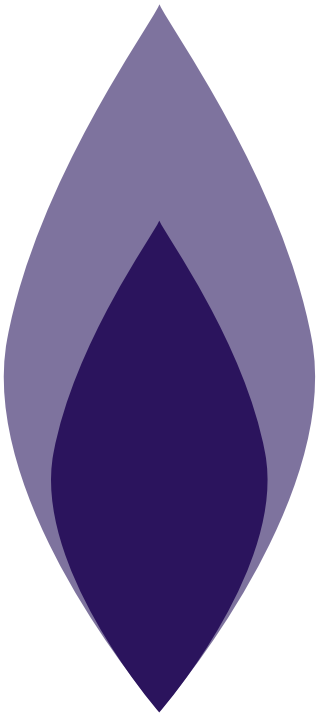
University and College Union

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY



Testimonials by UCU members

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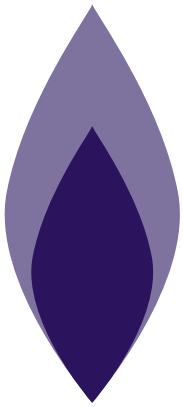
INTRODUCTION

We would first and foremost like to thank all UCU members who have contributed by allowing their family testimonial to be included in this publication. We would also like to thank the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust for allowing us to use the personal testimonials of Martha Blend, Kemal Pervanic and Sophal Leng Stagg, survivors of the Holocaust and genocides in Bosnia and Cambodia.

Some of the contributors included in this publication have also kindly taken part in the short film produced to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day. The film can be seen on the UCU website: www.ucu.org.uk/hmd2013

While our prime concern is to fight for greater equality and to oppose all forms of harassment, prejudice and unfair discrimination at work, we recognise that this includes the injustices that members face in all areas of their lives, whether on the grounds of sex, race, ethnic or national origin, colour, class, impairment or disability status, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or belief, age, socio-economic status, casualisation or any other aspect of status or personal characteristic which can lead to discrimination.



EIGHT STAGES OF GENOCIDE

Gregory H Stanton, President of Genocide Watch developed the Eight Stages of Genocide which explains how genocide occurs. At each of the earlier stages there is the opportunity offered to members of the community or by the international community to halt the stages and stop genocide before it happens.

Classification
The differences between people are not respected. There's a division of 'us' and 'them'. This can be carried out through the use of stereotypes, or excluding people who are perceived to be different.

Symbolisation
This is a visual manifestation of hatred. Jews in Nazi Europe were forced to wear yellow stars to show that they were 'different'.

Dehumanisation
Those who are perceived as different are treated with no form of human right or personal dignity. During the Rwandan genocide Tutsis were referred to as 'cockroaches'; the Nazis referred to Jews as 'vermin'.

Organisation
Genocides are always planned. Regimes of hatred often train those who are to carry out the destruction of a people such as the training of the Janjaweed militia in Darfur.

Polarisation
Propaganda begins to be spread by hate groups. The Nazis used the newspaper Der Stürmer to spread and incite messages of hate about Jewish people.

Preparation
Victims are identified based on their differences. At the beginning of the Cambodian genocide, the Khmer Rouge separated out those who lived in the cities and did not work in the fields. Jews in Nazi Europe were forced to live in Ghettos.

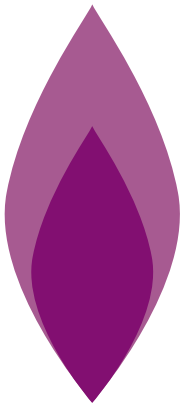
Extermination
The hate group murders their identified victims in a deliberate and systematic campaign of violence. Millions of lives have been destroyed or changed beyond recognition through genocide.

Denial
The perpetrators or later generations deny the existence of any crime.

THE HOLOCAUST 1933–1945

Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazis attempted to annihilate all of Europe's Jews. It is this event which we now refer to as The Holocaust or the Shoah, a variation on a Hebrew word.

The Nazis spread their hatred through the use of propaganda and legislation designed to deny human rights to Jews and used centuries of anti-Semitism as their foundation. By the end of the Holocaust, six million Jewish men, women and children had been murdered in ghettos, mass-shootings, in concentration and extermination camps, and many millions more were affected by the Nazis' extreme policies.

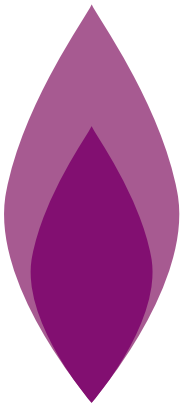


As soon as the Nazis came to power they introduced laws and legislation intended to deny Jews the freedom of movement, work and other basic rights. Boycotts of Jewish doctors, lawyers and shops began in 1933 and by 1935 Jews were not allowed to join the civil service or the army. The introduction of the Nuremberg laws in September 1935 further increased Jewish marginalisation. Jews were banned from marrying non-Jews and their citizenship was removed including their right to vote. As time progressed, more restrictions were brought in and Jews were barred from all professional occupations and Jewish children were prohibited from attending public schools. In 1938, further laws decreed that men must take the middle name 'Israel' and women 'Sarah'; all German Jews would have their passports marked with a 'J'.

On 9 November 1938 the Nazis initiated pogroms (an organised persecution of a particular group) against the Jews in all Nazi territories. It was a night of vandalism, violence and persecution that many have since described as 'the beginning of the Holocaust'. 91 Jews were murdered, 30,000 were arrested and 191 synagogues were destroyed. This night became known as 'Kristallnacht' – the night of broken glass, so called because of the smashed glass which covered the streets from the shops which were looted.

Martha Blend *The Holocaust**

THE HOLOCAUST 1933–1945



In January 1938 Martha celebrated her eighth birthday. It was a special day and her friends and family helped to make the day a memorable one.

Martha's cousin gave her a useful birthday present. It was an autograph book. Martha was filled with great delight as she asked the people she knew and cared about to write personal messages in the new book. Her school friends and relatives picked up their pens and pencils and filled its pages with their thoughts. The entries were varied. Some wrote witty comments whilst others wrote more earnest statements about the importance of good behaviour and getting on in life. Martha's father wrote a piece of special advice about education. His message to his daughter was 'He/She who puts the effort into their studies will achieve their life goals.' Martha was very pleased with all the messages. They were a record of a happy time. A few months later, in April, the Nazis entered Austria and her life changed forever. The small autograph book and its messages for an eight year old girl would soon represent a vanished world.

In 1939, only a year after her birthday, as the Nazis began to make life extremely difficult for Jewish people, young Martha had to escape from Austria. Her family sent her on the Kindertransport to safety in England. In her suitcase she carried her favourite doll and the autograph book.

Nine months before the Second World War, the UK opened its borders to about 10,000 children. Most of the children, like Martha, were Jewish, and their families sent them to England to escape from the terrors of the Nazi regime.

The children had to travel without their parents and they arrived in the UK from Austria, Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia in a process that became known as Kindertransport. Following Kristallnacht, a night of extreme Nazi-organised violence against Jewish people, charitable groups like the Red Cross organised the Kindertransport which enabled unaccompanied children between the ages of five and 17 to travel to the UK by train and ship. The Kindertransport saved the children's lives but separated them from those they loved best, their parents. By the end of the war many were orphans.

Martha was never to see her father again. He was imprisoned by the Nazis and murdered in Buchenwald in 1939. The autograph book took on new significance as it now contained the only surviving sample of her father's handwriting.

Martha remained in England and grew to adulthood. She had to build a new life away from her homeland. She always remembered her father's

message. The autograph book became and remains a treasured possession. The messages it contains now represent the world the Nazis destroyed.

Martha's father was murdered, other relatives were scattered and, to this day, Martha does not know what happened to many of the school friends whose words of wisdom, joy and hope filled the pages of her book. As she holds it in her hand it links her to the world she had to leave behind.

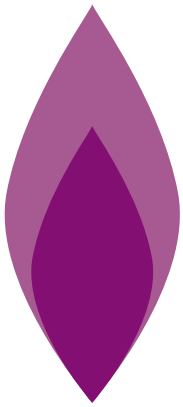
Today Martha uses her autograph book to share *Untold Stories* with young people.

She donated her doll to a museum where it is used to help visitors understand the story of the Kindertransport but she will never part with the autographs. She hopes that as she reads their messages to people, they will understand more about what was lost when the Nazis were in power. The messages, written by the relatives and friends of one eight year old girl, represent the world destroyed by Nazi policies of hatred.

On Holocaust Memorial Day Martha wants young people to understand how hate propaganda can make ordinary people do terrible things. She asks you to remember to think for yourselves and not to listen to those who spread hatred.

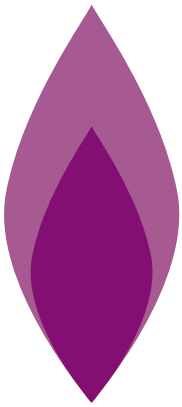
Martha believes that if youth can spread goodwill rather than hatred and ally itself with those who work for good, like teachers and doctors, rather than rabble rousers, then her precious autograph collection and its *Untold Stories* will become not only a record of a vanished world, but also a symbol of hope.

THE HOLOCAUST 1933–1945



Dr Julian Freeman UCU member

THE HOLOCAUST 1933–1945



My mother's progressive blindness in her last years combined with a psychological disorder to create a state of intellectual frustration, where Reason had no place. Increasingly, my visits to her sheltered flat in Hove became comprehension tests, as her mind moved from the present to states that I hoped I would never experience. During one of these episodes, in her 80th and last year, and without any preamble, she asked me to find out what I could about her father's family, who had lived until 1939 in the Russo-Polish town of Miedzyrzesc Podlaski, or Meshritz, as she pronounced the name in Yiddish. No – she did not 'ask'. It was more of an announcement. She would be very grateful if. She would very much like to know.

