

[Extra]Ordinary Portraits

Starting points and inspiration

This resource includes life stories, activities, questions to engage with, inspiring stimulus and advice from professional artists.



[Extra]Ordinary Portraits is a portrait project that allows students and young people to learn about a person who has experienced identity-based discrimination or persecution – for example, a Holocaust or genocide survivor, or someone targeted in conflict or forced to migrate because of their identity – and use art to share and reflect on their life story.

Portraits can be in any visual artform and should feature people whose lives have been affected by hate and discrimination. This includes survivors of the Holocaust or other genocides, people affected by conflict and migration, or people who have been targeted because of their identity. Some suggestions are provided in this resource. Ask your students and young people to explain why they have chosen the person as the subject of their art and how they relate to Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD).

You can display portraits created by your students or young people at school, university or local library, for example. Please share your portraits and displays with us on social media using the hashtag #HMDextraordinaryportraits.



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*Learning from genocide -
for a better future*

Teachers and youth leaders

You can select life stories, examples and activities from this guide to lead a session to help your students or young people to start their arts projects

Download the accompanying PowerPoint to see the example artworks in more detail!



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Life stories with a range of photographs

All artforms

Life stories

The first step to creating a portrait is to learn about some relevant people, and our life stories are a great place to start. Here are four suggestions, and at the end of this resource you can find a summary of their stories with a selection of photographs.

Person	Objects	Story
Lily Ebert BEM	Necklace	A Holocaust survivor with a big following on TikTok. Lily and her necklace survived Auschwitz-Birkenau – the Nazi's largest concentration and extermination camp.
Gad Beck		Gad survived the Holocaust against all odds while living in Berlin as a young gay Jewish man. If you choose to do a portrait of him it could be displayed for HMD and for LGBTQ+ History Month in February.
Mussa Uwitonze	Cameras	A professional photographer who survived the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.
Amouna Adam		Single mother and activist who survived the genocide in Darfur, Sudan and came to the UK as a refugee in 2009.

After reading about their experiences at the end of this resource, consider:

- What are the important moments, places, objects or people?
- What do you want to show about this person's identity and personality?
- Are there any words or phrases from the story that you would like to include in your portrait?
- What part of the story impacted you the most?
- How could you reveal the extraordinary experiences of this person through your portrait?

Other life stories

The **Ordinary Objects, Extraordinary Journeys (ooej.org.uk)** website features four people affected by the Holocaust, with their stories, artefacts, and maps of their journeys. Please note, this website is suitable for age 13+.

This series of **Moving Portraits (hmd.org.uk/movingportraits)** feature survivors of different genocides with an object and a brief description of their story.

Research someone else – maybe you know someone already with relevant experiences. You could interview them to find out more. Maybe you have read about someone you are interested in. Use libraries and reputable websites for your research - we recommend the below as good starting points:

Website	Features stories of people affected by
Ishami Foundation	Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda
Remembering Srebrenica	Genocide in Bosnia
Refugee Action	Recent experience as refugees and asylum seekers

Any of these people would make brilliant subjects for your portrait, and you can find more life stories at **hmd.org.uk/lifestories**.

How to create a portrait – Things to think about

Some portraits accurately represent what the subject looks like, and some are more abstract interpretations. Whichever route you go for, there are a few things we'd like you to think about.

How will you use colour?

Colours carry a lot of information in art. They help you to show what something looks like, and add light, shade and depth. Colours influence the emotions of people looking at the artwork. Your choice and combination of colours will change how someone experiences the portrait. Colour might highlight certain areas or make sure they are looked at first. Choosing to just work in black and white is also a colour choice.

How will you represent the person's story and background?

The arts project can spotlight the extraordinary experiences of seemingly ordinary people. There are a range of ways this might be done, and you might have your own ideas. You could:

- Feature significant objects that they talk about
- Create a backdrop for them – featuring location(s) from their journey
- Add words around/within the portrait
- Express emotion through facial expression and body language

Example



Claire Elizabeth Jackson

This is a portrait of Ben Abeles by Claire Jackson.

In 1939 Ben's parents made the decision to send him from Czechoslovakia to England on the *Kindertransport*, which saved his life. The portrait has an image of them to Ben's right and the label from Ben's luggage is also shown.

Other images include photos of his sister and brother-in-law who, like his parents, were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

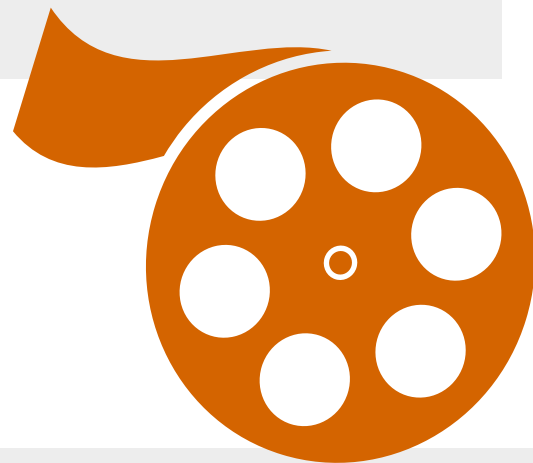
Ben later studied to become a successful physicist and there is an image of the award he won for his work on powering the Mars Rovers.

