

# Liliana Segre, or the courageous struggle against “indifference” and for social recognition

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## Abstract

From a historical and sociological perspective, based on the social theory of recognition of Axel Honneth, this article analyzes the life course of the Italian Jewish Holocaust survivor Liliana Segre, born in 1930 in Milan, and her struggle for social recognition after her liberation from the concentration camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Ravensbrück, Jugendlager and Malchow. The article will underline on one side, the “spiral of misrecognition” that Liliana Segre, as all Italian Jews, has been victim of after the approval of the Fascist racial laws of 1938 and the negative consequences for her identity, such as social shame, loss of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. On the other side, the article focus on the “upward spiral of recognition”, that Liliana Segre was able to realize after her return from the concentration camp. Through marriage, maternity, paid work in the labor market and civil engagement as Shoah witness, she was able to regain social self-esteem and dignity for herself and, for the Jewish people.

**Keywords:** Italian Holocaust survivor; Antisemitism; Nazi persecution; Fascism; social recognition; misrecognition.

## Introduction

After the promulgation of the Racial laws in 1938 by the Fascist regime, the life of Italian Jews changed dramatically. From that moment on Italian Jews, who were very well integrated in society, became second-class citizens and were excluded from all social, economic and political spheres. They were expelled from political organizations, lost their jobs, were excluded from public schools, from Universities, from public transport, and from all social and leisure activities, such as bars, cinemas, theatres etc. In addition, Jews were prohibited to marry non-Jews and to hire gentile domestic workers. The persecution of the Jewish population increased dramatically after September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1943, when Nazi Germany took control of Central and Northern Italy, after having established the puppet Fascist government of the Italian Social Republic, known also as the Republic of Salò. Jews were imprisoned and sent to German extermination camps. Within five years only they had undergone in the most tragic and deadly way what I call the “downward spiral of misrecognition”, from full citizenship to slavery. After the end of War World II, the Italian Jews who had survived the Shoah faced a long and painful process, before recovering their social status in the new democratic society (upward spiral of recognition). The aim of the present study

is to analyze these two developments, namely the downward spiral of misrecognition and the upward one, leading to a new recognition. Starting from the well-established theory of recognition by Axel Honneth, I have carried out a qualitative analysis of both written autobiographies and visual interviews of Italian Holocaust survivors, the latter being included in the data base of the Institute for Visual History and Education of USC Shoah Foundation<sup>1</sup>. Instead of discussing the bulk of biographic data I collected during my analysis, I will focus here on the biography of Liliana Segre, that I consider an “ideal-type”<sup>2</sup> of the dynamic of misrecognition and recognition experienced by Italian Jews after 1938 and until today. It must be underlined that she represents the ideal-type of Holocaust survivors, who differently from others were able to re-integrate into Italian society at the highest level. Liliana Segre was born in a Jewish family in Milan in 1930 and survived numerous concentration camps, from Auschwitz-Birkenau to Ravensbrück, Jugendlager and Malchow<sup>3</sup>. I am aware that Mrs. Segre has attained an unprecedented level of social recognition. While many survivors experienced severe psychological sufferance all their lives long, and even committed suicide out of despair, Liliana Segre was able to fully integrate into the Italian post-war society and reached the highest political recognition. After having decided to tell her story to a broader public audience and to become a testimony of the Shoah, she was recently nominated senator for life in the Italian Parliament (on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

In order to develop a stable individual and social identity, and to improve their abilities, every person must not only enjoy freedom, but also receive different forms of recognition – through the family, love, the affection of friends, through citizenship rights to various forms of solidarity and through social esteem from the community in which one lives<sup>4</sup>.

The idea that intersubjective recognition is necessary for the development of a person’s identity is not new: It is rooted in the Hegelian philosophy, and it is already outlined in the *System der Sittlichkeit* (System of Ethics), written by Hegel in 1802-1803 during the Jenian period<sup>5</sup>.

This theory was subsequently expanded by the social psychologist George Herbert Mead, who realized that for growth and the realization of subjectivity, intersubjective and increasingly wider recognition is required in the various fields of social life<sup>6</sup>. Based

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to the Freie Universität Berlin for the access to the database.

<sup>2</sup> “Ideal-type’ in the sense of Max Weber has to be understood as “an analytical accentuation of the essential characteristic of an historical phenomenon”. See Blustone, *Max Weber’s Theory of the Family*, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Padoan, *Come una rana d’inverno: conversazioni con tre donne sopravvissute ad Auschwitz*; Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz. Liliana Segre. Una delle ultime testimoni della Shoah*; Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi. La vita interrotta di una bambina nella Shoah*; Palumbo and Segre, *Fino a quando la mia stella brillerà*.

<sup>4</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*.

<sup>5</sup> Hegel, *System der Sittlichkeit*.

<sup>6</sup> Mead, *Mind, Self & Society*, in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, 93.

on this assumption, the social philosopher and sociologist Axel Honneth identifies three models of intersubjective recognition<sup>7</sup>. First, primary relationships of love and friendship are necessary for building self-confidence. By self-confidence, Honneth means the capacity to autonomously coordinate our body and to build trust in other people with whom one interacts in daily life<sup>8</sup>. Second, legal entitlement of citizenship rights supports individual self-respect, i.e., the "cognitive respect of the moral capacity to understand and to act"<sup>9</sup>. Finally, the ethical community and social solidarity strengthen a person's self-esteem, which means the "possibility to understand him/herself as a person valued for his/her qualities and capacities"<sup>10</sup>.

If, instead of receiving recognition, an individual is subjected to continuous forms of non-recognition and misrecognition, his/her identity and integrity are indelibly attacked. Honneth identifies three forms of intersubjective misrecognitions<sup>11</sup>: different kinds of violence, loss of rights and public humiliation. His/her possibilities for building self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem are destroyed. Instead, physical disease, psychic death (different forms of depressions), social shame, distrust in other people, hate and self-hate arise.