Like hundreds of other Jewish immigrants to Britain, my mother's parents had entered the country early in the 1900s. Her father was born in what was then Russia, later Poland; her mother was Lithuanian. The Lithuanian family had emigrated en masse, but my grandfather, Myer Berson, originally Birzahn or Birson, was a lone migrant: his two brothers and their families remained in Meshritz, throughout the First World War until 1939. In August 1939, having begged them to flee, my grandfather sent his brothers money for their families' passage to England, but he had never received a response.

I had known this since my later childhood, and I had assumed it as my baggage also: information offered in fragmented form, as short statements, probably as the result of ingenuous questioning, in no small part due to my early and promiscuous interest in military history, especially the world wars. Six million was a figure introduced well before my secondary education: an astonishing concept, and I wanted more, but for juvenile readers such matters were almost entirely off limits. Photographs of the electrified fence posts of Auschwitz were visually intimidating, but accessible British publications referring directly or indirectly to the Holocaust were few, and, in Trevor Roper and Rudolf Hoess, problematic.[1] As the 50s became the 60s, information about the Holocaust had not yet been transformed into a literature and, with hindsight, it seems clear that, in that era, textual and filmic fictions became increasingly important in the initial mediation of unspeakable frightfulness.[2] But for Jews of the 1960s, the Holocaust remained very much alive. Who needed to read about it? What could be lucid about the murder of six million people, when the survivors, the

[1]Trevor Roper, Hugh, 1949, *The Last Days of Hitler*, London, Pan; Hoess, Rudolf, 1959, Commandant of Auschwitz, London, Pan

[2]See for example, Uris, Leon, 1958, Exodus, New York, Doubleday; Uris, Leon, 1961, Mila 18, Wingate

'displaced persons' of post-war metaphor, still walked the streets of Europe, America and the Middle East? My mother, with all who were extrinsic to the lived experience of Nazi occupation, had few means to understand what would come to be termed 'The Jewish Tragedy' with lucidity. That was work in progress: it would be 1968 before Albert Friedlander attempted a synthesis in *Out of The Whirlwind*.[3]

My mother's request was therefore interesting. Blessed with an analytical brain, she was a natural, and independent, researcher, and, indeed, in her mid-70s she had set down in brief her experiences as a 20-year-old at war, working at the National Institute for Medical Research[4]. With effort she might have gained the answers she sought from her own reading, yet she had never done so. Was I now to square the circle for her?

I never found out, and, indeed, I never told her what I already knew to be the likely answer to her question. My continuous reading of Holocaust literature revealed nothing of Meshritz, until the paperback publication of Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men*[5] in 2001. If my mother's family had managed to escape the German invasion and airstrikes of September 1939, the return of the Russians to the area after the treaty of Brest Litovsk may have offered some respite. However, as Browning and others[6] show only too convincingly, for the indigenous and transient Jewish populations of Miedzyrzesc, in almost every case there were only endings. The pit. Slavery. Treblinka. However it arrived, Death was the only future.

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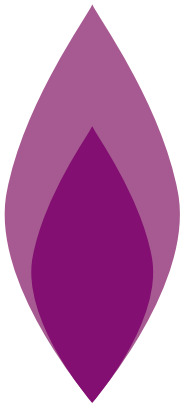


[3]Friedlander, Albert, 1968, *Out of the Whirlwind*: an anthology of Holocaust Literature, New York, Shocken

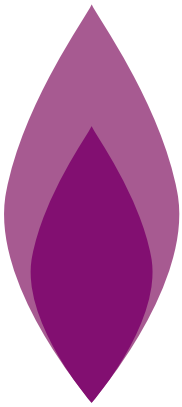
[4]Printed Records, Imperial War Museum, London

[5]Browning, Christopher, 2001, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, New York: HarperCollins, 1992, repr 2001, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, UK

[6]See www.deathcamps.org

Susannah Hanlon UCU member

THE HOLOCAUST 1933–1945



The Holocaust directly affected my mother and her family. She and her mother managed to escape from Breslau to London with the assistance of the Quakers. Mum and my grandmother had to leave my great-grandmother, my great-great-grandfather and my great great aunt behind. I have some of their last letters in German with the Red Cross and the censor stamps on them.

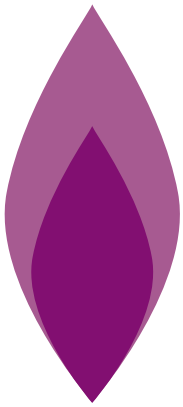
My great-great-grandfather died in about May 1941, at home, I think, though I wasn't able to find his grave. My great-grandmother's last letter gives an address in the country as her next address, saying she was moving in October 1941. When I researched the address, I discovered it was a transit camp. I also discovered that both women were then sent from there to Kaunas to the concentration camp. It looks as though my great-grandmother didn't make the full journey and died on the way, while my great-great-aunt was shot there in November, 1941. I have had their names added to the Yad Vashem list of names (which can be obtained in pdf form online). There is an additional irony in that both women were war widows to men who fought on the German side in the First World War (their names are inscribed in a memorial monument at the Jewish cemetery in Wroclaw (Breslau) where my family originated) proving the absolute futility of war (my English grandfather fought on the opposite side).

Both my grandmother and mother were permanently scarred emotionally, though my mother was very strong. My mother, in her later life in Ireland, got involved with helping refugees to learn English (Vietnamese boat people and asylum seekers from a range of countries). I think this helped her and also the people she taught because she had so much empathy for them. When she died in 1993, the Vietnamese community in Ireland paid a special tribute to her.

My mother didn't want me to disclose my Jewish heritage. Although she took me through the different religious aspects, from a Liberal perspective, she did not want me to stand out as different in any way at school or at work. It is only recently that I have begun to be more open about my background.

Gail Marcus UCU member

THE HOLOCAUST 1933–1945



I was born in South Africa. My grandparents were Russian Jews from Lithuania. My mother was born in a Jewish shtetl (village) in Lithuania, Pozelva. 'A very happy childhood, a close knit community, everybody knew each other, so you felt quite secure,' she told me. Today you won't find Pozelva on a map – like thousands of other towns and villages, it was razed to the ground by the Nazis, and all the people in it were killed.

My maternal grandfather immigrated to South Africa in 1927. My mother was five years old when she came to South Africa with my grandmother, in March 1933, on the last German ship that would take Jews. After that, the Nazi anti-Jewish laws came into force.

As immigrants, my grandparents struggled and were quite poor. Yiddish was my mother's mother tongue. In South Africa she first learned Afrikaans. Later she learned English, which she spoke like the Queen and regarded as her mother tongue. She considered herself South African.

My father was born in South Africa. His mother had come to South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century. His father died in the influenza epidemic in 1918, when my father was just one year old. His youngest brother was born soon after. His mother was left to bring up five children on a farm, in a strange country, barely knowing the language. They grew up in hardship and poverty, but were all healthy, strong and long-lived.

When war against Nazi Germany began, the South African government of that time was fighting against the Nazis, together with the allies. My father volunteered to join the South African army to fight the Nazis, he was a radio operator. He was captured at Tobruk in Egypt, by the Italians, on 21 June 1943, along with twenty-two thousand South African troops. He told me that not a shot was fired in defence.

He was taken to Italy along with the other captured troops. Although the prisoners of war were starving in Italy, his experience there left him with a lifelong love of Italy and the Italian people, which he passed on to me. My father often told us about his experiences as a prisoner of war under the Italians. As children, we loved nothing more than to hear these stories.

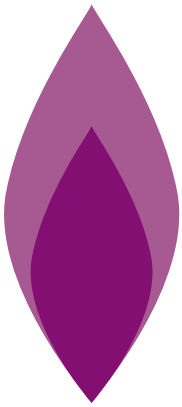
'Tell us about the prisoner-of-war camp!' we would cry and, 'What was it like to starve?'

'Ag man, it was terrible!' he would reply in a cheerful voice. 'All you could think about was food. All you ever spoke about was food. You even dreamed about food.'

He described how they were crawling with lice.

'The Italian women used to come to the fence with wagons with food and sing to us. They were so beautiful. There was such pity in their eyes.'

THE HOLOCAUST 1933–1945



The Italian guards were teaching him Italian.

Red Cross parcels helped to keep the prisoners alive. 'When we asked the prison guards when the parcels were coming, they would reply, "Domani, dopodomani." – Tomorrow, the day after tomorrow – everything was 'domani'. But tomorrow never comes.'

Then he would sing, to the tune of Lily Marlene, 'In Italiano, molto lavorari, molto lavorari y poco mangiare. Venire la, andare qua, andare qua, venire la, ma molto lavorari y poco mangiare.'

('In Italy there is lots of work, lots of work and very little to eat. We come here, they say go there, we go there, they say come here… lots of hard work and very little to eat.') We would join in, singing with gusto.

'The Italians hated fascism,' he told us. 'When Mussolini capitulated, all the guards were celebrating. They told the prisoners, 'Come with us. We'll look after you. We'll help you escape.'

But the British and South African commanders told them that if they went with the Italians, they would be considered traitors. Some of the prisoners did go with the Italians and were saved. The South African writer, Uys Krige, wrote the remarkable story of what happened in his book, *The Way Out*.

