



# The identity of a Cacuts Museum

Making connections through shared care experiences





“The identity of a cactus Museum. Making connections through shared care experiences” is a virtual place created within the European funded project “LeaveCare-Live Life” and aimed to share memories about care experiences.

The exhibition includes some works sent by European care leavers on the platform [www.careleavernetwerk.eu](http://www.careleavernetwerk.eu) to making connections and again share care experiences.

The works are photos/drawing/videos/short text/poems/songs, and so on... and they represent an important moment or a memory of the time spent in residential care.



# Theatre

**That had always been a theme in my life:  
being member of theatre groups.**

**When I was little, I have played a theatre role on stage in a  
musical-theatre in the quarter of Berlin, where I grew up.**

I liked exploring new forms of communication on stage, for  
example, to talk to the adult actors and actresses and to play  
with the other children.

When I was in care, I joined another theatre group, that was  
called “Die Zwiefachen”. I learned a lot of new things, such as  
being accepted in a group and also being criticized by other  
group members.

. Often, my social behavior was criticized.

**All in all, I liked connecting with other people in groups and  
creating plays on stage.**

(A., Germany)



# Causing good



**I Am Somebody's Child: The Regina Louise Story**  
Episode from the movie

*All rise, case No. 127A, Jeanne Kerr against the "Louise" Children's Center regarding the adoption of Regina Louise.*

**Genie Kerr:** Your Honor here is a list of available two-bedroom apartments next to St. Mary's High School. I want to show them to Regina so that together we decide where to live.

**Judge:** And work, as I understand, you no longer work in the children's center?

**Genie Kerr:** Yes, your honor, but I'm sure that I will find a new job very soon. I have a nurse education, I've been working continuously after college. I am hardworking, I've got savings. And I assure Regina will have a safe, secure and reliable home. It will be a great honor for me to become Regina's adoptive mother.

**Judge:** Thank you. Take your seat. Miss Ford, as I understand, you are against the adoption.

**Ford:** It is true, your honor. You know me and my dossier. Due to my professional opinion, Regina will have no future without a correction of her behavior that Miss Kerr is not able to provide. The National Association of Black Social Workers condemns interracial families. Black children must be in black families, and I believe that the court will never approve this particular insidious form of genocide that Miss Kerr proposes.

**Judge:** Miss Kerr, your sincere interest in the child is not in doubt, but the opinion of the inspector of the child is a priority for me.

**Regina:** May I say.

**Judge:** Take a sit Regina, everyone here works for your good. Sit down.

**Regina:** I know, but.

**Judge:** Sit down. I reject your application for adoption of Regina Louise. Based on the fact that a white woman does not know the needs of a black child in our society. According to Miss Ford's requests, Regina will be transferred to the Calling State of Raiding, where she will receive medical treatment for behavior problems which she will not receive now so that these problems do not lead to sociopathy in adulthood. It's over

In this movie, Ford says «*This is an insidious form of genocide when a white woman wants to adopt a black girl. A white woman does not know the needs of a black child in our society*». Seriously?  
**In orphanage no one asks your opinion, everything is decided for you. Institutions (like orphanages, courts) do not give you the possibility to say a word, and if you do, they also accuse you for what you have said.**

They repeat: «*Everyone here works for your good*». What kind of good? **For good of the child or for good of the institution?** How do they know what is good for me?

Seriously? Then, in my case, genocide is keep on studying at the university and live a wonderful life.

But for orphanage, for an institution, it's correct to send me to nursing home, because I am an orphan with a disability.

**I have my own opinion, voice and my own life.**

The main need of life is love. And a white woman can give love to a black girl, as love can be given from friends who see an incredible value in you.

(O., Ukraine, 27 years)

## Here I am with my recorder and sheet music for Handel's Messiah

My happiest memory of being in care was when I was sent to a Secure school, in the 1960s. This was in South Wales and my time there was the happiest time of my childhood.