This essay addresses the biographical path of Liliana Segre following this theoretical perspective.

### **The Jews in Lombardy and Milan in the 1930's**

To better frame the biography of Liliana Segre, it is worth remembering that the early thirties of last century was the peak of Jewish emancipation in Italy. It had been a gradual process that started with the Royal Decree no. 688 of 1848 in which Carlo Alberto di Savoia granted civil rights to the Jews of his State<sup>12</sup>.

According to the statistics of the Kingdom of Italy, Jews accounted for approximately 0.1% of the total population<sup>13</sup> from 1911 to 1938. In 1936, 13.5% of the Jewish population was concentrated in the community of Milan (including the communities of Como, Varese, Sondrio and Pavia). Milan had the highest Jewish population second only to Rome<sup>14</sup>. The concentration of Jews in cities is closely related to the type of professions they exercise and the industrial and tertiary sector. The percentage of mixed marriages can be seen as an indicator of integration between Jewish and

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<sup>7</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, 92.

<sup>8</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, 131-132.

<sup>9</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, 92.

<sup>10</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, 134.

<sup>11</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, 131.

<sup>12</sup> Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*.

<sup>13</sup> Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 43.

<sup>14</sup> Hamaui, *Ebrei a Milano. Due secoli di storia tra integrazione e discriminazione*, 70.

non-Jewish population. In the time between 1935 and 1937, it was 33.3% in the Kingdom of Italy and 36% in Milan, which is substantial.

The process of incorporating Jews into the Kingdom of Italy was remarkably advanced, and frequently associated with strong ascending social mobility, thanks to (but not limited to) the high cultural capital and available work in urban centers<sup>15</sup>. To illustrate, the illiteracy ratio among the Jewish population has been very small (5%) compared to the rest of the Italian population (50%)<sup>16</sup> since 1901.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, a considerable number of Jews were represented in high ranking positions in the political world, for example, as chairman of the Council of Ministers (Luigi Luzzati, 1910-1911), the Minister of War (Giuseppe Ottolenghi, 1902-1903), the Minister of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs (Lodovico Mortara, 1919-1920), and the mayor of Rome (Ernesto Nathan, 1907-1917)<sup>17</sup>.

Although Jewish women, like non-Jewish women, were not well represented in the political world (and often excluded from the councils of Jewish communities), they were often very active in the world of culture<sup>18</sup>.

The Segre family reflected the most general type of assimilation for Italian Judaism. It was a family, secular and rather indifferent to religion, of the small bourgeoisie, well integrated in the social context of the Lombard capital, and residents of the historic center of Milan.

Liliana's mother, Lucia Foligno, died prematurely due to a tumor and Liliana grew up with her father Alberto Segre, a man of great sensitivity<sup>19</sup>, in the home of her grandparents Olga and Pippo, of whom she has the fondest and sweetest memories from her childhood<sup>20</sup>.

In Segre's home, the primary socialization concerning Jewish tradition was almost nonexistent. Before the promulgation of racial laws, there was no mention of Judaism in her family<sup>21</sup>. They did not follow the food precepts of *kashrut*<sup>22</sup> (they ate everything) and they did not attend the synagogue. Liliana attended the public Italian school, not the local Jewish elementary school.

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<sup>15</sup> Bourdieu, *La distinction. Critique sociale du Jugement*.

<sup>16</sup> Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 45.

<sup>17</sup> Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 28-30.

<sup>20</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 17.

<sup>22</sup> Busi and Greco, "Vi servirà di segno. Cibo e identità nell'ebraismo", 11-40.

Like many families of the Jewish bourgeoisie, the Segre family also initially expressed some enthusiasm for fascism. More precisely, Uncle Amedeo was in favor, while Liliana's father, Alberto, was more critical and tending towards anti-fascism. Liliana, like all other Italian children, received secondary socialization in school based on fascist ideology<sup>23</sup>.

Liliana remembers life before the Italian Racial Laws entered into force as being a peaceful and happy time, similar to many Milanese girls<sup>24</sup>.

Alberto Segre worked with his brother Amedeo in the family business, founded by his father who belonged to the lower-middle class<sup>25</sup>.

### The loss of citizenship

The first form of misrecognition<sup>26</sup>, or denied recognition, was the loss of the major civil and economic rights following the promulgation of the Racial Laws on September 18, 1938. This upended the daily life and freedom of action for the Jewish people. The Jewish population lost the right to education, to work, to circulate in public spaces, and to participate in political and social life<sup>27</sup>.

That dull, happy, serene and relatively comfortable life style of the eight years-old Liliana suddenly dissolved. A spiral of misrecognition abruptly began, which was relentless<sup>28</sup>.

All Italian Jews (46,656) became second-class citizens, excluded from civil society and relegated to the margins of society. Their lives changed radically<sup>29</sup>. Their cognitive moral capacity to understand and to act was damaged.

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<sup>23</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 30.

<sup>24</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 17.

<sup>25</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 30.

<sup>0</sup> Although my theoretical framework refers to Axel Honneth's theory of recognition, I use here the term "misrecognition" instead of "disrespect", with which has been translated the German word "Missachtung" in the English version of Honneth's seminal book *Kampf um Anerkennung: Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte* (1992). To my mind, "recognition" / "misrecognition" fit the spiral-like social dynamic I am studying in the present article better than "recognition" / "disrespect".

<sup>27</sup> Fascist anti-Semitic legislation of 1938 included a set of legislative and administrative measures that deprived the Jewish population of the major rights of citizenship. Jews were forbidden: mixed marriage (between Jews and non-Jews), hiring non-Jewish (Aryan race) housekeepers, the possibility of carrying out work in all public administrations and private-public companies - such as banks and insurance companies - to perform the profession of solicitor and journalist. Strong restrictions were also introduced for all so-called "intellectual professions". It was also forbidden to enroll Jewish boys - who had not converted to Catholicism and who did not live in areas where Jewish boys were too few to set up Jewish schools - to public schools, military service, holding companies declared to be of interest to national defense. See: Falconieri, *La legge della razza. Strategie e luoghi del discorso giuridico fascista*; Capristo, *L'espulsione degli ebrei dalle accademie italiane*.