My father did not want to be considered a traitor to his country, so he remained. Shortly after, the Nazi Germans moved in. My father and the other remaining prisoners were taken to Germany by train. His experiences there were very different to Italy.

On the way, some prisoners tried to escape by jumping out of the train as it was going through a tunnel. It was pitch dark and some of them were killed instantly as they hit the tunnel wall. Those who weren't killed were shot dead by the Nazis.

The Nazis killed all those whom they knew to be Jewish. When it came to my father, a Nazi guard said to him, 'You're Jewish.' My father replied, 'No I'm not.'

'So how come you speak German so well?'

'It's like Afrikaans,' my father said.

I was shocked that my father had denied that he was Jewish. 'How could you say you're not Jewish?' I asked.

'Why should I tell them?' he replied. 'They would have killed me. Then I wouldn't be here, and you and your brothers wouldn't be here either.'

In Germany, my father was in a prisoner of war camp in Lutzen, near to Leipzig. He saw the bombing of Dresden from there. The prisoners were

starving, but had to work in a sugar factory for twelve or more hours per day. One day, my father refused to go to work on an empty stomach. The Nazis threw him into a dark dungeon beneath the ground. He was kept in there for nine days. All he could hear was the dripping of water and the Nazi guard marching back and forth above him, every now and then firing his gun and threatening to kill my father.

Soon after being released from the dungeon my father, not surprisingly, suffered a nervous breakdown. While in hospital he was treated by a fellow prisoner. He was later exchanged for a German prisoner of war and returned to South Africa.

Soon after his return from Nazi Germany, my father was attending a meeting on the Johannesburg City Hall steps. A man shouted, 'I'm a Nazi and I'm proud of it.' My father 'just went for him,' was arrested, and spent the night in prison.

In 1948 the Nationalist Party came to power in South Africa. Many members of the government were members of the Broederbond, which had openly and actively supported the Nazis and endorsed Nazi ideology before and during World War II. Apartheid was allied to and strongly influenced by Nazi ideology. As a result, my father, like many other Jews, became involved in the struggle against Apartheid.

In the sixties, the German government was paying reparations to survivors. People told my father that he ought to claim reparations. He said angrily, 'I don't want their money!'

Despite my parents' experience, I never thought of them as Holocaust survivors. Somehow I thought that, apart from what happened to my mother's village, and my father's POW experience, my family had escaped the death camps and murders carried out by the Nazis. It was not until the late nineties, when my aunt brought a family tree to England on one of her visits, that I learned that scores of our family had been killed in the Holocaust, or suffered in the concentration camps.

From my mother's notes, I have just discovered that my maternal grandfather's sister was also killed by the Nazis, as were the brother and sister of my paternal grandfather.

When I was a child, we used to visit one of my father's cousins. There were always a lot of older people sitting on chairs around the swimming pool in the back garden and they all seemed very gloomy. After looking at the family tree, my mother reminded me of them. 'They were all Holocaust survivors,' she told me.

The cousin who compiled the family tree wrote about 'the lovely Lydda', who was then four years old. He wrote. 'Out of 27 family members, 12 died in

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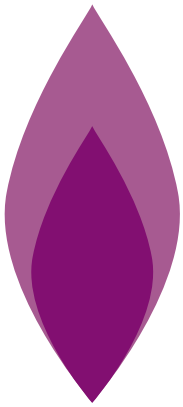

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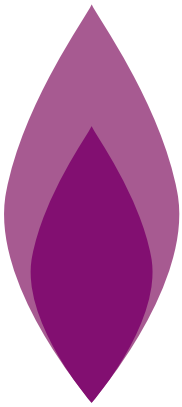

the Holocaust. And also the lovely Lydda.' This was just one small branch of my family.

In 2000, I was asked to participate in an art exhibition of work by the children of holocaust survivors. I did a painting called, 'And also the lovely Lydda.' In it I painted this branch of the family, and my father as a prisoner of war with the jackbooted legs of the Nazi guard marching above him. From a sepia photograph, I painted my mother in her grandmother's arms. Around this I wrote, 'My mother's village was razed to the ground by the Nazis and all the people in it were killed.'

When I showed this to my mother, she said, 'And also my grandmother.'

I said, 'Your grandmother?'

She replied, 'Well, you know my village was razed to the ground by the Nazis. And all the people in it were killed.'

Me: 'Yes, but I didn't know your grandmother was one of them.'

My mother: 'Well, she was there and she was killed.'

In the forefront of the painting I depicted my immediate family. Between them and the top section of the painting, is the smoke of a brightly burning memorial candle and in the smoke, the unborn babies. It was not only those who were killed, but the generations which they could have given birth to.

In this painting I wanted to show that my family, despite the terrible past, the hardships and memories, is happy cheerful, humorous, optimistic, forward-looking and life-loving. But the shadow of what happened in the holocaust is ever present.

The Nazis believed that Germans were the master race. Jews, Slavs and others were called untermenschen, (sub humans), and were regarded as an inferior species. The Jews were like vermin and needed to be exterminated completely. The Nazis planned to kill all the Jews in the world, followed by the Slavs, and to conquer and enslave the rest of the world to the thousand year Reich.

They failed and must never be allowed to rise again.

Anita Peleg UCU member

The following is an excerpt from the current book being written by Anita on her mother who survived the Holocaust.

THE HOLOCAUST 1933–1945

My mother, Nomi Blake (born Sisi Dum 1924, Munkacevo, Czechoslovakia). For as long as I remember mother told us openly about her experiences of the Holocaust and for as long as I remember I vowed to write her story. I have now completed a first draft and would like to share part of it with you here. It is a story of great strength and courage and one that reminds us all what racism can do if left unchecked.

Growing up in post WW1 Czechoslovakia, for Sisi Dum, youngest of 10 children to an orthodox Jewish family, memories were very happy ones. Playing in the streets with friends, riding horse-back through the town, studying the readings of Karl Marx by the river and sitting around the large dining room table with her family were hallmarks of this time of freedom and harmony. In 1938 Hungarian occupation restricted Jewish life and learning but optimism for the future remained strong. This was, however, the beginning of the end of this warm, harmonious and enlightened period in Eastern Europe. A New World Order was being attempted.

By 1944 Sisi was no longer allowed to go to school, her family was not allowed to earn money; fear and concern for the future crept in.

Confinement in a ghetto at the edge of town and deportation to Auschwitz separated from her father and other family members but spared the gas chambers, Sisi and her sister Malchi were chosen to survive. In the work camp of Brannau they were taught by other prisoners of war to sabotage German bombs. Despite appalling living conditions, Sisi and Malchi formed a bond of unity with their fellow prisoners which was to help them survive the death camp, the inhumane conditions of the work camps and give them the courage to escape from the German death marches. Returning home and being reunited with only a small part of her large family was a depressing and soul-searching time for Sisi.

Throughout her time in the camps she had remained positive and strong but the return home where no children and no older people had been spared was devastating. In 1942 her family had included her father and mother, nine brothers and sisters, six spouses and nine grandchildren, 26 direct family members. When the war finally ended only seven remained, the rest of the family including all the grandchildren had been murdered.

This is an excerpt from the book I am writing about her life:

'Schnell, Schnell climb aboard the train.'

The guards stood over them with guns forcing them to stand up immediately. Grabbing their belongings, Sisi took hold of Fishi's hand and together with Malchi, Gisi, her children and her father they were herded into

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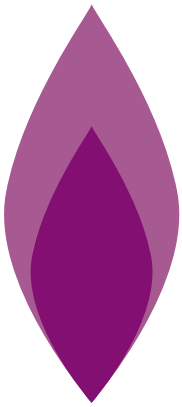

a carriage packed with about 100 people. There was no room to sit in the cramped carriage, everyone was squashed together upright.

After several hours of standing the children and the older people took it in turns to sit but with no food or water sitting was little consolation. For hours the train did not move, remained at the station and the people inside it stood in the heat of the day. Squeezed in between so many people hardly able to breathe, Sisi was thankful when the train started moving as some air got to them through the wooden slats. There were however many long stops en route, but without windows and only small openings between the wooden planks, they could not identify where they were or where they were going.From time to time Sisi saw little Judiko's hand stretching out pleading for some food. Just two months ago this would have been a welcome sight from a little girl that ate so little, here it just brought further anguish to Sisi's heart and memories etched indelibly on her mind.

In the heat and the darkness Sisi closed her eyes, she tried to imagine she was back at home in Munkacs, but the slow whimper of the small children and the moans of the older inhabitants of her carriage made it impossible to escape. With no toilets or sanitary facilities, the members of the carriage tried to organise one corner of the carriage for their toileting needs, the stench over the course of the four days was of course unavoidable. From time to time the container was emptied through a hole in the wooden planks but as the train gathered speed the remains of urine and excrement just flew back into their faces. And so the journey continued.

At one point during the four-day journey Sisi managed to fall asleep leaning against a wall, when she awoke she found Fishi standing up, he had not wanted to wake anyone. Sisi immediately found space for him on the floor so that he could sleep. With no food or water, the journey became more and more unbearable for all the passengers, one women became so distressed that she slowly lost her mind calling out as they passed each station 'Is this Vienna, is this Vienna, I must get out' and then an hour later: 'Is this Paris, is this Paris? Please let me out.'

Her cries and the cries of babies were incessant. At one point Sisi had to fight back the wish that the babies would just stop crying for good, such were the incessant nature of the cries. Again Sisi closed her eyes to block everything out, she could see nothing but slowly her closed eyes began to identify a small twinkling star. From that point on when the cries became too unbearable and her exhaustion so great that she wanted to just let herself drop, Sisi closed her eyes and focused on the little star before her.