This school, run by the Good Shepherd Sisters, was a happy school, free from abuse, bullying and the nuns were kind.

I struggled with education but loved music; myself and two other girls had private piano and singing lessons.

I later sang solo soprano in Handel's Messiah at school, then recorded it onto vinyl. An amazing experience.

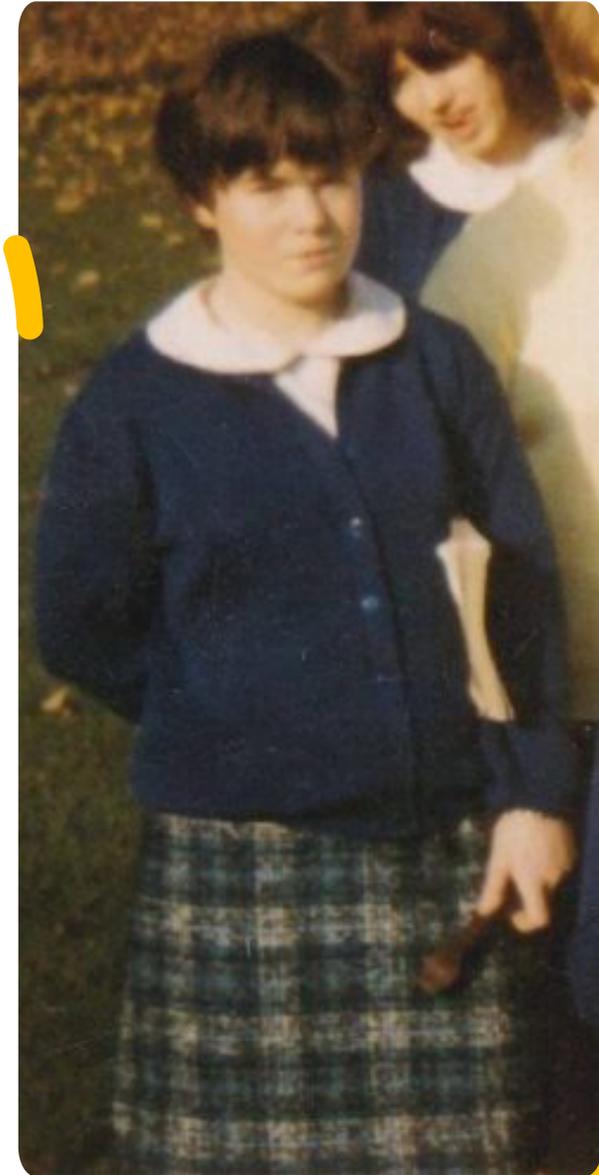
The Headmistress of the school

**is still my Mother to me.**

We were lucky, as in other schools the children were abused but nobody ever harmed us at St Euphrasia's.

**I wouldn't be here now if I hadn't been sent there.**

(J.R.A., Scotland, period of memory 1965)