<sup>28</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, 109. Alter and Ego respect each other as juridical subjects, because both possess a common knowledge of social norms, according to which, rights and duties are shared inside their community.

<sup>29</sup> Sarfatti, *Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista*, 31.

Liliana Segre became aware of the great changes that were going on. Her memories are still very clear to this day.

“I remember we were sitting around the table. I remember their anxious but at the same time warm-hearted faces: they stared into my eyes as they told me this news, which sounded incredible to me. I attended a public school. I was also a rather good student. Therefore, I could not see any reasons to be expelled. “Why? What did I do wrong?” I asked, and in the meantime, I felt guilty. Guilty of a fault that remained unknown to me. Only years later I understood what was my fault: being a Jewish born. A non-existing fault, an artificial paradox but at that time, scaring real<sup>30</sup>.

All the practices of everyday life, which represented an important anchorage for the Jewish identity, were transformed dramatically. Liliana Segre was obliged to change shops, doctors, schools, and friends as many of the old ones turned away.

Even security within the private sphere of the family was no longer guaranteed. Liliana Segre remembers very well the continuous police incursions, which required presenting documents of every kind to attest their Jewish religion, and the way they were separated from their affectionate housekeeper Susanna. Jews were no longer allowed to hire housekeepers who belonged to the “Aryan race”. (Susanna, who was Catholic, had served the family for forty-seven years and had to leave the Segre’s home. She was able to help the family by saving many of their assets, including the jewelry and photo albums of Liliana’s grandmother which represented a precious bond for Liliana to her childhood. She received them back after the end of the war<sup>31</sup>.) To further the spiral of downward social mobility, women of the Jewish bourgeoisie were charged with domestic labor, which they were not used to doing. Thus, a downward social mobility began not only for the Segre family but for many Jews as well.

### **Humiliation and public offense**

A second form of misrecognition is comprised of offenses, humiliations and devaluations in the public sphere that deny social value to single individuals or to a whole group<sup>32</sup>.

Different, marginalized, excluded: this was how Liliana felt. The image reflected by the mirror of a racist society is that of the deformed, unimaginable image of those who stigmatized just because they belong to a religion and culture that differs from that of the majority.

This exclusion, diversity and, above all, stigmatization deeply frustrated Liliana’s self-esteem as a human being worthy of attention and recognition. To be pointed out

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<sup>30</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 17-18.

<sup>31</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 44.

<sup>32</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, 129.

with contempt by girls who, only a year before, had been her classmates a mortifying and shaming experience:

"One of the clearest memories is just to be finger-marked while I was going to my new private school, the only one I was allowed to attend. I crossed the street near the public school where I used to go. And I saw my former classmates of the first and second elementary class, girls with whom I had played, laughed and joked, who across the street pointed out at me. "That's the Segre. She can no longer come to school with us because she is Jew". Mischievous jokes, sentences of the girls of that age, who did not really know the meaning of what they were saying as well as I was ignoring it"<sup>33</sup>.

For a child, classmates are an emotional point of reference and represent the first subjects of interaction outside the family of origin. It is the first step into the world beyond the family. Peer groups are important agents of socialization from which to learn new values, behaviors, and *Weltanschauungen*. They are also relevant for identity building. In the new school, Liliana was forced to do whatever she can to hide her social stigma.

But even more than the malevolent murmurings of the schoolmates and the fear of the police breaking into her home, it was the indifference of the people around her in all parts of Milanese society that astonished her, seemed incomprehensible and made her feel sick. Everyone seemed to be unaware of these misrecognitions and humiliating practices of exclusion which victimized the Jews, or they pretended not to see it.

"Suddenly we were thrown into the gray area of "indifference": a fog, a wadding that wraps you softly, then paralyzes you in its invincible pincer. An indifference that is more violent than any violence, because it is mysterious, ambiguous, never declared: an enemy striking you without ever seeing it distinctly"<sup>34</sup>.

This oppressive indifference meant being invisible and not being counted as anyone, and it was unbearable.

Unfortunately, the indifference did not end with the war, but lasted for many decades thereafter. Post-war Italian society came out of the conflict with many deaths, ruined cities, a broken economy, and the need to rebuild a young democracy.

Nobody seemed to have any time for the Jewish survivors who miraculously had saved themselves from deportation. No one believed them or could imagine such violence, many abuses and humiliations. This wall of indifference after the war was paralyzing

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<sup>33</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 19.

<sup>34</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 18.

and depressing. Many survivors found suicide the only way to escape the silence that suffocated them.

### **The collapse of family ties**

The last recognition left to Liliana was that of her family and its love for her (father and grandparents) and her elementary school teacher's love for her.

In the new school - the Marcelline Institute, a school that exists to this day - she was quite content and felt accepted because her classmates do not know that she was Jewish. In fact, the requirement to attend the Institution was to convert to Catholicism and be baptized, to erase the Jewish identity. In the hope of not being subjected to racial persecution, Liliana followed the advice of a Catholic aunt to convert, despite the harsh disagreement of her maternal grandparents who did not attend her baptism. Liliana retains a bad memory of the baptism to this day: she saw her father crying behind the column and she herself also cried as she was being baptized<sup>35</sup>.

At school she received her teacher's understanding and respect. The time spent at the new school was relatively serene. Liliana was a good pupil and during playtime, she could be carefree and laugh with her classmates<sup>36</sup>.

At school, however, she did not talk to anyone about her family, about the suffering she experienced at home. She kept everything to herself, and minimized her "disgraceful social stigma"<sup>37</sup> for not being expelled even from the Catholic school. Furthermore, she feared for her own life and that of her beloved family.

As Goffman sharply points out, people who are victim of a social stigma adopt different strategies in order to combat that stigma, including "not making the stigma visible" to those with whom they daily interact with<sup>38</sup>.