Ben died in Leicester in 2020.

Artforms

For this project you are free to choose a visual art medium of your choice, such as (but not limited to) photography, drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, graphic design or typography. Over the next few pages we have worked with a range of artists to create short videos and activities about making portraits in different artforms.

Artists' video tips



Rachel Mercer on drawing a portrait (3 mins)

Artist **Rachel Mercer** from the Royal Drawing School gives her four top tips for getting started.

hmd.org.uk/drawing

Rankin on photographic portraits (2 mins)

Renowned photographer **Rankin** talks about his portrait of Lily Ebert, and things to consider for portrait photography.

hmd.org.uk/photography



Ian Wolter on figurative sculpture (4 mins)

Ian Wolter is an artist and sculptor who has created a memorial to the *Kindertransport* in Harwich, and a sculpture called *The Children of Calais* about the current refugee crisis. He talks about techniques for sculpting humans.

hmd.org.uk/sculpture

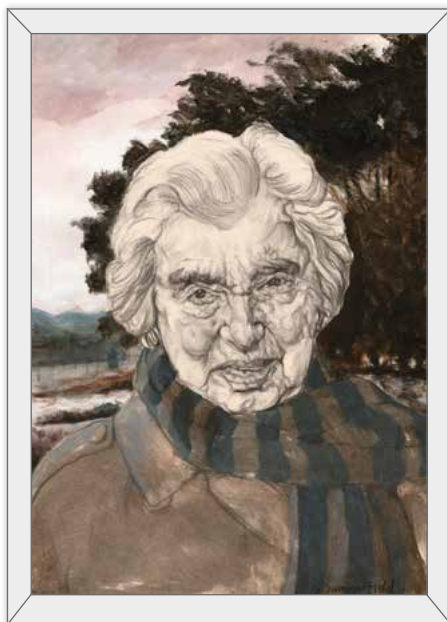
Gideon Summerfield portrait activity

Gideon is an award-winning, young British artist. He is a graduate of the Royal Drawing School and has completed portraits of many Holocaust survivors.

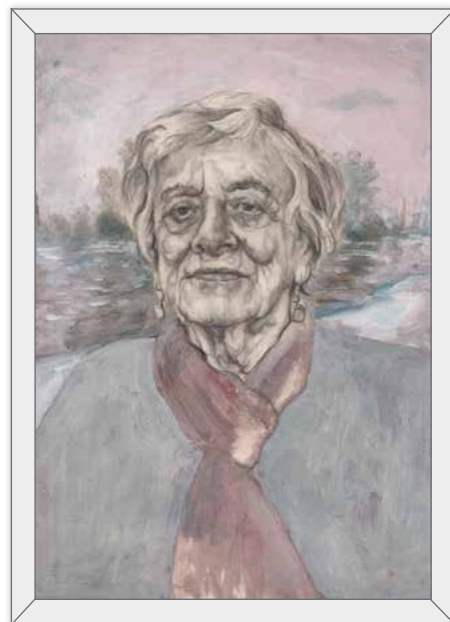
You can view them all at gideonsummerfield.com/legacy-of-survival and read about the people featured. Here are a few examples:



• **Freddie Knoller BEM** •



• **Renee Salt BEM** •

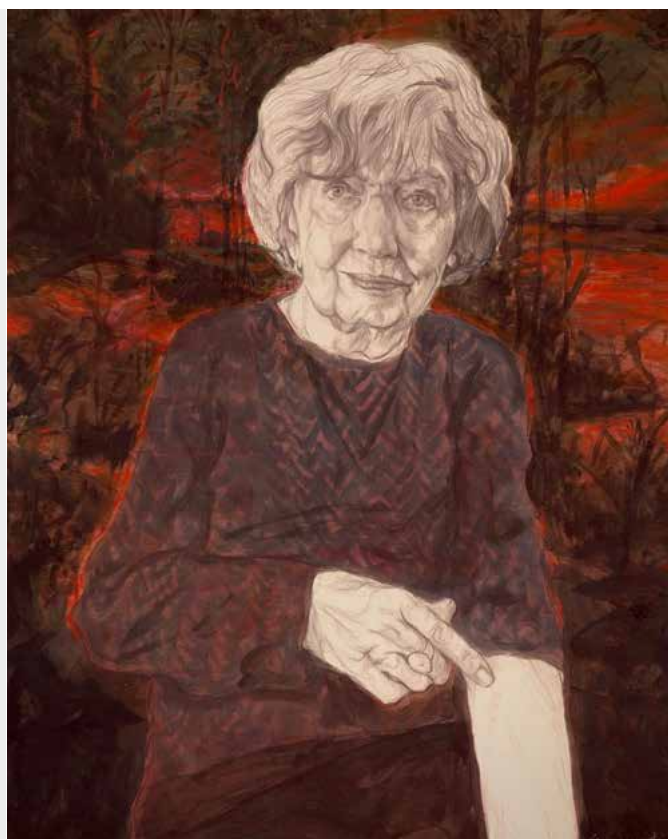


• **Renie Inow BEM** •

Here is Gideon's portrait of Holocaust survivor Rosie Heilbrun. Go through the provided questions to explore the portrait, and you can find some answers over the page.

