genocide again the Tutsi in Rwanda. He is the father of Clarissa and Raissa who also did not escape the Genocide.
Dear Thandiwe,

These photos are reminders from your dedication to our family. Do you remember how you came from work, put on your shoes and changed with our children? They loved that time very much.

You loved taking their photos. When I miss you, when I think of you, when I am lonely, I look at them and say, thank you so much for leaving me until your last day. Thank you for leaving behind you a legacy of love.

You were an exceptional husband. I love you dearly.

To Reissa (she was 3) and Clarisse (she was 5), you have been a blessing, and I thank God for the few years you smiled with your love.

I would never imagine myself living without you. Even today, you are the shining force in my life.

I need to be able to see you again.

Keep you so much!

Mother: weld; Immortal

Chicile Pumahander, morning to walk.

The Chimondo had spoken till night.

In our home waiting.

Chicile Pumahander was also killed in the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda.

It is the family of Chicile & Reissa, who also did not escape the Genocide.
Ida Sefer Roche
Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, March 23, 1985 -

Doll
Bosnia and Herzegovina, ca. 1992
On loan courtesy of Ida Sefer Roche

Reflections by Ida Sefer Roche

I was seven.

Ida and her family lived in the small town of Bosanski Novi until 1992 when the war began. Ida’s father arranged for Ida, her sister, and their mother to move in with relatives in Serbia. Shortly after, her father, along with hundreds of other Muslim men, was detained by Serbian militia in a concentration camp in the town. Upon his release, he went back to the family home to grab a few items—photo albums, some clothes, and Ida’s doll, Sanja. The family would never return. As refugees, they escaped to Canada and later moved to Chicago where Ida currently resides.
I was seven.
Henry Stone
Nowy Targ, Poland, March 7, 1924 -

Concentration Camp Jacket
Flossenbürg concentration camp, Germany, 1945
Gift of Henry Stone

Reflections by Henry Stone

To me looking at this picture brings back memories.
I feel like I am reliving a painful past so the world will never forget those that were left in the past.

Henry was forced into slave labor by the Nazis after the occupation of Poland. He was interned in seven labor and concentration camps throughout the war, and endured a death march. This jacket was issued at Flossenbürg, prior to his imprisonment in Dachau concentration camp toward the end of the war. He hid his Jewish identity in Dachau by wearing a Polish patch on his uniform. Eventually liberated by the US Army in 1945, he immigrated to the Chicago area in 1949.
To me looking at this picture brings back memories.
I feel like I am reliving a painful past so the world will never forget those that were left in the past.