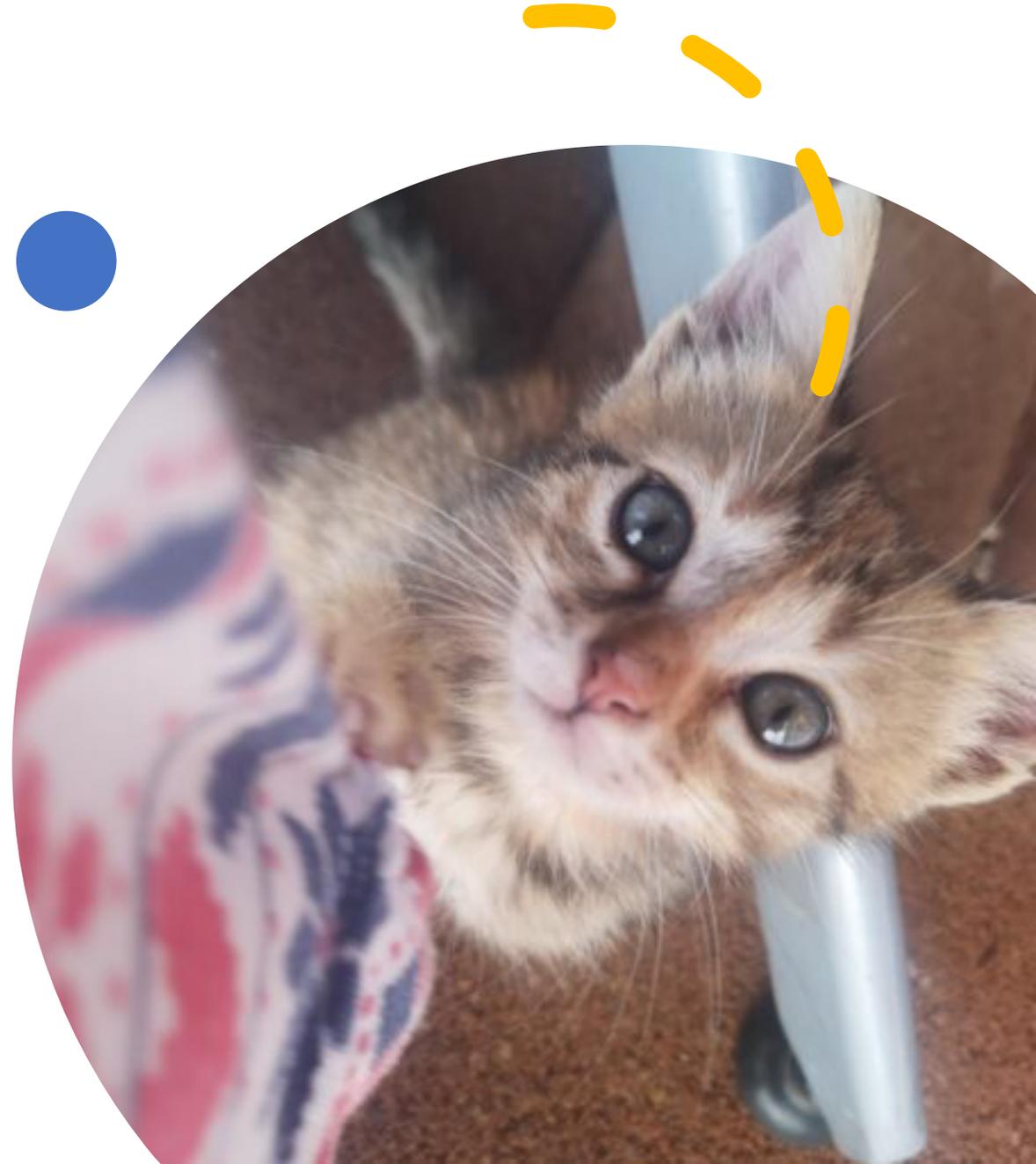
# Shape of love

**As we know love comes in all shapes and sizes.**

My childhood was marked by one being who gave me love and care that I simple didn't get from my parents. When I was supposed to get up at 6am in the morning and get ready for school on a cold winter days, she would come to me, curl up under my blanket, and rub against my body as if trying to explain to me that time flies and that I need to get up. When I came home tired of being frustrated by the situation I live in, she would quickly run to me, looking at me as if she was trying to comfort me.

**The reason I chose to write about something like a cat is very simple – love.**

(L.O., 18, Croatia, period of memory 12)