If Sisi had known what would happen to her family next she might have wished to remain on that train, she might have preferred to continue hearing the babies howling and the cries of despair as some people fell

unconscious with exhaustion or hunger. But her sense of relief and hope as they pulled into a brightly lit station, with what appeared to be a large but well organised welcoming party, was soon shattered with the sudden all too familiar barking of orders. Looking through the slats the darkness of the night was broken by bright lights shining through the wooden slats of the carriage. The train stood there for a while and then all of a sudden without warning 'heraus, heraus' the carriage doors were flung open. Shots were fired in the air as they were pulled off the train and pushed along the platform by young men and women speaking to them in Yiddish. If they were Jews why were they being so unkind, why were they so rough? Again screams of terror filled the air as people were beaten by the soldiers if they hesitated for a moment. There was not a moment to think, not a moment to consider the journey that they had just undergone or what lay ahead of them.

As they were pulled off the train and herded away their bags were pulled from them with no explanation. Some of those pulling them from the train whispered quickly to Sisi, 'You are in Auschwitz'... 'say he is 16' pointing to Fishi and Juditco. Others told her father, 'Say you are a carpenter, say you have a trade, give the children to the grandparents, save yourselves.'

The name of the station, Auschwitz, nor the warnings of those helping them off the train meant anything to them, they were too frightened and too tired to listen.

Again they waited, standing in line surrounded by soldiers glaring at them. Slowly the line moved until they came before a German officer sitting at a small table. With one finger he looked at the people and indicated to them where to go. Sisi and Malchi were directed to the left, Fishi, her father were all sent to the right. Her heart pounded as Fishi and her father were sent in the opposite direction with all the men. Sisi couldn't help feeling glad that Fishi was with her father, she supposed that Fishi could look after her father and that he was better off with the men. But then Malchi and Sisi were once again ordered to go in the opposite direction to Gisi. Why then were Gisi and her children also ushered to the right? Bewildered by all these shouts and orders, 'move here, stop, go to the right, go to the left, she signalled to Gisi as if to say see you later. Not even the words of the Polish inmates opened her eyes to the fact that she would never see them again.

The air smelt of burning and a dark smoke floated above them. On asking one of the Polish Jewish Kapos what the smell was, she shouted at them: 'That's your family up there in the smoke'. At the time Sisi and Malchi thought she was crazy and just rather unkind, how could she say such terrible things?

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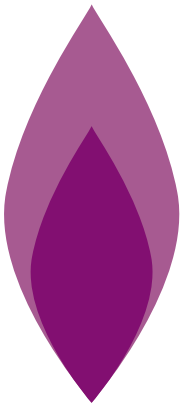

Again they were made to stand for several hours until all the sorting had been done and a large group of them were gathered together. After marching toward another building the consistent barking 'Schnell, Schnell' suddenly changed to, 'Undress, remove all your clothes.' Despite the presence of male soldiers Sisi found herself ripping off her clothes for fear she would be beaten for not getting them off quickly enough. Out in the open and inhibited by their bodies and the cold of the morning the women stood huddled together. One by one a large female solider came round with a razor, grabbed hold of their hair and shaved it off. Every inch of hair was shaved from their bodies. When finished Sisi looked round for Malchi and could not see her, in panic she started screaming for her older sister. She stopped for a moment as the nude bald figure next to her called out her name. They looked at each other and fell into each other's arms half laughing at how ridiculous they looked and half crying from fear and relief. They were still together but they no longer recognised each other without hair.

From this point on the sisters were inseparable, they made a point of staying as close as possible to each other for fear of losing each other. Sisi's only comfort at that moment was her dearest Malchi always by her side.

Sarah Rauchas UCU member

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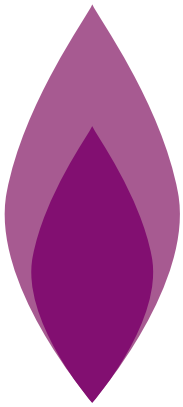

My father and his family lived in Lithuania, in a small village. In the late 1920s, he and two brothers were sent away to South Africa, to avoid going into Stalin's army. This is what he told me. He left behind both his parents, and his five sisters. Just over a decade later, in 1941, his entire family, the ones he had left behind, were wiped out by the Nazis. As he put it, 'The letters just stopped coming'. For many years he had no idea of what had actually happened to them, but his assumption was that they were captured and taken into concentration camps.

After some years, my dad had contact from Riva, who was the daughter of his oldest sister. Riva is my cousin, and she is now in her 90s, living in the US. Riva had also been in Zakeliskiai at the time, and with the family and her husband Joe, had been taken to German concentration camps. She had been separated from Joe. At the end of the war, 'when we were liberated', she found her way to America. Joe found his way there too, and they found each other in the US. But the rest of the family were obliterated. Riva does not talk about her time in the concentration camps at all; she finds it too upsetting to relive any of it. She still has the tattoo on her arm, the number she was given, which is a daily reminder, but for the rest, she says nothing. Joe, who has since passed away, was more willing to talk.

As I write this, I am filled with sadness. I never knew any of my grandparents, or my aunts; and my father lost his first family at a very young age; something he never forgot. At the end of his life, when he was very ill, he kept calling out the names of his sisters, and asking them to come. Mary, Hannah, Leah, Deborah, Gertrude. Especially Mary. I think that I reminded him of Mary, because he began calling me Mary. He also kept telling me to leave, 'before they come and get you'. I am named for my father's mother (as it is a Jewish tradition, to name babies after deceased relatives, so that their souls are then free to go to heaven), Sarah Tauba, whom I never met, but who I suppose lives on: through my father, and his stories about her and the love he passed on in them, and through me.

Barbara Winston UCU member

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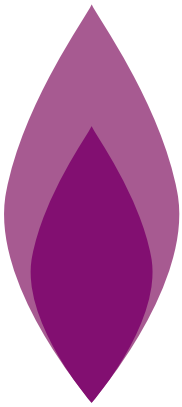

The entry for Abraham Spiegel/Szpigel in the Central Database of Shoah* Victims' names provided by 'Yad Vashem'** is stark:

Transport: #42 from Drancy to Auschwitz on 6 November 1942
Place of Death: AUSCHWITZ camp
Date of Death: 1.12.1942

I had been searching for survivors from my mother's extended family for years.

My grandfather came to this country from Poland over 100 years ago. He left behind his parents, brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins. Some years before his death in 1969, when I was too young to know what to ask or how to draw him out, he spoke to me about his search for his youngest brother in the immediate post-war years after a visit to his cousin, Berthe Benkel, in Paris. Berthe had lived in Paris throughout the Nazi occupation and told my grandfather that his youngest brother, Abraham, had visited her in Paris, probably near the start of the occupation, and that he had been involved in the French Resistance. My grandfather could not find any trace. He gave up. So far as I am aware he didn't share this information with any other family members.

The internet and the more recent availability of databases have enabled me to find Abraham, his wife and two children and indeed much of the rest of his extended family. Most perished, but among the few survivors I have been reunited with family in Israel, the daughters of the one nephew who left Poland for Palestine before the German invasion. From them I learned much more about our family, how they lived, and how they died.

That is the context of this testimony which focuses on Abraham and Pincza Spiegel/Szpigel and their children Chana aged nine and Isidore aged three when deported, ultimately to their deaths at Auschwitz.

It was a long and painstaking search that led me to the memorial on which their names appear in the small Dordogne village of St Privat des Prés, and to piece together with the help of one Isidore Drabinowski, whose family managed to evade the round ups, some sense of the life of Abraham, his wife Pincza and their young children.

The Spiegel family came from Unijeow, a small town not far from the city of Lodz and the larger town of Kalisch.

Abraham married Pincza from the village of Klimontow. They made their home in Metz, northern France, where both their children were born. There was a large community of Polish Jews in Metz and here Abraham and Pincza became friends with the Drabinowsky family.

We do not know precisely when they left in search of safety further south, we only have Berthe's reported comment about Abraham's involvement

THE HOLOCAUST 1933–1945

with the Resistance, we do know that they finally sought shelter in the tiny Dordogne village of St Privat des Prés.

We do not know exactly where they lived but we know that there was at least one villager who hid Jewish families in her attic; we know that food was very scarce for all and both villagers and refugees knew great hunger and deprivation. Rumours of an imminent roundup of Jews reached the village in the summer of 1942.

It would seem that Abraham and Pincza along with many others decided to stay put. They were hungry and tired and had to do their best for their young children. Where would they go? How would they travel? Might the outcome be worse? In the event they were rounded up on 8 October 1942 by the Vichy police and taken to the high school in Belves. Belves, described as a pretty town above the Nauze Valley in Perigord Noir. There they were all kept in the school gymnasium for between two and four days.

There would have been no facilities. They were taken to Drancy, the deportation camp where Jews and Gypsies among others were held prior to transportation east, mainly to Auschwitz, though some were sent to Majdanek, Sobibor, and Buchenwald. The evidence points to the fact that Pincza and her children were murdered on arrival, probably in the gas chambers.

Abraham survived for up to three weeks. They were among 1,000 men, women and children deported from Drancy on that day in November alone. According to available records 773 were gassed on arrival. It seems that Abraham was one of the 145 men selected for work. According to the records available four survived to 1945.

Abraham, Pincza, Chana and Isidore Spiegel, may their memory be blessed.