Holocaust survivor Rosie Heilbrun

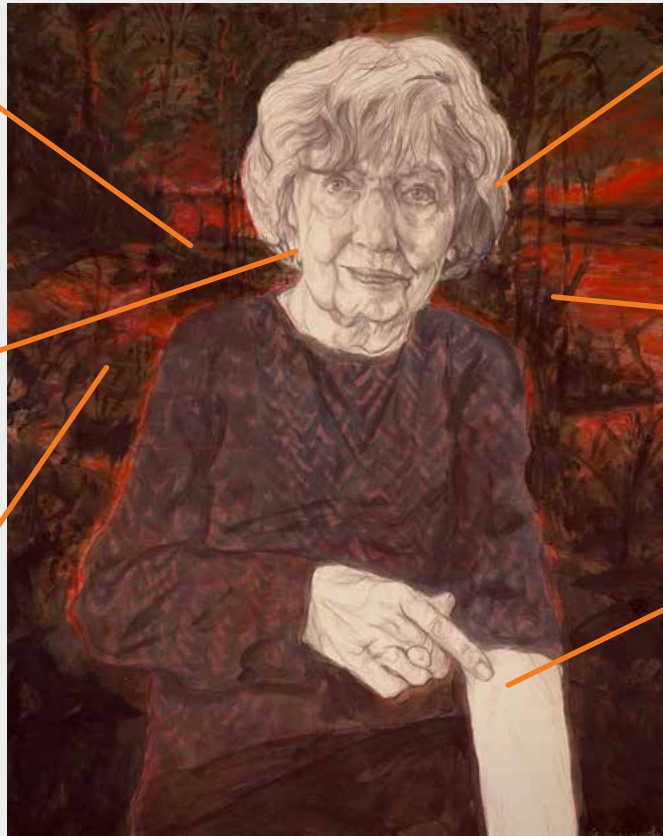
1. What materials do you think the artist has used?
2. Why did the artist use the colours they chose?
3. What do you notice about the composition? Where is your eye most drawn and why?
4. Is there any imagery that may relate to Rosie's past?
5. What do you notice about the expression on Rosie's face. Does she look happy, sad or a mixture of both?



Depicting a concentration camp in the background. A barbed wire fence and a building with a chimney.

Mixed expression - notice how Rosie has got a slight smile but if you stare at her face for a longer period, you may see a more subdued and saddened expression.

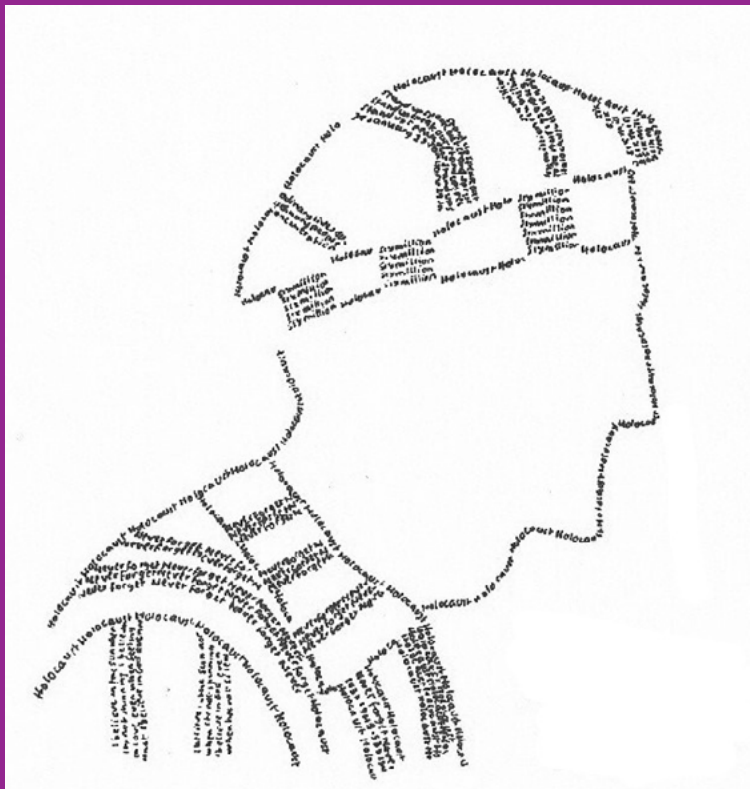
Creating a scenic background, a forest filled with trees and foliage. The artist wanted to draw the viewers eye deeper into the painting, to the beyond.



Using pencil to draw the face and hands from observation. Enabling him to truly capture the character and details in the flesh.

The colours red and green are used throughout the painting as they are contrasting colours. This gives a very striking effect.

Drawing the hand to be pointing at Rosie's ink tattoo that was put on her arm as she entered Auschwitz concentration camp.



David Southwell

This artwork is part of David Southwell's *Look Closely Art* series. It is not a portrait of one particular person, but represents those imprisoned at Auschwitz-Birkenau by the Nazis. The image is made up of words, and through simple representation is recognisable as someone wearing the striped uniform enforced at the camp.