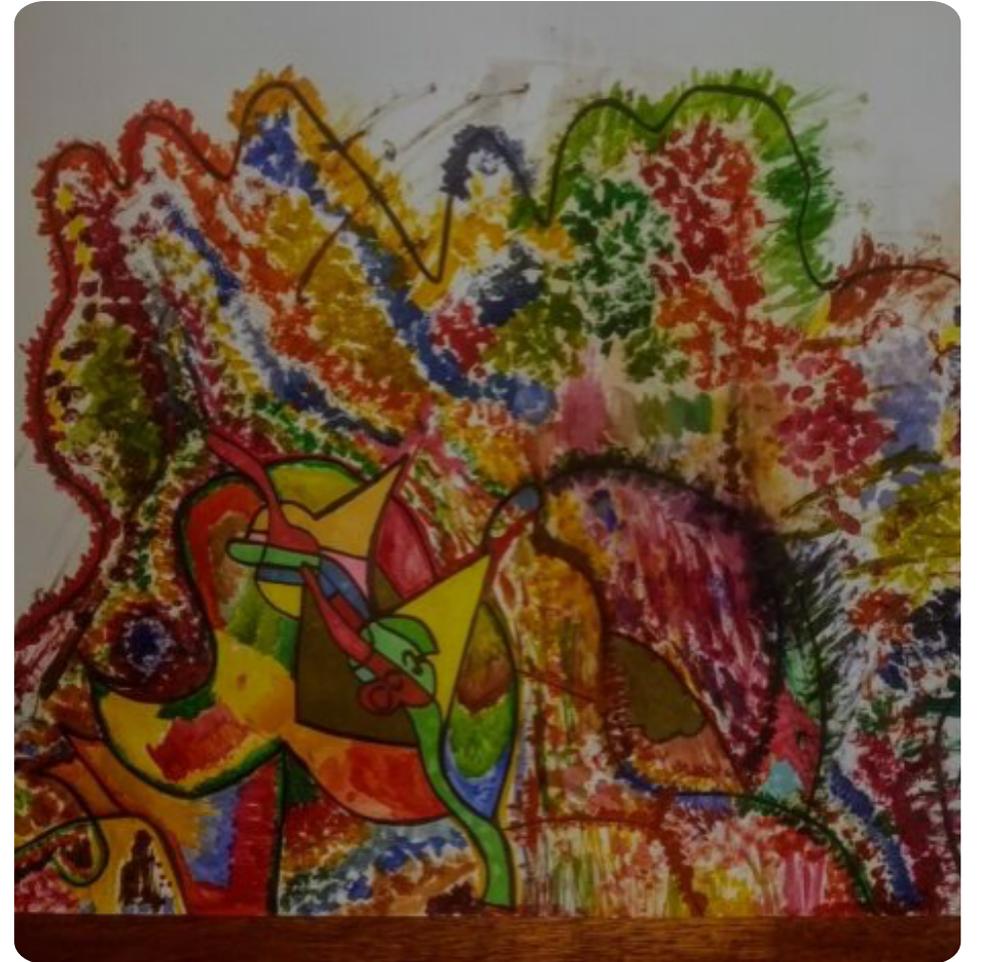
# Life

I gave this name to this design because I haven't felt alive for months.

**Drawing again I felt alive, full of colors, but also with a little black as in my story,** black still represents so much pain that I have inside .

I've been abused for eight years,  
**but I am alive, very sad,**  
but I love to express it.

(A., Italy)



# Superman

My favourite childhood memory is wearing a **superman** costume and running at full speed on the road, imagining that I could take off and fly.

Learning in later years **that superman was a care leaver was a revelation.**

(W., Ireland)



# Pride

**Alternative care.** Don't use this word as a weakness, as a pity, as excuse.

Don't be a shame of that word.

Take it with you with a pride.

**Take it with you as a strength.**

(T., Croatia, 24)



## Empty bottle beer



Indicates the inner conflict with myself to accept the fact that my mother is an alcoholic.

(A., Italy)

# I deserve better than this. After care to where?



*We publish this poem in memory of our beloved Shane, who left us on January 1, 2020. He has struggled all his life for the rights of care leavers and we will never forget him.*

[...] «Please Mr Social Worker  
leave me here,  
I've heard bad thing about  
those hostels and it's  
creating fear.  
What have I done wrong to  
be treated like this.  
The State is my parent and I  
deserve better than this».

# Keys

Those are the key of the house that I used to call “home” for 16 year, the time I spent with my abusing foster family.