**'Shoah' is the Hebrew word for 'Holocaust'*
*** 'Yad Vashem' Memorial to the Holocaust located in Jerusalem which aims to name all of the Jewish victims, many of whom will have had no surviving family or community to remember them.*

Isidore Drabinowski (l) and Barbara Winston (r) by the memorial plaque erected at his initiative for the Jews deported from St Privat des Pres in the Dordogne in July and October 1942.

Isidore survived in hiding with his family as a child; his father was a friend of my great uncle Abraham Spiegel.

Dr S Yoram UCU member

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As a scion to Polish Jewry (there were three million and 30,000 before the Holocaust; 30,000 survived, ie essentially total annihilation). I want to testify about some of my uncles and aunts and their children (which is only a small fraction of my family obliterated in the Holocaust) whose details I only recently discovered.

When my grandfather Samuel (Shumuel) Nadel and grandmother Hanna (Anna) Rickover married they each had two children from previous marriages. Together, they had eight children. My mother, born in 1907, was the youngest of these 12 children. One the eve of World War II, my father who accompanied my mother (who at the time was defending her doctorate in France), who had returned to Palestine but he decided to proceed to visit his family in Poland. I believe that he managed to return just in the last moments; many Palestinian Jews were engulfed in Europe when on a visit there. I guess it was not an easy decision for him to leave his family in Poland. Many of my father's family perished too in the Holocaust including his sister and niece.

I will lay testimony to those on my maternal side being my aunts Hella and Lola and uncles Max (and his wife Bunia) and Leon.

My search to find out about my relatives has been aided by the assistance of Kuba Reiss (the husband of a half sister of my mother) who in 1955 deposited all the daf-ed (official documentation forms and records) held by Yad Vashem (www.yadvashem.org), a world centre for documentation, research, education and commemoration of the Holocaust as well as records held at the Terezin (Theresienstadt) camp.

The case of Dr (medical doctor) Helena Nadel (married name Schmolkova) is of particular interest.

Born in 1894, Dr Helena Schmolkova was deported (Prisoner Nr. In Transport: 556) from Prague to Terezin on the 24.10.1942 and from Terezin to Auschwitz Birkenau (Prisoner Nr. In 2nd Transport 1054) on 12 October 1944. My aunt Hella was on one of the last transports from Terezin. My aunt was murdered at Auschwitz.

Dr Hella (Helena) Schmolkova. Died Auschwitz-Birkeau

My mother (Helena's sister) had arranged a certificate for my aunt to travel to Palestine. This was a very rare opportunity since as is well known on the eve of the war, in the beginning of the war,and even during the war, there were various opportunities for Jews to save themselves but not a single country wanted to accept Jews.

THE HOLOCAUST 1933–1945



Above, l–r: Max Nadel, his wife Bunia Nadel, and Lola Grunberg, née Nadel

My Aunt Hella worked as a physician with children and she deliberately declined to use this opportunity to leave and save herself, but decided not to leave the children in her care. Instead, Aunt Hella carried a cyanide pill intending to use it on herself when the time came, so as not to let the Nazis determine the time and circumstances of her death. Her husband, on the other hand had escaped to London.

Other family members who were murdered during the Holocaust include my Uncle Max Nadel (above left), a merchant by trade who was born in 1904 and his wife Bunia (above, centre). Together, they had two children. The children were between the ages of six and ten years, and all perished.

My aunt Lola, married name Grunberg (above right), also had two children.

In addition to those mentioned, other family members who were murdered include my Uncle Leon Nadel (not pictured) who was born in 1896. An engineer by trade prior to World War II he had one child. Like many other Jews, were murdered under appalling conditions during the Holocaust.

The few who survived

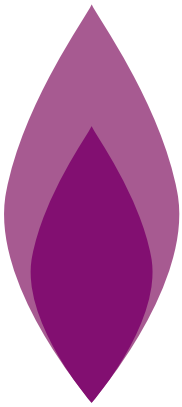
My uncle Dunek had managed to secure safe transport for my uncle Kuba, who was a practising physician in Vienna during the outbreak of WWI, his wife and my cousin Lucy, out of Auschwitz. Whilst living in London, my uncle Kuba managed to pass the American exams in medicine – I've heard he was the only one out of 1,000 who passed the exams. He left bound for the United States where he became the chief public children's doctor in New York. My cousin Lucy currently resides in the United States.

Terezin (Theresienstadt) Camp

I outline below a brief description on how the Terezin (Theresienstadt) camp (where my aunt was deported) differed from other camps.

The Terezin or 'camp ghetto' existed for three and a half years between 24 November 1941 and 9 May 1945.

THE HOLOCAUST 1933–1945



During its existence, Terezin served three purposes:

1 Terezin served as a transit camp for Czech Jews whom the Germans deported to killing centres, concentration camps, and forced-labour camps in German-occupied Poland, Belorussia, and the Baltic States.

2 It was a ghetto-labour camp to which the SS deported and then incarcerated certain categories of German, Austrian, and Czech Jews, based on their age, disability as a result of past military service, or domestic celebrity in the arts and other cultural life. To mislead or conceal the physical annihilation of the Jews deported from the Greater German Reich, the Nazi regime employed the general fiction, primarily inside Germany, that the deported Jews would be deployed at productive labour in the East. Since it seemed implausible that elderly Jews could be used for forced labour, the Nazis used Terezin to hide the nature of the deportations.

3 Terezin served as a holding pen for Jews in the above-mentioned groups. It was expected that the poor conditions there would hasten the deaths of many deportees, until the SS and police could deport the survivors to killing centres in the East.

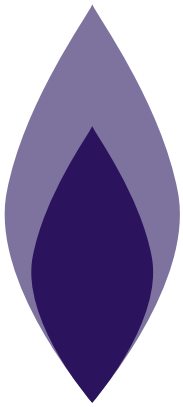
Neither a 'ghetto' as such nor strictly a concentration camp, Terezin served as a 'settlement', an assembly camp, and a concentration camp, and thus had recognisable features of both ghettos and concentration camps. In its function as a tool of deception, Terezin was a unique facility in that it also served to camouflage the extermination of the Jews from world opinion, by presenting it as a model Jewish settlement.

At the end of 1943, the Nazis allowed an International Red Cross investigation committee to visit Terezin in 1944, in order to show the world that the Nazis did no harm to the Jews. In preparation for this visit the Nazis deported more prisoners to Auschwitz so as to reduce the population. A number of changes were made, such as dummy stores, a café, kindergartens, a school and flower gardens.

The Red Cross visited Terezin on 23 July 1944 and the Nazis made a propaganda film, *The Führer gives the Jews a town*. After filming most of the cast, all the members of the internal leadership, and nearly all the children were deported to Auschwitz.

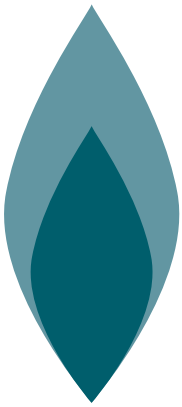
Terezin included many intellectuals, artists, musicians, for example, from the family of Gustav Mahler and Gideon Klein, painters and writers, who populated intellectual centres like Vienna and Prague between the wars. They indeed produced paintings and music in very difficult conditions and this in turn helped the Germans in their deception tactics. For more information about Terezin visit **www.pamatnik-terezin.cz**

Holocaust Memorial Day provides an opportunity for everyone to learn lessons from the Holocaust, Nazi persecution and subsequent genocides and apply them to the present day to create a safer, better future.



On Holocaust Memorial Day we share the memory of the millions who have been murdered in the Holocaust and subsequent genocides in Armenia, Bosnia, Cambodia, Darfur and Rwanda in order to challenge hatred and persecution in the UK today.

ARMENIA 1915–1918



Between 1915 and 1918, the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire were systematically persecuted, deported from their homes and murdered. Following the Balkan War and start of the First World War, Armenian men, women and children were expelled and exterminated in an attempt to destroy their very existence. The campaign was waged against Armenians following a period of deterioration in relations between ethnic groups in the Empire and a number of political and financial upheavals. It is estimated that the Ottoman policies resulted in the deaths of up to 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children.

In 1933, the Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin, was so motivated by the lack of recognition and awareness of the crimes in Armenia only a short time before, that he presented a paper to the League of Nations. The paper outlined a way in which the international community could condemn the crimes and atrocities in the Ottoman Empire, and provide a basis to prosecute the perpetrators behind such crimes. It wasn't until 1946 that the UN recognised the term genocide and affirmed the cause to which Lemkin had dedicated his life. To date, the 1946 convention is still used to recognise the actions of a state-sponsored attempt to destroy a particular group of its people.

Geoffrey Robertson QC's legal opinion 'Was There an Armenian Genocide?' with reference to Foreign & Commonwealth Office Documents which show how British Ministers, Parliament and People Have Been Misled (http://groong.usc.edu/Geoffrey-Robertson-QC-Genocide.pdf Page 38 section 93) reaches the inevitable conclusion that 'the treatment of the Armenians in 1915 answers to the description of genocide'.

Whether it takes place in Nazi-occupied Europe or in Armenia, we have a duty to remember to the victims of any act of genocide.

James Derounian UCU member

ARMENIA
1915–1918

Memoirs of a mongrel: James celebrates his immigrant heritage

In 2010 President Obama sparked a row when he referred to Americans as 'a mongrel people, I mean we're all kinds of mixed-up'. In similar vein, then-Tory MP John Townend claimed in 2001 that ministers wanted to turn the British into a 'mongrel' race. Well I have bad news for him… we are a 'mongrel race'! And I am a mongrel incarnate!