Usually her father picked her up from school and took her home. In one glance, Liliana would know if the police had broken into their house or if her father was worried or distressed.

At home, she did everything she could to create the pleasant illusion of a happy atmosphere. She took a lot of care with her frightened grandparents, especially her grandfather, who was severely ill. He suffered from Parkinson's disease.

With Mussolini's announcement of Italy's entry into the war on June 10, 1940, the situation for Jews became even more difficult.

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<sup>35</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 36.

<sup>36</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 37.

<sup>37</sup> Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the management of spoiled identity*.

<sup>38</sup> Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the management of spoiled identity*.



A restricted number of Milanese Jews, who belonged to the highest and better educated social strata, decided to emigrate. The possibility to escape from Italy was strongly correlated to social stratification. Indeed, the escape required not only economic capital (for visas, for travel, for the first periods in the new homeland) but also social capital (resources that can be gained from a network of acquaintances, such information on where to get visas, trust to not be betrayed, etc.) as well as cultural capital. The knowledge of foreign languages and possession of a university degree for liberal professions, such as attorneys or doctors, were essential for future integration into the country of emigration.

Italian Jews from the lower and middle class, to whom the Segre family belonged, had fewer economic resources available to cope with the forced migration compared to members of the upper bourgeoisie. In addition, the Segre family lacked the educational background necessary to understand the enormous danger they were risking. The lack of foresight due to social class and to their home culture made them remain in Italy.

However, the Segre family finally decided to escape from Milan on December 7, 1943 but, unfortunately, it was too late. That night Liliana Segre and her father Alberto fled to Switzerland in an harrowing escape through the mountains. As soon as they crossed the border, thinking they were free, Liliana and her father were stopped by the Swiss guards and sent back to Italy where they were arrested.

The love of family, the last form of recognition that supports self-confidence, would now fade away more and more. She remembers the noise of the prison gates, which was deafening, closing behind them:

"Crossing the door of a jail is an experience that will obliterate you, especially if you ignore your guilt [...]. The transition from liberty to imprisonment was another unforgettable moment"<sup>39</sup>.

During the next two months, Liliana entered and was released from several Italian prisons: Varese, Como and, finally, Milan at San Vittore, where she remained imprisoned for forty days. There she reunited with her beloved father Alberto, with whom she shared a cell in the part of the prison reserved for Jewish prisoners. It was the last time in her life where she would be able to feel her father's body close and warm. These few moments of intimacy gave her the strength to withstand the most atrocious forms of violence in the years to come.

On the morning of January 30, 1944, the bell tolled at dawn and Jewish prisoners were woken, pushed harshly onto a truck and driven away<sup>40</sup>. No Milanese had any pity for them; no one lifted a finger to help them.

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<sup>39</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 29.

<sup>40</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 35.

The truck stopped at the Milan Central Station. They were brought to track number 21, where now, more than seventy years later, the Shoah Memorial stands.

It was a few decades later that Liliana found out that her beloved grandparents - Olga and Pippo - had been arrested in their house in Inverigo (closed to Milan) where they had been hiding. An Italian fascist had betrayed them in exchange for a little money and reported them to the German Nazis. Although even the grandparents had converted to Catholicism, for the German racial laws (the Nürenberg laws of 1935) this conversion was not enough to save them. When the Nazis put them on a truck, her grandfather, who was not able to stand still because of his Parkinson's, was even beaten by them<sup>41</sup>. Both grandparents died upon arrival in the concentration camps.

### **Non-humans: Slavery**

On rail track 21, Liliana and her father and the other prisoners were pushed by the German SS (*Schutzstaffel*) and the Italian fascists (called "black shirts") and forced into the cattle car or a freight train. Their car, number 6, was over loaded with 50-60 prisoners.

The step to get on that freight train was not a "usual" step, i.e., a step that took them to another prison like the one they already knew: It marked the beginning of a long process in which every human appearance of humanity will be erased<sup>42</sup>.

Jews went from having the legal status of citizens, to being second class people to being non-humans since they were no longer legally represented:

"The right to be a person is established by law. Only the slave is excluded from this law: *servus non habet personam*. The slave has no legal personality, he/she does not own his/her own body, he/she does not have ancestors, surname, last name, neither own goods<sup>43</sup>.

The journey to Auschwitz in Poland lasted six days. Prisoners were crammed in with each other, heartbroken, hungry and thirsty. No one gave them food or anything to drink during the trip. No one knew where the convoy was going. Only a dim light came from the cracks in the car walls where a few villages could be seen under the snow now and then. The prisoners were angry, crying, despairing. Older people and sick people fainted and some people died. For urination and defecation there was only one bucket. The smell of urine and sweat spread everywhere.

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<sup>41</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 223.

<sup>42</sup> Wardi, *Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust*, 14.

<sup>43</sup> Mauss, "Una categoria dello spirito umano. La nozione di persona, quella di "io"', 373, citation in Dal Lago, *Non-persone. L'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale*, 215.

Most religious Jews began to pray with fervor, clinging to a glimmer of hope. Then, after a few days of traveling, exhaustion and resignation took over. Very few of them talked, the majority remained silent and only touched hands to those sitting close to them to communicate. No words were necessary, they would be too much. For many of them, these moments close to their beloved would be the last before being killed in the gas chambers<sup>44</sup>.

When they arrived in Auschwitz, covered by snow, and left the cattle car, the frosty wind lashed their faces. Other prisoners wearing striped clothes opened the cars. The SS set the dogs against the prisoners. Disabled persons were thrown outside the car with no pity. Outside the train there was confusion and a lot of noise: screams, barking dogs and children's cries. The children were clinging to their mothers' skirts in order not to lose them.