When I went in a residential home I kept them with me, but happily I’ve no have to use them anymore.

(K., Italy)



# Backpack

Dear backpack,  
you entry in my life when I have 10 year,  
from a family from USA.

In this backpack was things that maked my childhood, and  
make me realized that exist another world, a new family at  
distance.

In this backpack was clothes suitable  
for me and valuable things.

That backpack came into my life as a family.

Although I was alone these things made me happy  
and I felt valuable.

The motivation to learn became more important after I  
received this backpack. After that I kept in touch with this  
family.

They became my distant mentors.

This backpack came into my life every year motivating me to  
become a man in life.

(G., Romania)





# Birthday

It is one of the most beautiful day for everyone, but for me it is also a day of hope.

I expect my mother to call me, and she does, every year.

My friends try to make me drink to see who will be the first to get drunk...

**MY MOTHER IS ALWAYS THE WINNER.**

(M., Italy)



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# Motherhood

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To be a mother, is so feel the pain of not being mothered.

To not be with my child, brings a storm of emotions.

How could you not choose us over drugs?

Them I remember, you used them to cover your pain of not being mothered.

I BREAK THIS CYCLE.

I am a mother.

(C., UK)

# Love and care

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Growing up in care, I learned that if you love someone and want him or her better, you're ready to do anything and fight.

**When I was 21, I adopted an abandoned dog.**

For me it is the most important that she is happy, and I don't care how much money or time I am going to spend.

**It is wonderful feeling to take care of someone.** In return you get so much joy and fulfilled heart. If I am ready to do so much for my dog, I really can't understand parents neglect or leave their children.

(T., Croatia, 24, period of memory, 21)



