

Newport Girls High School marks #Genocide70

'May mothers' tears become prayers that Srebrenica never happens again to no one and nowhere.'

One of the many stones at the haunting memorial to the 1995 Srebrenica genocide is inscribed with these words. On a snowy day in February a small group of students and myself read these words having just listened to the harrowing testimony of Fadila who lost her husband and son to the genocide, which occurred under the eyes of the world's media and the United Nations peacekeeping forces. Seventy years after the genocide convention, events like Srebrenica show that genocide education and prevention is as relevant as ever. Forty-five UN Member states have still not acceded to the genocide convention. Seventeen countries are listed on the Genocide Watch website as currently being in stage 9 of the ten stages of genocide; extermination. Five men suspected of bearing responsibility for the Rwandan genocide are currently walking free on British soil. It is clear that despite Lemkin's work in persuading those with influence to make genocide a crime there remains much work to be done.



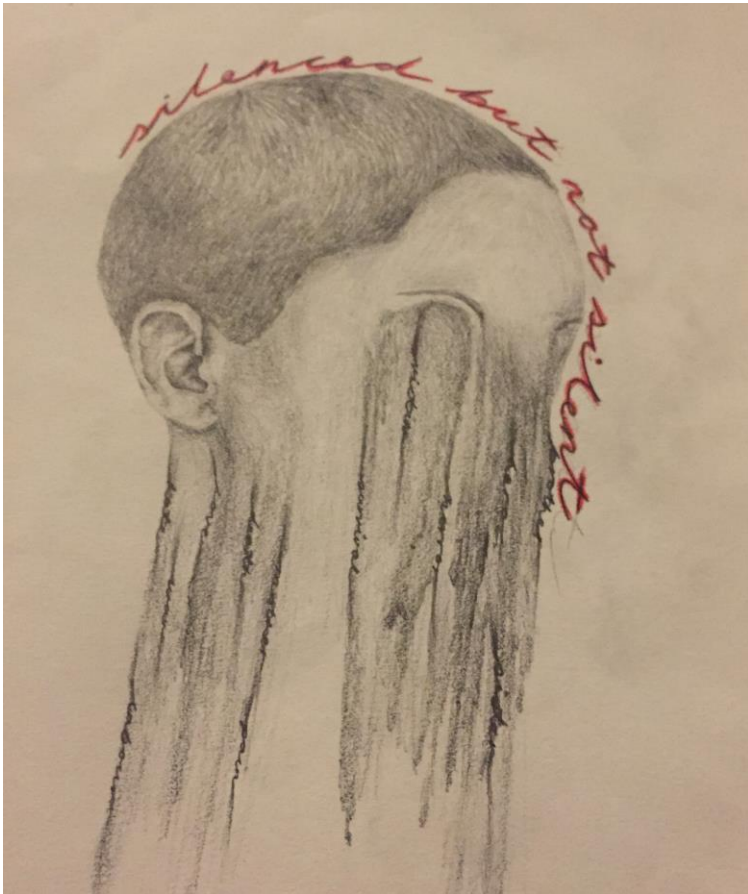
Lemkin's work is an inspiration to staff and students at Newport Girls High School working to raise awareness and educate about genocide through projects such as a newspaper about genocide produced in conjunction with eight other schools, a collaborative workshop and legacy project about Bosnia hosted by the Royal Wootton Bassett Academy and student work as HET Ambassadors and Remembering Srebrenica Future Leaders in Schools. Lemkin persisted in his mission to make people accountable for the mass murder of different social and ethnic groups by coining the term 'genocide' and persuading those with power and influence to make genocide a crime. His tenacity has enabled the prosecution of many hundreds of perpetrators; a huge leap forward from the lack of culpability seen after the massacre of Armenians by Ottoman Turks at the turn of the century. Lemkin's determination and the UN adoption of the genocide convention shows us that if we work together we can achieve great things and gives us hope that in the future we may be able to create a better world in which genocides can be stopped in their early stages. Our work to educate about and raise awareness of genocides has enabled us to work collaboratively with schools and organisations on a local, national and international scale.

This week, four of our students spoke in parliament about our work. Baroness D'Souza who was part of the panel who received the presentation urged the young people who spoke to continue to work together to start a movement for real change. Our work as a UCL Beacon school and involvement in projects with organisations such as Remembering Srebrenica, Genocide 8020 and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust has opened up numerous opportunities for us to work with staff and students from other schools, benefitting from their expertise, ideas and creativity, as well as being able to share and showcase our own. We have forged new professional and personal friendships that have led to further collaborative work that grows in profile as it grows in scale. Our genocide awareness work has had whole school benefits; it is starting to be seen as something that is not just about history, something which is essential if we wish to engender real progress.



We will end with the words of Resad Trbonje, a survivor of the Bosnian genocide:

‘You are the future of this country. It’s your responsibility to work towards a better society’. As daunting a prospect as this may seem, we can all work for a future without genocide by educating ourselves and sharing this knowledge with others. Let’s make 2019 a year that future generations will remember as a time of positive change.



To find out more about Newport Girls High School’s work, check out [@NGHS_history](#)