Auschwitz-Birkenau is the most infamous of all Nazi camps and we commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January, the date that it was liberated. Over 1.1 million people were murdered at this site, and over 90% of them were Jewish.

This is an example of using typography to create a portrait – how might you include words in a portrait? What words would you choose and why?

Activity: Portraits of Holocaust survivor Lily Ebert BEM

At the end of this resource you can find information about Lily's life, and a selection of photographs of her. You might choose to create a portrait of her yourself. You can also watch a video of Lily telling her story at hmd.org.uk/lilyspendant.

As a very inspirational person, Lily has been involved in portraiture projects before. Here are three portraits of Lily created by different artists, with some activities:

Activity one

Consider:

- What are the similarities between the three portraits of Lily?
- What are the differences?
- What impression do you get of her as a person just from the portraits?
- Does reading about her life change this impression?
- Do you have a favourite of the three? Why/why not? What elements do you like in each?

Ishbel Myerscough

Artist **Ishbel Myerscough** was commissioned by Prince Charles to paint Lily's portrait as part of the *Seven Portraits: Surviving the Holocaust* collection, unveiled for Holocaust Memorial Day 2022. Ishbel says:

'I wanted to show the layers of experience and complexity of her life. I wanted the painting to have a feeling of infinity. The deep endless blue, like the night sky. I wanted to capture her infectious energy. Every time I left Lily and her family I had a surge of positivity. I needed the painting to twinkle, to engage and to reflect that she is a happy, determined woman, who also made me laugh a lot... Lily was determined I would paint her smiling, "not just with her eyes." She gave me no other options, and, from getting to know her, she was absolutely right.'



Lily Ebert by Ishbel Myerscough, commissioned by Prince Charles



Lily Ebert by Rankin

Rankin

Rankin is a well-known British photographer and director. He took this portrait of Lily as part of his project *Alive In The Face Of Death*, which explores and challenges our perception of death. Lily was included as someone who has faced death and survived. Rankin says:

'I've met some amazing people and I think each portrait brings out the vitality of each subject, their humour and unique qualities... Working with Lily Ebert was incredible. What was really exceptional about her was her ability to take what had happened to her and turn it into a positive.'

She said "If we don't want this to happen again, we need to be able to talk about it and listen to each other."

Gideon Summerfield

Gideon Summerfield is an award-winning, young British artist. He created his portrait of Lily as part of *The Legacy of Survival* - a personal project that has spanned over eight years, and involves meeting and drawing the portraits of Holocaust survivors. Gideon says:

'It has been an extraordinary privilege for me personally to learn from people now in their 90s, about their experiences as children and teenagers, how they survived the death camps and the Holocaust. I hope my paintings will be an everlasting testimony for what happened over 75 years ago and as a memory for me of those people I now call my friends.'



Lily Ebert by Gideon Summerfield

Activity two

Read the quotes from the three artists.

- What do they reveal about their different processes?
- Do the portraits do what the artists set out to do?
- Did the quotes make you notice different things about the portraits?

Activity three

Read more about Lily's life at the end of this pack. How would you create her portrait? What elements of Lily and her story would you like to highlight?

Get started

Now that your students or young people have explored other artists' approaches, it is time for them to create their portraits.

1. Choose a subject

Ask your students or young people to choose a subject. You can focus on the life stories provided below, or find someone else by using the guidance on page two.

2. Create your portrait

You can ask students to use a specific visual artform or give them a choice of how to create their portraits.

3. Share your artwork

Consider how students or young people can share their artwork with their friends and in their communities. You can for example, organise portraits to be displayed at school, college, or university, a local library or community centre. Remember to also share images of your artwork or display on social media on or around HMD (27 January) using the HMD hashtags and graphics found [here](#).



5. What next?

To put on an event or activity for Holocaust Memorial Day, and to learn more about the Holocaust, other genocides, and the people affected by them, visit hmd.org.uk.

For arts courses, check out the **Royal Drawing School Young Artists programme** (royaldrawingschool.org/courses/young-artists).

Consider what you have learnt from taking part in this project. What has it made you think and feel? You might want to:

- Use your portrait to raise awareness of the Holocaust and genocides that have happened since, the current refugee crisis, or those targeted because of their identity today.
- Organise a fundraising or donation drive to support refugee charities, visit chooselove.org/donate-goods for information on how to donate money or items.
- Promote empathy and kindness to other people, including people who are different from ourselves.



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Find out more...

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust: hmd.org.uk
Discover resources for educators and other materials for
your activities: hmd.org.uk/resources

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Learning from genocide - for a better future



Genocide survivor

Refugee

Activist

Single mum

Amouna is from Darfur, which is part of Sudan, a country in north-east Africa. She belongs to the Fur tribe - the largest group in Darfur.

Amouna was a bright child and a good student. She achieved a place at the University of Khartoum to study Biology and Chemistry, then became a Chemistry teacher, married and started a family. She began working in her home village in Darfur teaching Arabic and supporting the farming communities. She felt lucky to have gained an education and wanted to give something back.

Darfur is home to more than 100 different tribes. Some Sudanese people are African-Sudanese and have dark skin, and some are Arab-Sudanese and have lighter skin. The Sudanese Government favoured the Arab-Sudanese and gave them better treatment, and discriminated against the African-Sudanese people. This made life much worse in Darfur, where there were already tensions between the different groups.