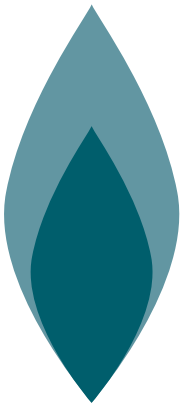
In 1947 my dad and mum arrived at Harwich, having escorted prisoners of war home, following the World War.

I remember my father describing the steam train journey to London – he kept seeing hoardings saying 'This is the Strong Country'! And thought this was heavy post-war propaganda… when in fact it was a brewery advertising its beer!

My parents met, on active service, in the Middle East; my mother was a German-Jewish refugee from Nazism; and my grandfather had fled the Turkish Genocide of 1.5 Armenians at around the time of World War I. Grandfather had settled in Khartoum (Sudan), and I still have a porcelain ashtray advertising his general store. I also have great-grandfather's binoculars picked up off the field of battle at Omdurman; he had fought in General Kitchener's British army.

Kathleen (my mum) was a nurse and Nubar (nicknamed 'Adolf' by army colleagues!) a doctor-major in the Royal Army Medical Corps. Both were headed for America but somehow ended up in London… and stayed! On one occasion I picked up grandfather's X-ray plate, in my dad's North London surgery, and held it up to the light. There were lots of opaque blobs which my father explained were bits of shrapnel still in his torso – he had been a freedom-fighter/terrorist blowing up Turkish troop trains. I can remember in my childhood taking part in marches and vigils outside the Turkish embassy in London each 24 April: The date in 1915 that the Armenian holocaust began. This remains an unacknowledged crime against humanity – the destruction of some 1 – 1.5m Armenians by the Ottoman authorities in what is now Turkey. Yes, it's a long time ago… almost a century, but that doesn't lessen the pain for the families of the victims, nor does it excuse the perpetrators. There are furthermore the examples of countries like France and the Welsh Assembly Government, who have recognised the genocide. As Nick Chen commented in a Time magazine article (30.1.2012), 'In Turkey, it is still a criminal offence to remember' the Genocide. In 2007 the journalist Hrant Dink paid with his life for 'insulting Turkishness', when he was shot dead by a fanatic in Istanbul.

ARMENIA 1915–1918



Meanwhile, on mum's side of the family, my grandfather – Gustav Goldstein – ran a munitions factory, and was rewarded with the Iron Cross for services to the Fatherland! There is a photo of mum, aged about one year, in the back of a chauffeur-driven Daimler-Benz sometime in the early part of the twentieth century.

In the lead up to Word War II, Gustav Christianised and changed his name to Gorsten. But he died of TB and grandma took mum to England sometime around 1936.

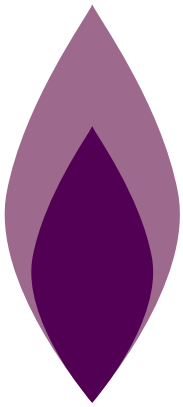
So I am a mongrel among mongrels, and proud of it! I'm proud to be born in England and very proud of my Armenian roots. It seems so obvious that the British Isles – founded on seafaring and trading – should have benefited from waves of incomers: whether they are Angles and Saxons; refugees from Idi Amin; or as a result of Poland's accession to the EU. Practically all of us 'Brits' would find – if we looked – that in fact we come from immigrant stock. What's wrong with that? I love multiculturalism and the diversity that we enjoy in this country – the various cultures, customs – and especially the food! In my childhood, in Haringey, we would regularly pick up Halloumi cheese at the Greek Cypriot deli, pick up a kebab, or enjoy a curry.

According to the BBC, 'the largest number of community languages in Europe can be found in the United Kingdom. Over 300 languages are currently spoken in London schools. Some of the most established of these are Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi, Cantonese, Mandarin and Hokkien.' How amazing is that? Of course it raises issues around inclusion and assimilation… and I genuinely sympathise with the plight of places like Dover, contending with a massive influx on non-English speakers.

But equally, I remain grateful to this United Kingdom that gave safe haven, and new life, not just to one but both my parents… and indirectly to me, of course.

BOSNIA 1992–1995

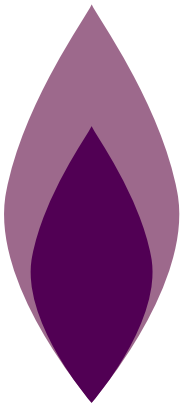
In 1980, the population of Bosnia consisted of Bosnian Serbs, (Bosnian Muslims), and Bosnian Croats. In the turmoil following the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Bosnia declared independence (1992). This was resisted by the Bosnian Serb population who saw their future as part of 'Greater Serbia'. Bosnia became the victim of the Bosnian Serbs' determined wish for political domination which it was prepared to achieve by isolating ethnic groups and, if necessary, exterminating them. With the backdrop of the ongoing civil war, in July 1995, Bosnian Serb troops and paramilitaries led by Ratko Mladic descended on Srebrenica and began shelling it. Despite being declared a safe zone by the United Nations, Bosnian Serb forces prevailed. Women and children were forced onto trucks and buses, men and boys remained. The deportation of Srebrenica's population took four days. Concentration camps such as that in Omarska were established. Inhumane conditions, suffocation from overcrowding, systematic rape and starvation, were regular dangers to prisoners.



At least 7,500 men and boys over 13 years old were killed in Srebrenica. Up to 3,000, many in the act of trying to escape, were shot or decapitated in the fields. Mladic sent out written orders to 'block, crush and destroy the straggling parts of the Muslim group' – it was carried out. 1,500 were locked in a warehouse and sprayed with machine gun fire and grenades. Others were murdered in their thousands on farms, football fields and school playgrounds. The whole action was carried out with military efficiency.

Kemal Pervanic

BOSNIA 1992–1995



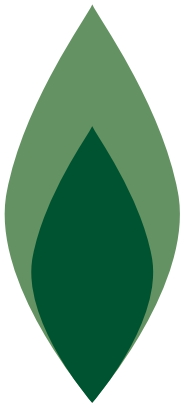
Life was relatively peaceful for Kemal and his family until 1992 when he was 24 and the former Yugoslavia began to fall apart. As this happened, political groups began to form which were based on ethnic grounds. Kemal's school and community had been made up of Serb and Muslim people with students who had worked and studied together. However, when the new authorities came into power they began targeting the Muslim population. Along with his middle brother Kasim, Kemal was forced to live in a concentration camp in Omarska. His mum was sent to a separate camp and his dad and eldest brother went to Croatia.

Kemal and Kasim were imprisoned in atrocious conditions with little water or food. The camps had been created for all men and boys over the age of 12 and the guards were made up of the Serb members of the community of the surrounding villages and towns. This meant that some of the guards in the camps were the neighbours and fellow students of Kemal and Kasim. Kemal and Kasim survived the camps, and they came to the UK shortly after they were released. With the help of the British Red Cross, they were able to bring the rest of their family to the UK and were reunited within about nine months of Kemal's arrival.

CAMBODIA 1975–1979

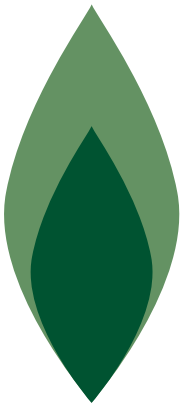
The fate of Cambodia shocked the world when the radical communist Khmer Rouge, under their leader Pol Pot, seized power in April 1975 after years of guerrilla warfare. The Khmer Rouge ruthlessly imposed an extremist programme to reconstruct Cambodia (now under its Khmer name Kampuchea) on the communist model of Mao's China – creating 'Year Zero'. The population was made to work as labourers in one huge federation of collective farms. The inhabitants of towns and cities were forced to leave. The ill, disabled, old, and very young were driven out, regardless of their physical condition. No one was spared the exodus. People who refused to leave were killed, so were those who did not leave fast enough and those who would not obey orders.

Factories, schools, and universities were shut down, so were hospitals. Lawyers, doctors, teachers, engineers, scientists and professional people in any field were murdered together with their extended families. It was possible for people to be shot simply for knowing a foreign language, wearing glasses, laughing or crying. One Khmer slogan ran, 'to spare you is no profit, to destroy you is no loss.'



Sophal Leng Stagg

CAMBODIA 1975–1979



Twenty years and what seems like a dozen lifetimes have passed since the events that I describe in the following words transpired and, although I can now look back with less emotion, the memories of that time are as vivid as if they happened yesterday. I cannot completely explain my reasons for the need to write about these experiences except as a testimony to those whose lives were lost and can no longer speak for themselves.

On the night of April 16, 1975 we were awakened by the terrible sounds of bombs and guns, close at hand. The explosions were so near that our house shook with each burst. To the mind of a terrified nine-year-old girl, it seemed that the gunfire was aimed directly at me. My parents led us to a shelter underneath the house and there, in total darkness, my mother clutched my sister Chan and me to her body and comforted us with her warmth and love. Although she must have been frightened as we were, her first thought was for the safety of her children. Needless to say none of us slept that night.

Early the next morning, Papa went out to inquire about the circumstances of the battle. We huddled together in one room hoping for the best, but fearing the worst. When he returned, we could tell from the worried expression on his face and the change in his demeanour that the news was foreboding. He told us that the Khmer Rouge was everywhere, marching up and down the highways waving their flags and celebrating their victory at the conquest of the capital city. Although he was clearly concerned for our welfare, my own reaction was to hope that this new development would at least put an end to the warfare and killing. Maybe by now, I thought, Cambodia would once again be at peace and my family could return to our treasured customs. I soon learned that the people I loved the most would begin to experience the worst horrors imaginable. We knew our lives would be changed forever.