All prisoners had to leave the few possessions they had brought with them on the train. After that, the selection for life and death began: To the left, in five columns, the men, to the right, the women. Liliana Segre was separated from her father in the selection and she never saw him again. The memory of her adored father always moves her until today:

"We kept staring at us from far away. It was the last glances. I struggled not to cry. I smiled, I sent him my hellos<sup>45</sup>"

It was the last glimpse of a deep emotional bond, and the last form of recognition. Then, for a year and three months, until her release, there would be no kind of deep love.

It is possible that she passed the severe selection because she was rather tall for her age. Since she was thirteen, she could have risked being sent directly to the gas chambers.

When she arrived at the barrack, she saw many prisoners dressed in striped garments who had been beaten. Others were shouting or kneeling down for punishment while others carried bowls. The atmosphere seemed almost unreal because the degradation and violence was so immense.

When her turn came, Liliana, along with other prisoners, had to take her clothes off and show her naked body to the SS officers. They often commented on women's naked bodies with sarcasm which made the degradation even worse. The prisoners were shaved under the armpits, their pubis and, finally, their heads. The women's beautiful long hair fell to the ground.

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<sup>44</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 35.

<sup>45</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 40.

The women were then forced to dress in the striped garments, like the other prisoners they had seen at the entrance. Once the 'non-people' uniform had been put on, each prisoner had the task of choosing two shoes from the heap the shoes. Finding paired shoes was very difficult, mostly they found unmatched shoes. The consequence was that walking became difficult and clumsy.

At the end of this long and painful process of reducing prisoners to "non-people", the female prison guards engraved a number on their forearms as it was commonly done with animals. Liliana's number was 75190. Segre recalls these painful moments in her autobiography:

"We became *Stücke*, pieces. The word woman no longer existed anymore. The concept of the person disappeared forever. From that moment on, our names were deleted from history and replaced with a number: the simplest way to say that we had never existed. Auschwitz's number was imprinted in the heart, tattooed in mind and soul: it was the essence of each of us, who has come back to tell. [...] Dressed in rows, with our swollen arm, we went out into the snow with two different clogs on our feet. An immediate brutalization: we were not anymore the same women, who came out from the train a few hours before. Our life as slave prisoners began"<sup>46</sup>.

Before going to sleep in the wooden barracks, the new inmates learned from the older ones that the smoke coming out of the chimneys was that of other prisoners who had not passed the selection. They were killed by Zyklon B gas and then cremated. The violence of these sentences, described without any type of emotion by the prisoners, immediately made it clear that the values, social norms and behaviors that had been valid before the Racial Laws entered into force were now part of an irretrievable past.

During the first nights, many inmates including Liliana despaired, cried, thought about how to rebel. The more time passed, the more the prisoners got used to that meaningless and violent life. The loss of contact with their inner and emotional world became one of the strategies that helped them survive.

The chance of survival in the concentration camp at Auschwitz was very low. Liliana never knew why she was destined to work in the factory (the Weichsel-Union-Metallwerke which produced ammunition<sup>47</sup>) since she had no work experience nor specific abilities. Working inside a factory rather than outside in the freezing weather of the camp increased her survival chances<sup>48</sup>.

Although work at the factory was heavy, the rhythm gave her a certain "structure" for her daily life and provided some shelter from the severe violence outside. In the

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<sup>46</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 43.

<sup>47</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 116.

<sup>48</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 116.

morning, the prisoners who worked at the factory had to leave the barracks and walk for a couple of miles. This physical distance meant that, at least for a while, they no longer perceived the stink and decay although during their march to the manufactory, they were often insulted by the Hitler youth boys, which she hated.

The successive days at the concentration camp were extremely monotonous. Liliana woke up early in the morning, ran to the baths to wash then lined up for the very small food rations. Then the hated long roll-call assemblies before the barrack started, where the guards counted how many *Stücke* were still alive. The roll-call could last for hours, and it was exhausting, because each prisoner was obliged to stand still outside in the frozen winter air. And those, who dared to move, put their lives at risk of death. From time to time, the guards selected prisoners for the gas chambers. As Liliana recalls:

“When I arrived in front of the judges, I could pretend to be indifferent, although I was strongly scared. I was perfectly aware of my thinness, my appearance of a woman, who was unable to work. And with what terror I endured that exam! Naked women, who were examined in front and behind, in their mouths by men dressed in uniform, who often ordered: “Turn around again, I did not see you well.” Any femininity was canceled, completely violated. Animals at the market, which were observed, and when one was not good anymore, then the gas chamber was responsible to erase it from the world<sup>49</sup>.”

The concentration camp, a typical “total institution” in the sense of Goffman<sup>50</sup>, eroded any “power of self-determination, autonomy and adult freedom of action”<sup>51</sup>.

Furthermore, misrecognition took many forms of violence: slaps, corporal punishments, SS dogs thrown against prisoners, lack of proper nutrition and protection from cold, very bad hygienic conditions<sup>52</sup>, and exhausting roll-call twice a day. The deterioration also included by experiments on men and women’s bodies, as well as on young twins, done by Dr. Mengele for “scientific aims”. Psychological, emotional and economic violence also reigned over the concentration camps expressed through: derision, verbal aggression, lack of any empathy even among prisoners, confiscation of all the material possessions of prisoners - money, family jewels, clothes, photographs<sup>53</sup>. Physical objects never have only economic value. They are invested with a symbolic

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<sup>49</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 55.

<sup>50</sup> A “total institution”, concept elaborated by sociologist Erving Goffman, is “the place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time together, lead an enclosed formally administrated round of life”. Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Condition of the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, xiii.

<sup>51</sup> Goffman, *Asylums*, 71.

<sup>52</sup> Pawełczyńska, *Values and Violence in Auschwitz. A sociological Analysis*, 16-17.

<sup>53</sup> Pawełczyńska, *Values and Violence in Auschwitz. A sociological Analysis*, 17.

and affective value and represent the last memories of people with social ties capable of self-determination.

Lastly, a strong moral harassment and atmosphere of perversion dominated in Auschwitz. Moral decay was so high that any system of values, Jewish, Christian or any ideology, such as socialism, was erased or transformed into its opposite until it became violence. The ultimate aim of the SS was to arouse the prisoners against each other as if they were beasts, and to destroy their morality<sup>54</sup>.

