

## Collège Charles Péguy, France Claire Podetti, teacher

The project I led was an artistic and interdisciplinary project. This project was carried out with a class of 25 students aged 14 to 16. We wrote the biography of Jankiel Fensterszab who was deported with the last big convoy from the transit camp of Drancy (France) to Auschwitz-Birkenau on July 31st, 1944.

We made a real historical inquiry with the students: interviewing Ida Grinspan (Jankiel Fensterszab's daughter), looking for archives in different places, asking a history specialist of the Second World War and the Jews. Students worked with the tools used by historians. They learned how to write history. With this inquiry, our students realized that the Holocaust was more than genocide. The Nazis *actually attempted* to cover up their crime and destroy *all* evidence of the very *existence of Jewish people*.

Two professional artists also participated in this project. This was very important for us because we are convinced that that art enables people to gather and share their experience. In the class there was a child who had recently migrated from Syria, another one from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and another teenager had autistic disorders. The artistic workshops were moments of shared learning and mutual help. Teachers and students were placed at the same level. The whole group took part in a common work.

As a matter of fact, artistic workshops help to establish links between the present and the past. They make it possible to go beyond simple historical knowledge, to build the beginning of historical consciousness. We worked on racism and anti-Semitism. Through the study of the past, it is today's society and universal values that our students question. They reflected on how to defend these values and make them real. In other words, how can everybody act and fight racism nowadays?

By working on the biography of Jankiel Fensterszab, we followed Jankiel's family story, through Europe from Poland to Berlin and Paris. It is not the Jewish history, it is a European story that we have written, a part of our shared history that we have built with the students.