In 2003 war broke out in Darfur. The government gave the Arabic tribes funding and weapons. They formed a militia, known as the *Janjaweed* – ‘the devils on horseback’ – and began attacking the villages and communities of darker skinned tribes across Darfur. It is estimated that they murdered between 200,000 – 400,000 people, and left millions homeless and fleeing to neighbouring countries in fear for their lives.

In 2009 President Omar al-Bashir, the Sudanese Government and the *Janjaweed* were charged by the International Criminal Court for committing genocide. However, there has still been no court case and no justice. Despite these charges Omar al-Bashir remained president of Sudan until 2019.

Also in 2009, Amouna and her husband managed to raise enough money to escape Darfur with their two young sons, and travel to the UK. Amouna now works to try and support more people to escape the genocide.

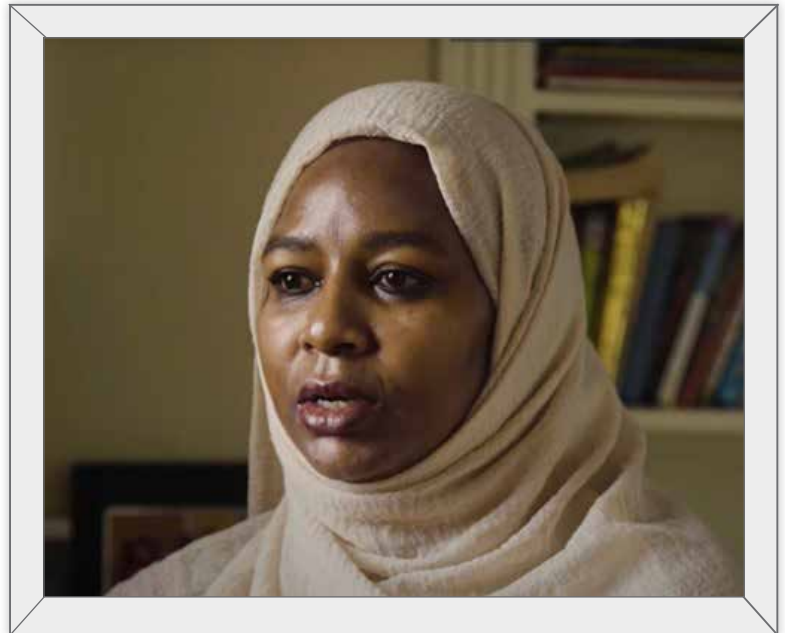
‘This is hurting my heart. I lost a lot of my family back home. 150 people in one village – all of them died, all of them buried in one place. Everyone now is in camps in Darfur, other people are displaced to Khartoum and Chad. They are suffering. They don’t have the money to escape Sudan.’

Amouna’s third child was born in the UK, but she has since separated from her husband and is a single mother. She regularly takes part in humanitarian work between the UK and Darfur and demonstrates against the Sudanese Government. There are many rumours that the Sudanese Government seeks information on anyone speaking out against them, and targets those people’s families in Darfur.

Amouna defies the dangers to continue demonstrating, speaking out about what happened to her, and trying to help people.

People continue to be targeted and attacked in Sudan based on their tribe or identity. The genocide there has not been declared over.

'People have value. Our culture, our heritage has value. Darfur is the land of our ancestors. In Darfur we still need real peace to come to the people on the ground. I haven't been home for 13 years. I miss my family. My children have missed them too.'



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Find out more...

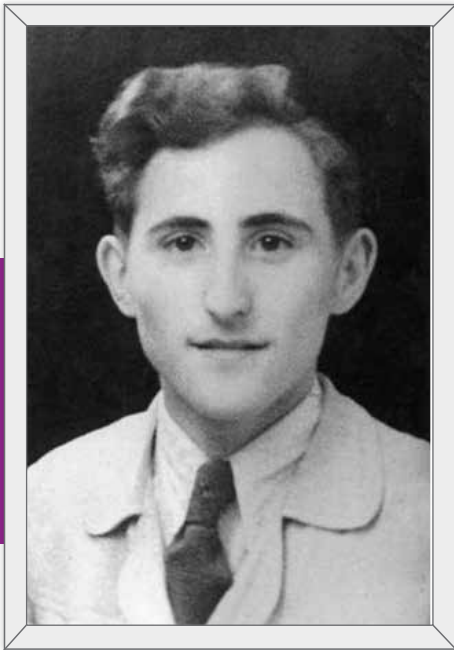
Genocide in Darfur: hmd.org.uk/darfur

Life stories of those affected by genocide: hmd.org.uk/lifestories

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Learning from genocide - for a better future



Holocaust survivor

Twin

Resistance activist

Gay man

Despite being both gay and Jewish, Gad Beck managed to survive the entire duration of Nazi rule living in Berlin. He made the decision to actively resist Nazi persecution, assuming a leading role in the Chug Chaluzi (pronounced Hug Ha-loot-si) Jewish resistance group.

He was born in Berlin in 1923 and had a twin sister called Margot. His father was a Jewish immigrant from Austria and his mother had converted to Judaism.