Liliana Segre remembers:

“In such situations, it is almost impossible to behave, as heroes since these severe deprivations, hunger, and the forced fasting, made you focus only on the most urgent needs, the food above all. And this food addiction took away your dignity, because anyone who has an obsession - whether it is for love or a desire to win a race at any cost - relegates everything else in the background. And if life revolves around the moment they give you food, it meant you’ve reached the level of the beasts. And so were we<sup>55</sup>.”

*The Fragility of Goodness. Luck and Ethics in Greek - Tragedy and Philosophy* To survive such a spiral of misrecognitions, the prisoners were forced to shrink to the most elementary primary needs (food and rest) and almost to freeze their system of values<sup>56</sup>.

On their arrival at the Auschwitz gates on January 27, 1945, Soviet troops found only those prisoners-mostly the sick or those unable to walk- who the SS had not taken with them on their “death march”.

With the imminence of the Soviet advance, the SSs destroyed the three crematorium and fled, dragging about 56,000-60,000 inmates with them. Liliana described the death march as an extreme experience. The prisoners had to walk at night in the freezing temperature because the SS did not want to show the *Stücke*, the skeletal and suffering “non-humans” to the rest of the German population. The prisoners, who during the march stopped or fell, were threatened to be immediately killed. In order to feed themselves, the prisoners ransack the dirty garbage at the entrance of the villages. This behavior put their health further at risk<sup>57</sup>. During the torment of the march, Liliana kept repeating herself: “Walk, walk otherwise you will die”.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Pawełczńska, *Values and Violence in Auschwitz. A sociological Analysis*, 137.

<sup>55</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 115.

<sup>56</sup> Pawełczńska, *Values and Violence in Auschwitz. A sociological Analysis*.

<sup>57</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 60.

<sup>58</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 60.

She reached the Ravensbrück women's camp, then the neighboring 'Jugendlager' and finally, reached the sub-camp of Malchow in the North of Germany which was only freed by Soviet troops on April 30.

The torments suffered and engraved in her soul require full recognition, adequate to their size: A redemption that is not a vengeance which kills the murderer.

Liliana often remembers the circumstances under which, at the end of the terrible death march, she arrived at the last camp. The war had ended with Hitler's defeat and the Nazis had fled in fear. Liliana saw a Nazi lying down on the ground in front of her. He took off his uniform and threw his gun away so that he could put on civilian clothes. She suddenly got the idea of taking his weapon and killing him to revenge both herself and the whole Jewish people. It was just a moment. But she immediately told herself to choose and honor life, to follow the imperative that bans the killing of any human being<sup>59</sup>.

A few years later, the "downward spiral of misrecognitions" became the motivation for her militancy as a witness to the Shoah. Liliana Segre's story is not only a struggle for the recognition of the tortures suffered which met a thick barrier of indifference for a long time, but also a battle to celebrate the life that, despite everything, had "miraculously" been won. If we could frame the symbolism of her life, we could call it a celebration of the star that had continued to shimmer in the sky.

Auschwitz had stolen everything from her: the few material goods she managed to carry with her, her beauty as a young girl, her cheerfulness and carelessness, her dignity. However, her mind and her fervent imagination had escaped annihilation. In the evening, before falling asleep, on the hard pallet of the barracks, dressed in rags and with her wooden clogs as a cushion under her head so that they wouldn't be stolen by the prisoners, Liliana hugged her fantasies:

"In the clear nights I chose one star in the sky, and I identified myself with that star and I thought (so childish as I was) [...] "I am this star. As long as the star will shine in the sky, I will not die, and as long as I stay alive, the star will continue to shine!"<sup>60</sup>.

Taking refuge by imagining a brighter future - and not thinking about the past, which was too distressing and painful - was one of the many strategies adopted by the inmates of camps to stay alive<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 144.

<sup>60</sup> Zuccalà, *Sopravvissuta ad Auschwitz*, 49.

<sup>61</sup> Frankl, *trotzdem Ja zum Leben sagen: Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager*.

## The “upward spiral of recognition”: love, family, work and civil engagement

According to Honneth’s social theory, the first form of recognition is love, which Liliana Segre encountered again three years later, after her arrival in Milan.

While at the beach on the Italian side of the Adriatic coast, she met Alfredo Belli Pace, a law school graduate ten years older than her. He succeeded in making her fall in love with him and they married. His deep love, patient compassion and devoted sympathy slowly alleviated Liliana’s suffering and returned her confidence in her body and the trust in others she needed to rebuild her female identity. She felt different from the other young Milanese women who enjoyed a carefree life and coquetry. She felt older than her age and inadequate in her femininity. In fact, she suffered from a slight what today we would call “eating disorder” and was slightly overweight.

Her feeling of alienation slowly disappeared along with the emotional barricade around her heart. These feelings disappeared definitively with the birth of her son Alberto. Named after her beloved father who was killed in the gas chamber few months after his arrival in Auschwitz, the birth was like a “memorial candle”<sup>62</sup>. Liliana was finally able to cry again and this time it was for joy.

“[...] For me, that child who carried my father’s name had a special meaning. It was a return to life after so much death, an opportunity to see my father “reborn”<sup>63</sup>.”

Her family grew: Liliana gave birth to two other children, Luciano and Federica. This great love, a first important form of recognition, brought back what had been stolen from her: joy, passion and social integration into a middle class, bourgeoisie daily life. In a loving relationship, a person feels seen, appreciated and encouraged in their daily work. Such positive social interactions are key elements to building trust in human relations and it is what Liliana Segre had completely lost.

She felt as if she were being seen again as human being, not just her inner life, but her female body as well. That woman’s body, which was so much despised, abused, mishandled and indelibly marked on her forearm, felt reborn. Love encouraged her to show that she was fertile and reproductive, the cornerstone of the social construction of femininity between the forties and the fifties of the last century.