What began as a hasty departure from our homes and neighbourhood soon became a massed confluence of families in an ever-growing crush of frightened, confused humanity. The forced evacuation of the one million residents of the capital city had begun. This was the beginning of immeasurable pain and suffering for the Cambodian people.

By the end of 1976, I was convinced I would not reach my next birthday. The Khmer Rouge had again shown me how endless their cruelty was. Up to this time, regardless of the hardships I endured, I always found comfort in the fact I would see my mother at the end of the day. I was taken by force away from my mother and assigned to a far away work group. Now my heart was broken and the will to live was gone. Without my mother I was now unable to communicate and could only look into the darkening skies

CAMBODIA 1975–1979

as if searching in my despair for some sort of comfort. As the stars shone with unusual brilliance, the round full moon seemed to offer a sign of warmth and sympathy. I began talking to it as if it was a loved one who was there to comfort me.

The next three years brought with it starvation, sickness and death as my companion. We endured misery which words can never fully describe and numbness to life itself. I got sicker with each passing day. There was virtually no muscle left on my body at all, just skin and bones. My head was bigger than my trunk even though my body was swollen from starvation.

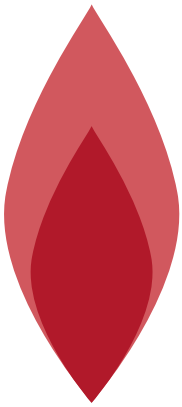
I lost my vision and the use of my legs. I was yellow with hepatitis and was ready to die if it were not for my greatest fear – I would not die without my mother. As I lay motionless I recalled my mother's voice urging me on and not to accept death, for it was this that saved my life. The Khmer Rouge would not kill me.

Peaceful times have gone away
Long gone, so far, so far away
Let me live as I will you
Peaceful times as we once knew
The young, the old, so sad these days
So sad, so scared, are we
I have closed my eyes to run away
Run away to peaceful days
Mother please stay with me
Don't go, please stay close to me
I need you now to help me see
To see the days of peace for me
Help me find those peaceful times
The times we laughed when we were free
No more pain, be at peace.

I survived Cambodia's darkest years to tell my story – as I believe all survivors of genocide should do. It is of profound importance that our youth be made aware of the horrors that existed in our past and understand that history must never repeat itself.

May the suffering of all genocide victims impact the hearts and minds of our students and teachers, making them aware of the consequences of hatred, indifference and apathy which continue to manifest itself today.

DARFUR 2003–



Darfur is a region in the west of Sudan, bordering Chad in North-East Africa. Over six million people live in Darfur and over half are Black Africans. The rest of the populations are predominantly Arab people. In more recent times, the Black Africans have been referred to as 'abid' (meaning slave) by some Arabs, who see the Africans as inferior.

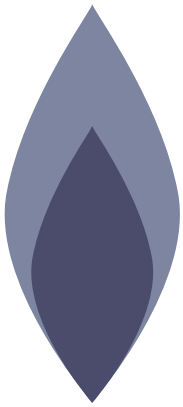
In 2003, a civil war began in the region between the sedentary population of farmers, who mainly see themselves as Africans, and the nomadic population who regard themselves as Arabic and who have been supported by the Sudanese Government.

This civil war has lead to the deaths of between 200,000 and 400,000 civilians, although reporting varies greatly, as it is difficult for the International peacekeepers to keep accurate records. Despite the creation of South Sudan in July 2011, up to 2.5 million people are still displaced in Darfur. They have been forced to flee their homes to makeshift refugee camps in Darfur or Chad run by international aid agencies.

RWANDA 1994

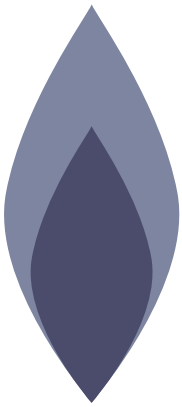
In 100 days in 1994 approximately one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered in the Rwandan genocide. On 6 April 1994 the plane carrying Rwanda's President was shot down. Tutsis were accused of killing the President, and Hutu civilians were told by radio and word of mouth, that it was their duty to wipe out the Tutsis. First moderate Hutus who weren't anti-Tutsi should be killed. So should Tutsi wives or husbands. Although on a large scale, this genocide was carried out entirely by hand, often using machetes and clubs. The men who'd been trained to massacre were members of civilian death squads, the Interahamwe. The State provided supporting organisation – politicians, officials, intellectuals – and professional soldiers incited the killers to do their work. Local officials assisted in rounding up victims and making suitable places available for slaughter.

Tutsi men, women, children and babies were killed in thousands in schools and churches. The victims, in their last moments alive, were also faced by another appalling fact, their cold-blooded killers were people they knew – neighbours, workmates, former friends, sometimes even relatives through marriage.



Jean Bosco Ngabonzima UCU member

RWANDA 1994



Jean Bosco Ngabonzima gave this testimony to UCU members to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day 2011 'Genocide: unheard stories'.

Hello my name is Jean Bosco Ngabonzima, and I am one of the Rwandan Genocide survivors in 1994. I was born in 1979 in the small village of Kimisange in the outskirts of Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda. I was the second oldest of seven children. My father was a civil servant, and my mother was a nurse. The family was close and lived together happily until the outbreak of the genocide in Rwanda on 6 April 1994.

The following day, we heard rumours that Hutus were out to kill every Tutsi in the country, claiming that we, the Tutsis had killed the Hutu president. We were advised to stay indoors. I had never seen my parents so agitated and terrified in all my life. That night we heard screams and gun shots from our neighbours. Then there was a knock at the door and before we could even respond, the door fell in and about four or so people came in and dragged my father out by his legs. That was the last we saw of him.

We could hear him on the way begging them not to kill his family and that he was going to reward them with money. They later killed him on the road.

We were hiding under the bed but we could see everything. Mother told us to keep quiet. Then the shooting began. The bullets came in and hit everything in the way. Yet, no-one dared scream. Mother could not cover all four of us.

I could smell the hot blood coming from under the right shoulder of my little sister and my mum who had been hit on her left leg (at the time) did not know whether it was me or my mum or my sister. I could not feel any sound of them. My mind was occupied with the terror of us being hacked to death.

We played dead, praying that the killers would disappear. Suddenly the door burst open and they came in praising themselves for a good job done. I was closer to the door and they kicked me in my belly. It was painful but the thought of being severed alive with their machetes, made me stay as quiet as a mouse.

One of them said: 'Let's make sure that he is dead with this'. I didn't move an inch, nor did I make any noise. They must have thought that I was dead. So the next day I saw so many Tutsis in the area gathered to try to fight the perpetrators and Interahamwe with men and women fighting and throwing stones. First four to five days we managed to hold them until we heard that they have got support from soldiers and other perpetrators and other Interahamwe from other areas. That was when we decided to move to another place which was on top of the hill, so we could see them coming. On that hill we met others, many Tutsis running free for their own life and joining forces to keep fighting.

Because my mum was wounded she looked very weak and the next house to our house was the home of my grandmother, who was very disabled

RWANDA 1994

using a wheelchair. She couldn't do anything for herself and my mum decided not to come with us on top of the hill. She decided to stay with my grandmother to take care of her. From time to time I and a few other people would go to see them.

One night when we get there we found every house destroyed. There were no doors or windows and the hall roof was gone on the house. We sneaked into the house, we found them dead.

I cannot describe how they had been killed, because some of the older people tried to hide and not let me see them, and some of them asked me to say goodbye to my mother and grandmother. We left them there and went back to the top of the hill.

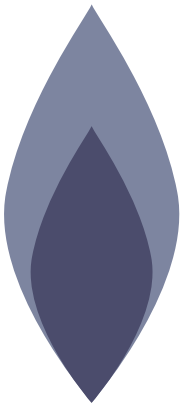
The next day on the hill while we were gathering, we kept fighting trying to hold our position and defeat them. The news spread all over the town, even on Radio RTLM, calling for Interahamwe and perpetrators to join forces together even with soldiers to come to attack us because they said we are Inyenzi (cockroaches).

I remember that day. I heard it on the Radio, later on around 4pm we started believing today is another day of surviving. People started to settle in their own place in the bush. Women and children including my young brothers and sisters were so tired. So hungry with no drink and no food for almost four weeks and here is another big attack with soldiers and Interahamwe. All over we were ambushed and we fought but they were so strong with guns and grenades. For some of us it was first time we heard gun shots and see someone being shot and then we start running. And then they come and killed all women and children and the ones who tried to escape were being killed by others who been ambushed by the people who tried to escape. That day is a day I'll never forget.

It is a day I saw hundreds of people die. Killed by machetes, hacked and been shot everything you can ever imagine. Luckily I don't know how I escaped. I just kept running all over in the area trying to find somewhere to hide. I wasn't even scared to go the house of the killers who were our neighbours who would chase me away and called out to the murderers to come to kill me.

I kept running all over in the bush luckily I found a big bush very dark with a big hole in the ground. I didn't know if there were any animals in there but at that moment, I wasn't scared of any animals because I would rather be killed by animals instead of being hacked or butchered by machetes. I went in and stayed inside the hole all night and the next day. I could hear them there carrying on killing and they kept searching for survivors to finish all who didn't die directly and hear them talking about how they killed them and how proud they were of the job they had done. They knew there were some who escaped and they kept looking all over using sniffer dogs.

