

## A candle assembly for Fani, whose picture is filled with **Untold Stories**

*Please note this is a simple reflective assembly led by one person. If you wish your students to be more active participants please download the scripts for our primary assembly and presentation on the SS Louis <http://education.hmd.org.uk/assemblies/primary> and our secondary assembly on the plight of refugees from genocide <http://education.hmd.org.uk/assemblies/secondary>.*

*This assembly is linked to the lost communities of Greece <http://education.hmd.org.uk/case-studies/the-untold-stories-of-lost-communities/read> case study and uses recently discovered **Untold Stories** linked with a poignant photograph kindly provided by Kehila Kedosha Janina.*

Before the assembly **cover** a table with a cloth and **place** an unlit candle on it.

**Welcome** everyone into the room and **project** the slide, which you will find at the end of this document, onto a screen. **Ask** everyone to sit quietly and look at the picture. Then, using the following words as your guide, **tell** the picture's **Untold Stories**. You could **use** a pointer or torch beam to highlight parts of the photograph as you speak about them.

They say that every picture tells a story so this morning I want to share a special picture with you. I like looking at old photographs. It makes me feel as though I am looking through a window into the past. The photographer has caught one brief second and preserved it forever. The people are frozen in time but as I look at them I think of the scene around them, the sounds that might have been heard, the conversations which were taking place as the camera captured this image. Old photographs are very special. You see, if we ask the right questions they bring the past to life and provide us with **Untold Stories**. It is important to remember the past because often it has lessons to teach us. Learning from the past can help us create a safer, better future.

When I first saw this photograph I thought of lots of questions. Why are all these people gathered together? Where are they? What are they doing? What do they have with them? Some seem to have suitcases and bags at their feet, so are they going on a journey? They don't look very happy or excited do they? So it doesn't look like a holiday. They are all wearing lots of clothes, perhaps that makes clothes easier to carry when you only have one suitcase, but it can't be the right time of year for a summer trip or holiday and anyway...

Look – the trees don't have any leaves. It must be winter. So there's another question. Why would people stand together outside with suitcases in the middle of winter?

I wanted to know more so I looked more closely at individual people in the photograph. I suddenly noticed that I couldn't see any men in the picture, only women and girls. Where were all the men? Look at the woman in the front, she's crying. She looks very distressed. Look at the old woman in the headscarf – she looks upset too, and then there is this woman clutching a handkerchief in her hand – that's what I do if I'm unhappy. What **Untold Stories** are hidden in this picture? I wish I could talk to individual people in the photograph and find out. I can think of so many things I want to say to them. Why are you crying? Can I help you or comfort you? Is there anything I can do? Perhaps it sounds silly but I want to walk into the picture and help. You know how it is when you see a sad piece of news on television – you want to walk right into the scene and dry people's tears.

I found out more about the picture and discovered the answer to some of my questions. These are the **Untold Stories** I discovered.

This photograph was taken in March 1948. It was taken in Greece. The Nazis had invaded Greece bringing with them their terrible policies of hatred and discrimination. The Nazis wanted to get rid of anyone who did not agree with them or fit their description of an 'ideal' human being. They persecuted disabled people, Gay men and Lesbians, Black Germans, people who opposed them like those with strong religious beliefs like Jehovah's Witnesses and those with different political ideas like members of Trade Unions. They murdered millions of people especially Gypsies and Jews. Often before they murdered people they enslaved them, sending them to work camps.

The women in this picture are members of the Greek-Jewish community of Ioannina. There are no men in the picture because they had already become prisoners of the Nazis. In March 1944 these women were ordered to pack a bag and leave their homes. The Nazis made them gather together in an open space and here we see them waiting for the trucks that will take them on the first part of a terrible journey away from Greece and across Europe to camps in Poland, where many of them will be murdered. Of course, as this picture is being taken they don't know that they will be murdered. They only know that they are leaving their homes and community and they have no idea when they will be allowed back home. That is why they are all looking cold and sad and why some of them are crying. They are facing a long journey into the unknown and there is no-one to help them. No wonder the woman in the foreground is in such despair.

When I discovered this I was shocked. I thought I knew lots about Greece. I have been there for holidays but I didn't realise that before the Nazis came there were strong Jewish communities in many parts of the country. In fact when I thought about it I had never noticed anything which hinted at any traces of Jewish life. The Nazis must have destroyed everything.

This picture was found four years ago. It is now on display in a small museum in New York, a museum which tries to make sure that the Jews of Greece are not forgotten. The staff of the museum called this picture *The Crying Woman*, after the woman in the foreground, because nobody knew who anyone in the picture was.

But the museum staff wanted to know who the crying woman was. They put the photograph on their website and asked anyone who could identify the woman to contact them. Then they waited and waited. One day they received a message. A woman, called Lia, who lived in Athens recognised the crying woman. She was her grandmother.

So now I know that the *Crying Woman* was Fani (*pronounced Far-knee*) Heim. She was 19 years old at the time the photographer captured her despair. A teenager weeping because she does not know what is going to happen and has no ideas whether she will ever see Greece again or where she is to be taken. In this photograph she does not know that she will be the only member of her family to survive the terrible journey from Greece and the horror of a Nazi camp but she knows that her life has been changed because of hatred and discrimination. She knows, but she does not understand why.

Fani's granddaughter Lia told the museum that Fani returned to Greece after the war. She settled in Athens, married a Christian man and had children and grandchildren. She did not hide the fact that she was Jewish and had survived the camps but said very little about what had happened to her and how the lives of her Grandmother, her Dad, her Mum her younger sister and two little brothers had all been stolen by the Nazis.

When I heard this story I felt sad, angry and helpless at the same time. Sad because so many people had been murdered and I couldn't understand the point of so many wasted lives, angry because one group of human beings could inflict so much suffering upon another and helpless because I couldn't do anything. I couldn't walk into the picture, change history, remove hatred and wipe away Fani's tears. I thought I couldn't do anything to make a difference.

But then I realised that there were things I could do and things I could ask others, like you, to do too such as...

- making sure the lost Jewish communities of Greece are not forgotten by sharing their **Untold Stories** with others
- reminding people how Nazi hatred and discrimination led to murder and pointing out that hatred and discrimination still exist today
- asking everyone we know to challenge hatred and discrimination every time they encounter it in our own society

And although we do not know the names or the **Untold Stories** of all those murdered or persecuted by the Nazis or by others in more recent genocides we can focus for a few moments on this photograph of Fani Heim, *The Crying Woman*, and use it to remind us of the importance of listening and passing on **Untold Stories** to help everyone remember the millions of people and hundreds of communities destroyed through hatred which leads to genocide.

Today – 27 January – is Holocaust Memorial Day and I am going to light a candle for Fani *The Crying Woman* and for millions of others whose eyes were just as wet.

(**pause**, then **light** the candle, **stand** back and **watch** the flame flicker, then **sit** down quietly to signal the end of the assembly.)



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