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<sup>62</sup> The term “memorial candle”, was coined by psychotherapist Dina Wardi, and designates the role that the children of Shoah survivors, usually the firstborn and more often daughters, are assigned inside the family. Parents give “their memorial candles the task of infusing content into emptiness of their hearts and rearranging the broken and hidden pieces of the mosaic within”. They had the role reconstruct new generation and to build again a Jewish community. Wardi, *Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust*, 31-32. Children represented for the Holocaust survivors “a symbol of victory over the Nazis”. Wardi, *Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust*, 26.

<sup>63</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 184.



Liliana Segre, like many Holocaust survivors, feared that she would not be able to have children because of the bromide in the camp soup, which was used to stop menses. Getting pregnant and giving birth gave her confidence in her own body<sup>64</sup>.

Love helped her social integration in Milan, in the role of wife and mother, and prevented her from become "crazy" and homeless, as she confessed many times<sup>65</sup>.

Although her loving relationship allowed her to begin reconstructing her fragile identity as a Jewish woman who had survived the Shoah, anguish and fear continued to visit her from time to time. She was afraid to sleep alone at home, she was afraid of dogs, she was scared by the sight of smoke coming from a chimney<sup>66</sup>.

She remained "submerged", to use the words of Primo Levi<sup>67</sup>, by the trauma of the violence she experienced in the concentration camps for a long time and sometimes suffered from depression. As many Jewish Holocaust survivors, she didn't tell anyone besides her husband of the atrocities she had experienced. The tattooed identification number on her forearm spoke for her.

Her second form of recognition came through paid work and the right to work outside the family. Liliana continued the traditional role of wife and mother until the 1980's. Milan, after the destruction of the war, became one of the most important centers of national industry and tertiary. In the mid-1970s, the city began transforming itself into an advanced service center, a center of finance, fashion, design and furniture. Great economic transformations are accompanied by cultural ones (consumerism but also the claim of new rights and values, such as divorce, abortion, etc. thanks to student movements, workers, trade unionists and the feminist movement).

Although Italian women, the Milanese women being among the first, were increasingly part of the workforce starting in the 1970's<sup>68</sup>, Liliana only entered the labor market in the early 1980's, after almost thirty years dedicated to her husband and her children. She began by working in the family business, "Segre & Schieppati", with her Uncle Amedeo, who originally intended to close the firm in 1981<sup>69</sup>. Her uncle changed his mind when Liliana decided to enter the business. She worked for free for almost two years because she was having a very hard time coping with her grandmother's death, marked by strong depression and panic attacks. However, the involvement in the family business, outside her family, allowed her to overcome her crisis and she lost weight.

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<sup>64</sup> Gugutzer, *Soziologie des Körper*, 14.

<sup>65</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 185.

<sup>66</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 185.

<sup>67</sup> Levi, *I sommersi e i salvati*.

<sup>68</sup> Fontana, *Il lavoro di genere. Le donne tra vecchia e nuova economia*.

<sup>69</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 194.

For the next thirty years, she successfully managed the family business which she inherited from her uncle.

This work represented another important form of recognition for her (legal recognition), which allowed her to strengthen her self-respect and confidence in the various skills and abilities she possessed that were not related to the family environment. Liliana was proud of her new social role, of having mastered economic independence and managing “dual presence” in both work and family<sup>70</sup> and the private and public spheres. Her middle class family was transformed from the traditional male-breadwinner family model to one based on dual-earners. Liliana remembers:

“It was at that point that I understood the big difference between being a truly independent woman and having to consult my husband [...] for any extra expenses<sup>71</sup>.”

Work meant a challenge, which allowed her to rethink her own identity as a woman in a less traditional role. It meant retrieving the desires and dreams she had as a teenager during the last year of her studies<sup>72</sup>. She had wanted to become a journalist and to travel a lot<sup>73</sup>. Only in her midlife, after the tremendous experiences of deportation, was she able to finally obtain the desired job and economic independence.

The third and last form of recognition for Liliana was her civil engagement, which helped her to regain her full self-esteem. Since her liberation from the concentration camps, Liliana had succeeded but many Shoah survivors had unfortunately failed. Indeed, for a great majority of them, the consequences and injuries of the Holocaust trauma had been too painful and profound to recover from. By contrast, Liliana was able to build her own family and to have children which, for many Shoah survivors, meant a guarantee of the Holocaust memory. Her family represented for many the escape from extermination, the hope of being able to fill the great emptiness caused by the killing of family members, and a new future for the Jewish people - a sort of late victory over Nazi perpetrators<sup>74</sup>.

As a mother, she was also able to separate from her children and to let them find their own path and become autonomous. First generation of Holocaust survivors often experience with a lot of pain and ambivalence in the process of separating from their children because it often reopens the wounds from the persecution. Although unconscious, mothers feared abandonment by those who they loved.

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<sup>70</sup> Balbo, “La doppia presenza,” 3-11.

<sup>71</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 195.

<sup>72</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 177.

<sup>73</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 178.

<sup>74</sup> Rosenthal (eds.), *Der Holocaust im Leben von drei Generationen, Familien von Überlebenden der Shoah und von Nazi-Tätern*; Gottschalk, “Reli(e)ving the past: Emotion work in the Holocaust’s Second Generation,” 355-380.

Liliana was also able to come back to her Jewish roots, and she had proudly re-discovered her cultural diversity (but not the religious tradition since she declares herself to be agnostic) without homologating herself to the Christian majority.

There remained one last step in this long process of the "upward spiral of recognition" that Liliana Segre wanted to make: The courageous and painful step of telling her story to thousands of people and thus becoming a living Holocaust witness and civil activist.

For years, Liliana had not talked to anyone about her tragic experience. The only exceptions were her husband Alfredo and her friend, Graziella Coen, who was one year older than she. The two women met for the first time in the concentration camp at Auschwitz and then again, the day of release in Malchow, from where they jointly returned to Milan.

