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Holocaust Survivors & Friends Education Center programs:

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JUSTICE Journal

Sarah’s Key unlocks the history of a Jewish child, Sarah Starzynski, who was arrested in the Vel D’Hiv roundups, the largest roundup of French Jews in Paris carried out by the French police. 12,884 people including 4,051 children were arrested and put into the Vel D’Hiv, the bicycle stadium in the middle of Paris, on July 16 and 17, 1942. They were left without food, water or medical care for days before being deported to concentration camps.

The story helps us look at the once-closed chapter of the Holocaust in France. The anti-Jewish legislation and policies, which were passed beginning in the autumn of 1940, followed by the arrest and internments of thousands of French Jews in camps, and the June 7, 1942 law requiring all Jews over the age of 6 to wear the yellow star, are the backdrop of the story depicted in Sarah’s Key. Of the 6 million who died in the Holocaust, more than 1 million were children. 77,000 Jewish people living in French territory died in the Holocaust. Of this number, 11,400 were children.

While Sarah’s Key is fiction, the true story of the Holocaust in France provides a lesson for the future. Learn more about how prejudice led to genocide in the Holocaust. Sarah’s Key compels us to learn the history, remember the victims and fight prejudice today. Holocaust Survivors & Friends Education Center sponsored the French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial Exhibition by Serge Klarsfeld and prepared a study guide for this exhibition about the Holocaust in France.
The Holocaust Children Who Did Not Grow Up
Children arrested during the Vel d’Hiv roundups and deported from France

Jean Landau was born in 1933 in Paris. Arrested with his mother Lucienne in the Vel D’Hiv roundup, and deported— their convoy number has not been found.

Emile Messyngier was 3 years old. He was born in Paris on March 10, 1939 and was forcibly separated from his mother and deported on convoy 24.

Albert Kaczka was born on April 22, 1933 in Paris and was arrested with his parents and deported on Convoy 20.

Learn More about the Holocaust in France:
From the Beate Klarsfeld Foundation:

- Arno Klarsfeld, Touvier, un crime francais
- Beate Klarsfeld, Wherever They May Be!, Kiesinger, Dokumentation Mit Einem Vorwort Von Heinrich Boll
- Serge Klarsfeld, French Children of the Holocaust A Memorial, and additions No 1 — No 7,
- Jean-Louis Besson, October 45: Childhood Memories of the War
- Deborah Dwork, Children with a Star, Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe
- Patricia Heberer, Children During the Holocaust Documenting Life and Destruction Holocaust Sources in Context
- Jeremy Josephs, Swastika Over Paris, The Fate of the French Jews
- Michael R. Marrus & Robert O. Paxton, Vichy France and the Jews
- Renee Roth-Hano, Touch Wood, A Girlhood in Occupied France
- Richard H. Weisberg, Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France
- Susan Zuccotti, The Holocaust, The French, and the Jews

Holocaust Survivors & Friends Education Center
Website: www.holocausteducation.org for the “Study Guide for the French Children of the Holocaust: A Memorial Exhibition” from the Beate Klarsfeld Foundation and Holocaust Survivors & Friends Education Center

The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation Website: http://www.klarsfeldfoundation.org/


The Arrest & Deportation of Children / The Vel d’Hiv Roundups, Paris, 1942

Buses at the Velodrome d’Hivre indoor bicycling stadium and people inside at the time of the roundups by French police. On July 16 and 17, 1942, 12,884 people, including 5,082 women and 4,051 children were arrested in their homes and on the streets of Paris and brought to the Velodrome d’Hivre. They were left there for days under inhumane conditions before being transported to French transit camps and later to the Auschwitz death camp.