Gad was nine when the Nazis took power in 1933. Over the next few years he was forced to leave school and his family had to move from their home into a poorer part of the city designated for Jews. The clothes shop Gad worked in was vandalised during **Kristallnacht** – a night of violent attacks on Jewish people, businesses and Synagogues in November 1938.

This persecution led Gad to fully embrace his Jewish identity, and he connected with Zionist activists in the city. Through this network, they received warnings from Switzerland not to comply with Nazi orders to 'migrate' on the transports to the east, because this would actually take them to their deaths.

The Nazis began deporting Jewish people from Berlin in September 1941. The Beck family were defined as *mischlinge* (pronounced mish-ling-a) (people with mixed Jewish/non-Jewish background) so were not targeted at this stage.

Gad had begun a relationship with Manfred Lewin. Both of Manfred's parents were classified as Jewish by the Nazis, and his whole family received the order to be deported in 1942.

In a risky attempt to save Manfred, Gad borrowed a Hitler Youth uniform and persuaded the assembly camp commander that he needed Manfred for a short time. The lovers walked out together, but Manfred explained to Gad that he was unable to leave his family. Manfred returned to the detention centre, to deportation, and to death at Auschwitz.

By 1943 most of Berlin's Jews had been deported, and Gad and other *mischlinge* were at risk. Gad was arrested and held at a Jewish community centre on Rosenstrasse occupied by Nazi police for several days, but escaped deportation thanks to protests by some of the wives and family members of the men held there.

Gad stepped up his resistance activities and took a leading role in Chug Chaluzi. Between 1943–45, the group supported an estimated 50 Jews in hiding. Gad arranged safe houses, delivered money, and assisted Jews in attempts to escape Germany.

Gad was betrayed and arrested by the SS in March 1945. He was liberated from prison on 24 April 1945. His parents and twin sister had also survived the war.



• Gad and Margot •



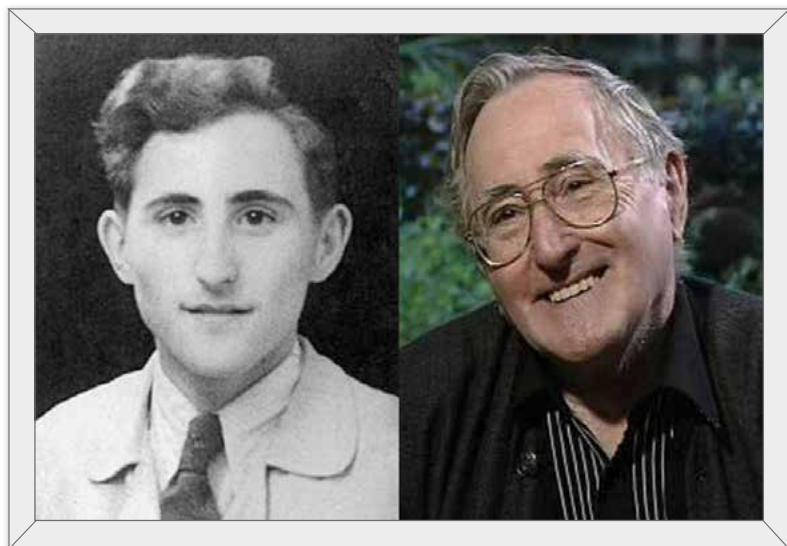
• Gad and Margot •



• Manfred Lewin – Gad's boyfriend •



• Gad in later life •



Find out more...

The Holocaust: hmd.org.uk/holocaust

Life stories of those affected by genocide: hmd.org.uk/lifestories

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Learning from genocide – for a better future



Holocaust survivor

Author

TikTok star

Great-grandma

Lily Ebert was born on 29 December 1923 in Hungary. She had a happy childhood, growing up in a loving family as the eldest of six children. Lily recalls, *'I got my pendant when I was a little girl - five, six years old - from my mother.'* Although neither expensive nor unique, Lily's gold pendant remains incredibly meaningful due to its remarkable story.

In 1944, when Lily was 20, the Nazis invaded Hungary. They began by ordering Jewish families to hand over all of their jewellery, gold and valuables. Lily's brother hid her gold pendant in the heel of their mother's shoe. As a result, this was the only childhood possession that Lily was able to keep.

In July 1944, the Nazis deported Lily and her mother, brother and three sisters to Auschwitz-Birkenau. They were transported by train, crammed into a dark, cramped cattle wagon, with around eighty other people. Lily's necklace went with them, still safely hidden in the heel of her mother's shoe. As they arrived at the camp, she remembers her mother saying *'Maybe we should swap shoes'*, leaving Lily with her mother's footwear and the hidden pendant.

They were ordered out of the cattle trucks and made to stand in rows of five, in front of the man Lily later discovered to be Dr Mengele, the infamous Nazi doctor, known for his brutal medical experiments at the camp. She describes, *'This man was standing there with a stick in his hand, and with one movement he sent people right or left. To live or to die. That was the last time I saw my family.'*

Lily's mother, sister Berta, and brother Bela, were sent left and immediately taken to the gas chambers and murdered. Meanwhile, she and her sisters, Renee and Piri, were sent to the right. They were ordered to undress, leave all their belongings and go to the showers. When they returned, they found everything had been stolen, apart from their shoes, where Lily's pendant remained hidden.