RWANDA 1994



I stayed in that bush all day and then in evening, when I couldn't t hear any sound or someone talking. I came out of the bush and went back to the top of the hill. That was where I saw people lying down dead, including my two young brothers and sister. I didn't know what do. I couldn't even cry because I was so scared while I was trying to touch my little brother to check if he is dead.

I saw people who escaped came back with soldiers in the distance and my first thought was they are bringing them here to kill as well. I just remembered the trick of playing dead again and laid down trying to cover myself with the dead bodies and not breathe.

And that was when I heard the people with the soldiers were looking for anyone who were not dead talking about how they been killed. That was when I found out that they were Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) soldiers.

I came out from under the dead. I saw a few people I knew who survived and the RPF soldiers started to calm me down, telling me I'm safe now. We searched for wounded people all night and they took us to their base to another Hill called Rebero. That is how I survived the Genocide.

I personally believe that surviving was partly a matter of luck – but it's also a great responsibility because many survivors are very poor and don't even have life's basic necessities. That's why those who have something to share need to feel responsible for those who have nothing. I also think surviving is a privilege because when I consider what happened in Rwanda, all the determination of the killers and their accomplices, it's a miracle that some people managed to survive.

It's hard for other people to understand our experiences. Obviously not everyone can understand what I went through. Some people didn't even want me to live – they still don't want me to be alive today – and they're not happy to see me prosper. Those who went through similar things do understand, especially those who share our lives daily

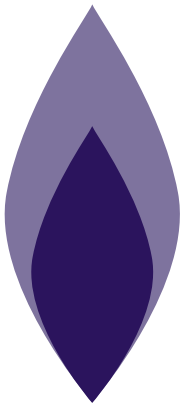
Notes

Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) was a Rwanda radio station which broadcast from July 8, 1993 to July 31, 1994. It played a significant role during the April–July 1994 Rwandan Genocide.

Widely listened to by the general population, it projected racist propaganda against Tutsis, moderate Hutus, Belgians, and the United Nations mission UNAMIR. It is widely regarded as having played a crucial role in creating the atmosphere of charged racial hostility that allowed the genocide to occur. A study by a Harvard University researcher estimates that approximately 9.7% of the participation in the genocidal violence was due to the broadcasts. The estimate of the study suggests that approximately 50,000 deaths were caused by the station's broadcasts

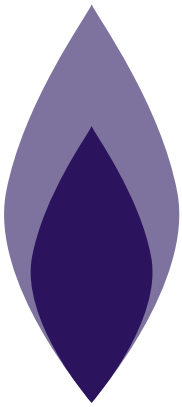
Opposing racism at grassroots level

As part of the trade union movement, we have longed campaigned against racism in society through active campaigning at grass roots and national level, training and exposing race hate groups by dispelling the myths and message of hate and division.



Philippa Davey UCU staff member

OPPOSING RACISM AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL



UCU regional support official for South West region, Philippa Davey, recounts her experiences of visiting Auschwitz in 2011, the theme *Untold stories* and standing up against the English Defence League in her home town of Plymouth.

In January 2011 my daughter and I went to Auschwitz on Holocaust Memorial Day. The camp was surrounded by armed Special Forces, helicopters and military vehicles as the Polish and German presidents and other dignitaries were laying wreathes. It was snowing.

It was really eerie as you could almost imagine the troops were the SS and there were also a number of camp survivors wearing neck scarves in the 'pyjama stripes' of the uniform of prisoners.

Meeting some of the prisoners was a humbling experience and I spoke to a Polish political prisoner who was also a trade unionist. He was arrested and sent to Auschwitz for helping Jews to hide and escape the ghettos. He said he never gave it a second thought that he would protect his neighbours and community. My daughter and I said that we would likely be in the camps as we are both trade unionist's and my daughter is gay. We both said we would like to think we would stand up against racism, fascism and homophobia. He said that was good news as people needed to stand up to the fascist threat that still existed and we promised we would make sure that we did.

In May 2011 I was elected as a Labour councillor in Plymouth. At the end of June 2011 the English Defence League (EDL) planned a march through our city centre and as a UAF member I was asked to approach other councillors and MPs and ask them to sign a statement renouncing the EDL and supporting a peaceful multi cultural event on the same day. I was proud to do so and asked councillors and MPs from both parties to do so. The statement described the EDL as racist and cited a recent racist attack that members had been involved in. Initially our group Leader and councillors agreed to sign and for this to go into the press. About a week before the march I received a phone call from our group leader saying that the council officers had advised we do not sign as we could be sued for saying the EDL were racist and we could be personally held responsible. It was a difficult phone call and as I had only recently been elected I was considering not signing and not continuing to pressure other councillors and MPs.

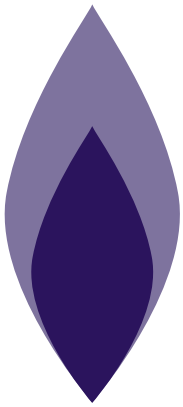
As I walked home, feeling very upset, I remembered the promise I had made at Auschwitz. My life wasn't at risk and all I was being asked was to sign a statement that I knew to be true, I had failed at the very first opportunity to stand up against fascism and racism and let down my community. I rang our group leader back and said that I didn't care what anyone else

was doing I was signing and I was signing because it was true and I was not scared by a threat to sue.

In the end our whole group signed, both MPs and some individual Tory councillors. We attended the event, marched, spoke and spent the day with friends and neighbours. I can look myself in the eye in the mirror and when I returned to Auschwitz this year I felt I could go with a clear conscience.

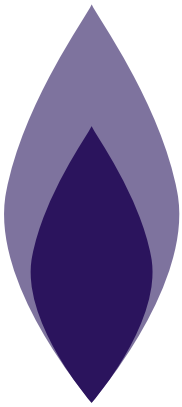
I would hope that if my life or freedom was threatened I would do the same but I can see how easy it is to make the wrong decision and that is why we must speak out, we must listen to survivors and we must remember.

OPPOSING RACISM AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL



Dawn Livingston UCU member

OPPOSING RACISM AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL



The following testimony was given by Dawn Livingston, UCU Member and Vice Chair of the UCU's Black Members' Standing Committee (2011/12) in January 2012 to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day – the theme *Speak up, Speak Out*.

Like many of you here I lived through the shock and despair following the New Cross fire in January 1981. This happened over 30 years ago. Yet the horror of the communal hurt that affected so many is unforgettable. 13 people all black died. Subsequently one person 'fell from a balcony' after being traumatised from losing his friends. 16 more people were injured. I can remember the sadness and anger at the way this terrible disaster seemed as if it was almost disregarded and felt misrepresented by the police, the media and others.

The police were criticised for ruling out a racial motive. However, black people were used to this sort of attitude from the police regarding any issues affecting them. I remember at around about the same time there was a bombing in Ireland and the Queen made an official statement of sympathy. The black community with others that were sympathetic to the cause had to comfort each other, had to come together to insist on an investigation, had to speak up and speak out. As a nineteen year old at the time it was one of the first times I became aware of community action. To date no satisfactory resolution has been made regarding this tragic happening. Two inquests both returned open verdicts.

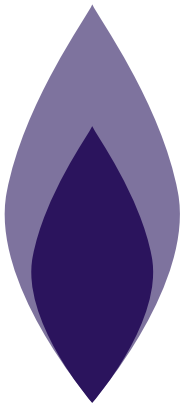
12 years later Stephen Lawrence was murdered. At this time I had two of my three sons. They were aged 10 and 15 years. My eldest son just a couple of years younger than Stephen was at that time. You can imagine how frightened I was of the possibility of a racist attack on my sons. How terribly desperate I was for the murderers to be brought to justice and how disappointed I was when it was clear that yet again the racists were getting away with murder. I appreciated that my sons were still alive and how devastated Stephen's parents must have been. First because of losing their son but also because of having barrier after barrier put in the way of them gaining justice.

The Lawrence's would not give up and many people affected by their resolute determination to insist that they be heard became part of the community that listened.

18 years! Despite or maybe in spite of the McPherson report that announced 'institutional racism' recommendations were slow to bring change. I shared another community with the Lawrence's.

Believing in the principles of union activism I have always been a union member joining as an 18-year-old.

OPPOSING RACISM AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL



Around the time the Lawrence's were mourning their son I was finding that my working life was beset by racism, bullying and harassment. At this point I was a single parent with a full time job and two sons. My workplace situation was seriously affecting the quality of my life. For the next several years I had no other recourse but to defend my rights and to do this I was supported and protected by my union in a way that made it possible for me to survive.

This led me to the decision to accept the nomination to the role of a union representative. In order to fulfil that role it was necessary to get the relevant training. So off I went to Lewisham College. There I met the people who were to be my future work colleagues. My suggestion to my tutor that I think I would like to do her job was met with an invitation to discuss the possibility with the coordinator of the Trade Union Studies department! My tutor became my colleague when I began part time work at Lewisham College before gaining a permanent post less than year later.

Within months of starting with the Trade Union Studies Department I was invited to speak at the launch of the TUC Tackling Racism Book event. Doreen Lawrence was a guest of honour. I was able to meet her for the first time and introduce my husband, sons and a daughter who were there too. This initiative provided different ways of speaking up and speaking out.

18 years! It has taken 18 years to bring some redress for Stephen's murder. It has also brought the ConDems, the bankers and the cuts. All our communities are being affected when racism rears its ugly head. We have to speak up and speak out to fight back.

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