There was a deep bond between them; a bond based on the sharing of pain and a common tragic experience which only a few could understand profoundly. When they were both back in Italy, they got together and tried to talk about what happened "over there" and to describe that great tragedy. However, since they belonged to different social classes, they had different lifestyles and, in the long run, a certain distance grew between them<sup>75</sup>.

The unbearable social offenses of the persecution and deportation needed more than to be described in the private sphere. It demanded a collective elaboration and social recognition of the trauma.

The painful "spiral of misrecognition" (from the physical violence, deprivation of rights and humiliation)" which had struck Liliana like so many other Jews, was the motivation for her struggle for recognition and social esteem<sup>76</sup>.

After forty-five years of silence, now a grandmother, Liliana began to talk to young Milanese students for the first time about the Shoah and about her deportation to Auschwitz in the early 1990's. And from that day on, she never stopped.

When Liliana found the courage to face what had happened in the extermination camps, and when she was able to step into her inner life, her civil and social engagement was able to unfold. She herself admitted that:

"[...] I prohibited myself to see. I had to become old to accept to see the things that had happened to me until that moment I had just looked at. One thing is to see, another thing is to look at. For too many years, I have watched without seeing.

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<sup>75</sup> Ghisleni et al., *L'amicizia nell'età adulta. Legami d'intimità e traiettorie di vita*.

<sup>76</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, 138.

Everything: from the piles of corpses to the kneeling inmates in the camp. And those who attached them to the barbed wires to get out<sup>77</sup>."

Liliana felt she had not yet completely fulfilled her responsibilities as a Holocaust survivor. She felt that she still had to bear witness to that which was proven on her own skin; that she had to elaborate the tragedy collectively and not just privately. It was not a feeling of revenge and hatred against Italian persecutors, Nazis and fascists that motivated her. Public testimony served as a rebellion against the oppressive indifference shown by Italian society both during fascism and, partially, even after the Second World War. For Liliana, the indifference was: "not to see, to turn the head away and ignore the suffering of others"<sup>78</sup>.

Her civil engagement comprises, first of all, explaining the complex phenomenon of the Shoah and narrating her own experiences as a Holocaust survivor so that the young students can understand it. Secondly, she invites the large audiences of elementary and high school students to share their feelings to help them feel the pain and suffering of the victims.

For Liliana Segre, only a profound cognitive and emotional awareness can serve as an antidote to the anti-Semitism and dehumanization that the Jews were victims of. She invites an enhanced ethical development, based on compassion, which is not only a precept of the Jewish religion<sup>79</sup>. She sees this as the only guarantee to avoid persecution and genocide in the future. As Martha Nussbaum has observed, understanding tragedies only rationally is not enough; the emotional dimension needs to be activated as well<sup>80</sup>."

Overcoming indifference implies, according to Liliana Segre, a second objective, namely the affirmation of love and friendship and to recognize others:

There is a sense of gratitude and loyalty to those who have loved and sustained her that is behind her positive view of life which is the fruit of a profound inner journey in spite of the extreme suffering she endured during the Nazi-fascist persecution. And indeed, gratitude and fidelity are essential elements for social cohesion and for the continuity of institutions<sup>81</sup>.

In 2005 Liliana Segre received decoration medal for her social and civic engagement: "Commander of the Italian Republic" and the "Gold Medal of Recognition" of the

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<sup>77</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 116.

<sup>78</sup> Mentana and Segre, *La memoria rende liberi*, 211-212.

<sup>79</sup> Stefani, *Le donnote del rabbi. Compassione e misericordia nell'ebraismo*.

<sup>80</sup> Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought. The Intelligence of Emotions*; Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness. Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*

<sup>81</sup> Simmel, *Soziologie, Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, in Flam, *Soziologie der Emotionen*, 18

Province of Milan. In 2008 she was awarded a degree in law *honoris causa* at the University of Trieste and in 2010 a degree in pedagogy from the University of Verona.

At the beginning of the current year, on January 19<sup>th</sup> 2018, Liliana Segre has been awarded the highest political recognition: she has been nominated senator for life by the Italian President Sergio Mattarella<sup>82</sup>. At the age of 87, she enters the Italian political arena without any specific party affiliation and following her own conscience only. Her goal is to combat the indifference of the Italians towards those who are suffering and to oppose all kinds of discrimination based on religion or ethnicity such as the Roma discrimination.

## Conclusions

The path depicted here can be represented as a double movement, downward and upward, the deconstruction and reconstruction of her identity. Liliana Segre's biography exemplifies the dreadful stages of discrimination, persecution and extermination to which millions of Jews were subjected in Europe including tens of thousands of Italian Jews.

In the biographical story of this great Jewish witness of the twentieth century, we have distinguished four moments of misrecognitions: i) loss of citizenship rights, (ii) humiliation and public offense, (iii) destruction of family ties, (iv) becoming non-people: slavery.

Liliana Segre, who survived the hell of the concentration camps and was still very young, has journeyed back towards self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem and dignity with strength and determination. She has been able to give to acknowledgement to her experience, to become a witness and to give back some very important lessons to society.

The stages of recognition, which are an inverse to those of degradation, appear as follows: i) love, marriage and family; ii) working life and economic independence; iii) civil engagement, social esteem, awards and decorations. Unfortunately for many who escaped extermination, the return to normality was blocked or was only partially accessible. Too many traumas, losses, too much grieving and even, in the case of this tireless witness. That subtle, overwhelming and oppressive indifference which Liliana described as being a collective behavior, an offensive 'turning away' during the period of discrimination and persecution, continues to disturb our contemporary society. As long as there is someone who we prefer not to see, voices like that of Liliana Segre will be indispensable.

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<sup>82</sup> According to the second part of the Italian Constitution (art. 59, paragraph 2), the President of the Italian Republic has the right to designate five senators for life among citizens "with outstanding patriotic merits in the social, scientific, artistic or literary field". See Panizza and Romboli (eds.). *Costituzione italiana*.

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