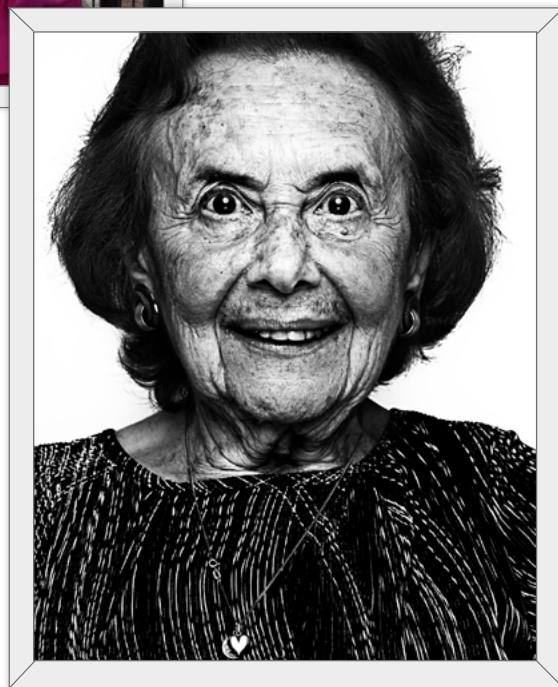
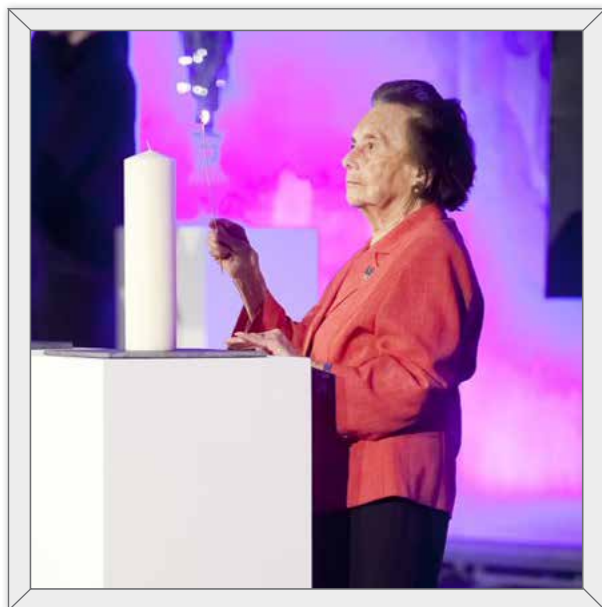
During her time at the camp Lily resolved to keep her pendant safe. It was a symbol of defiance. When the heel of the shoe wore out, she hid the pendant inside her daily ration of bread. She explains that now *'it is a symbol for me that something impossible happened. Because neither me nor the pendant should be here today.'*

They were hungry, dirty and unwell. Yet, in spite of the odds, Lily and her two sisters survived Auschwitz, and were transferred to an ammunition factory near Leipzig.

In 1945, the Allied forces liberated Leipzig and Lily was rescued from a Death March. Lily and her sisters went to Switzerland to seek refuge. She wore her gold pendant every day in memory of the murdered members of her family. Later she married and had three children. The family moved to London in 1967, and have lived there since. Lily is now a proud great-grandmother. She continues to wear her gold pendant and share its remarkable story with many people. The Nazis stole all gold arriving in Auschwitz so she believes that her pendant is unique, still remaining with its rightful owner.

Reflecting on Auschwitz, Lily recalls *'I promised myself in the camp when I was there, that if a miracle happens and I survive, I will tell people what happened there. Not one day goes by when I don't think about it. I will carry on what I have started – to help teach the world to be tolerant to each other.'*

Lily has written a book with her great-grandson Dov Forman – *Lily's Promise* - to share her story more widely, and their **TikTok account** reaches millions of people around the world. Lily believes in the importance of people – young people especially, as the future of the world – standing together against rising division and hate.



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Find out more...

The Holocaust: hmd.org.uk/holocaust

Life stories of those affected by genocide: hmd.org.uk/lifestories

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Learning from genocide – for a better future

Mussa Uwitonze



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Genocide survivor

Husband

Father

Photographer

'Photography is an art that helps you open up and express yourself. It is a voice; it is a tool for change.'

Mussa Uwitonze was born in 1991 in Rwanda, the youngest of a large family with two sisters and a brother. In 1994, when Mussa was three years old, the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda began. His father made the decision to move the family across the border into the Democratic Republic of Congo (then known as Zaire) in search of safety. Mussa didn't understand why his family rushed to pack up their belongings, though he sensed his family's fear.

The *Interahamwe*, a government-supported militia, had begun slaughtering Tutsis, as well as any Hutus who refused to take part in the genocide. Mussa's family left their home, fleeing the chaos and violence that had now reached their home town.

After a long and dangerous journey, the family was able to pay a bribe and cross the border. Mussa's family found temporary shelter in a refugee camp, however after a few weeks the camps were invaded by *Interahamwe* militia. The *Interahamwe* had fled Rwanda following the end of the genocide, but continued to wage violence in neighbouring countries, targeting Rwandans who had found shelter in camps close to the border.

