

“Children of Survivors: Bosnia, Holocaust (Greece and Lithuania), and Sudan”

2011. 35" H X 26.5" W Mixed media wall construction

Collaboration between David Feinberg and Daliya Jokondo, daughter of The Sudanese Civil War survivor, Laura Zelle, daughter of Holocaust survivors from Greece, Joanna Sussman, daughter of Holocaust survivors from Lithuania, and Dragana Vidovic, family displaced during Bosnian genocide, with contributions from Chris Charbonneau, Joni Christenson, Daisy Giles, Sarah Hiatt, Tat'yana Kenigsberg, Rowan Pope, and Nicole Rodriguez.

Four people from different parts of the world (Bosnia, Greece, Lithuania and Sudan) have come together to create this piece in order to give voice to the tragic human experience of war and genocide. Although they each have varied backgrounds, their lives were affected similarly by war. Each participant was either a child or grandchild of survivors of genocide and each used their own experience to add to the piece. To incorporate all four stories into the work, each participant was asked to pick out certain objects that triggered memories or emotions that related to their experiences.

Joanna Sussman was struck by a pair of eyeglasses that reminded her of her uncle who had survived the Holocaust along with her parents. She explained that the Jewish people in the concentration camps were stripped of clothes, shoes, glasses, and all other personal belongings. She stated that her sight-impaired uncle described his many years of near-blindness in the concentration camp was like “living in an alternate universe.” Joanna believes that his inability to see the horrors about him was a blessing within a curse. Joanna also chose a storm trooper figurine to represent the anonymity of their persecutors and also to represent that they could be everyone and anyone. And lastly, in stark contrast to the storm trooper, she chose a Captain America action figure to represent her parents, whom she described as heroes for being able to retain their humanity as well as their passion for life after enduring such trauma and tragedy.

Dragana Vidovic picked a little cart for her first item to represent the cart she traveled in to escape her hometown in September of 1995 during the Bosnian army occupation. Most of those who had to flee were women and children because the men were away fighting. Dragana recalls with gratitude that the escape was only such a success because of a neighbor woman called Mara who organized town dwellers into trucks, carts and tractors, making sure that all who wanted to leave were able to get out safely. When they returned months later, most of the town was burned down to the ground and all who had remained were dead. Dragana believes that if it were not for Mara, they all would have lost their lives.

Laura Zelle chose a blue beaded necklace that reminded her of her uncle's worry beads. Her uncle was only a young teen when the Nazis came to Greece and began the rounding up of Jews. He used a pushcart to carry his four young sisters into hiding. Her second object was a small piece of fabric that was representative of a white tablecloth that her Grandmother owned. It was one of the only heirlooms that her grandmother was able to keep from Greece for her daughters' dowries. Laura and her cousins honored her memory by using the tablecloth as a huppah in their weddings. Her last choice was a locket. The locket reminded her of a necklace that her grandmother had been able to keep hidden from the Nazis in Athens. The necklace had an upside down heart and was inscribed with a Hebrew prayer or blessing for a joyous occasion or simcha. For Laura, the necklace symbolizes the life that her family had in Athens before they were forced to leave. The necklace is still in their family's possession today.

Her own family locket was one of the few objects that they were able to keep when the Nazis came to Greece. It remains in her family to this day.

Daliya Jokondo, chose a phone as one of her objects to represent early memories in her childhood when her parents would call far away relatives in the Sudan. Since it was rare and very difficult to get through the phone lines in Sudan, most of the calls were very brief news updates that mostly dealt with the death of different relatives. Daliya came to associate the phone with mourning and loss. Her second object was a machine gun that directly related to war and conflict in the Sudan.