The militias killed indiscriminately, targeting any men, women and children they found.

Many women were also raped, including Mussa's sister. His brother, whilst attempting to protect his sister, was gunned down by the militia and murdered. Mussa and his family fled the camp in search of safety, in a crowd of others all headed in the same direction.

'It had been a long and tiring journey. We were amid a flock of people who were all headed in the same direction. I was holding on Mama's kitenge (a fabric, often worn by women) for dear life... as she made her way through the mass of people. Then someone said to make way and for the briefest moment I did, and everything changed. I lost my family and my hopes for a life with them.'

Mussa vividly recalls crying out for his mother in the crowd only to realise that he did not know her name. This was the last time he saw her. Mussa was eventually taken to the Red Cross, who realised he was suffering from cholera. He spent a month in hospital, constantly asking the nurses for information about his family, but nothing was known about them.

Mussa was taken to an orphanage called Imbabazi CENA. This is where he first encountered an American who he came to see as a mother figure. *'When we got to the orphanage we were introduced to an old woman named Mrs Rosamond Carr. The first day I saw her, I saw love.'*

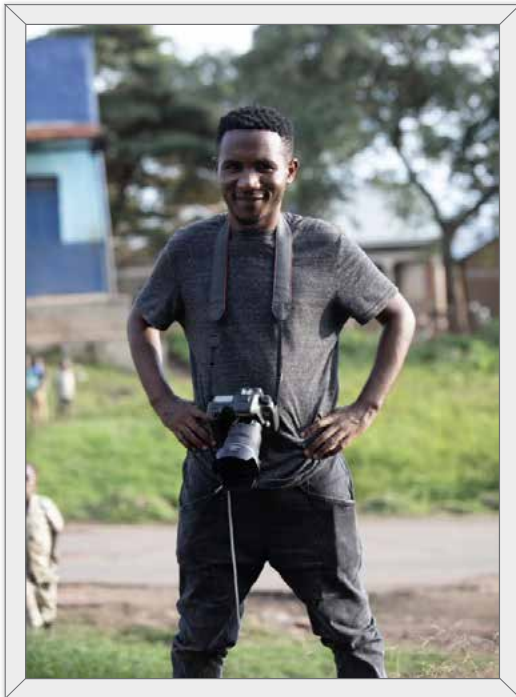
The warmth and affection that Rosamond showed all the orphans gave him a renewed sense of family, security and love. Mussa still has no information about any of his relatives. He does, however, consider all the children he grew up with at the orphanage to be his brothers and sisters.

In 2000, whilst Mussa was still at primary school, American photographer David Jiranek (1958 –2003) visited the orphanage and saw the children's interest in his camera. He set up ongoing photo workshops, which became the charity **Through the Eyes of Children**.

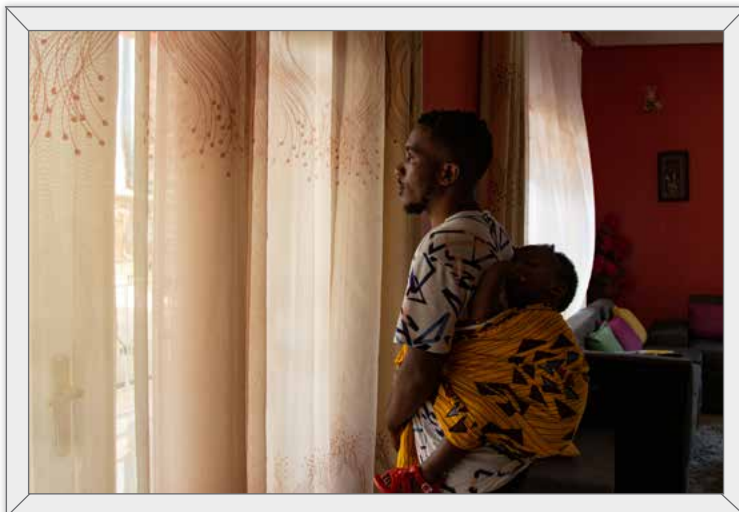
Mussa was one of 19 pupils selected to take part, and was given a disposable camera to document the world as he saw it. Those children were called 'The Camera Kids'. After David died the project was continued by Kristen Ashburn, Jenifer Howard and Joanne McKinney and the children's award-winning photos were exhibited throughout the world, with proceeds from print sales going to the Imbabazi Orphanage. This experience ignited Mussa's lifelong passion for photography.

Mussa now works as a professional photographer and runs photography workshops with two other original 'camera kids' for Through the Eyes of Children that aim to give young people creative skills and the tools to share their stories. Mussa has taught photography to young Rwandans, Syrian refugees, foster children and Haitian immigrants in the US, and with children in Haiti and Nepal.

Mussa is now married with three children. You can see his photography at mussauwitonze.com.



• **Mussa (far right, front row)**
taking part in the photography
project as a child
• © Through the Eyes of Children •



Find out more...

Through the Eyes of Children: camerakids.photos

Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda: hmd.org.uk/rwanda

Life stories of those affected by genocide: hmd.org.uk/lifestories

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