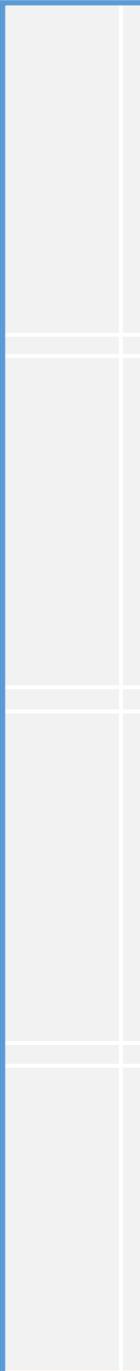
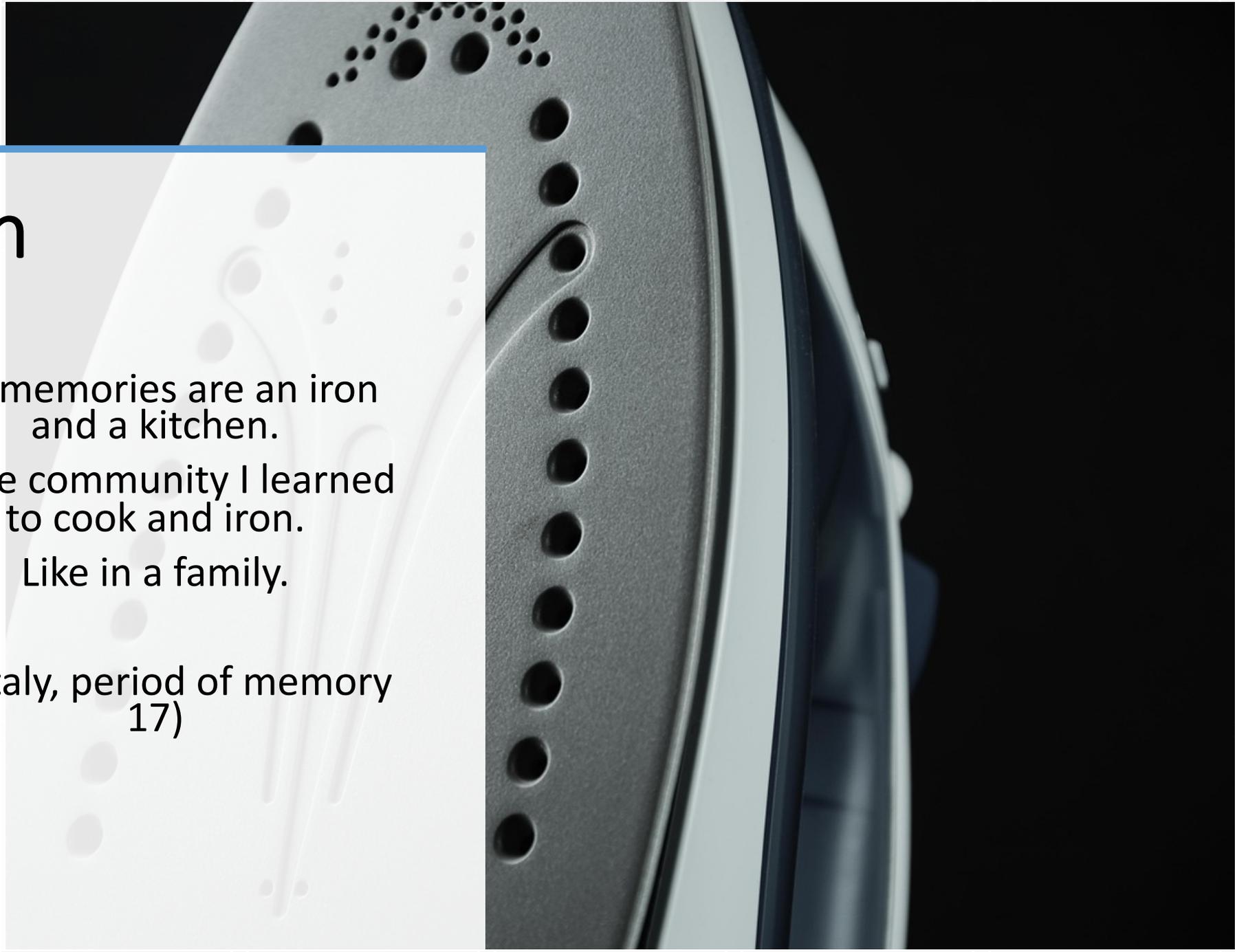
# Iron

My memories are an iron  
and a kitchen.

In the community I learned  
to cook and iron.

Like in a family.

(J., Italy, period of memory  
17)



# Mp4 player



The object that changed my life in childhood was an mp4-player. I was going to school listening to music all the way.

**It showed with the music that I was listened beautiful people that helped me to be a more beautiful man into society, to graduate highschool.**

The mp4-player I received from Dino, an italian guy that wanted to adopt me. He took me to his house in the summer holiday and he offered me happy moments that I still remember with pleasure.

I meet him again in 2019 in Italy. It was a pleasure to meet again and hug them.

**For all the good moments they offered me I will never forget him.**

(T., Romania)



# Clothes

The clothes of my childhood are my best memories. In 2002 I remember a group of nuns visited our center and they saw me staying shy in a corner and offered me a bag of clothes.

**Suddenly, I looked into the bag and I saw clothes that I loved and made me happy.**

**My life, I say, was changed because of these nuns. Those changed my way offering me clothes that made me happier with the courage to live on.**

**Not only the clothes, their advices warmed my soul and made me follow the school path.**

**These little things made me a big man that reached his height and realised his always dreamed dreams.**

(C., Romania)

A young boy with short brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt, is seen from behind, holding a soccer ball. He is standing in a grassy field with trees in the background under a warm, golden sunset sky. The scene is captured in a soft, cinematic style.

# Football ball

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The object that changed my childhood is a football ball. I was a shy person with not so much friends, but when I touched a ball, it discovered me new horizons and helped me to socialize, to make new friends.

The simple fact that I had a football **was something “Wow”** comparing to the other friends that hadn't, so I was on the spotlight. “Hey guys! We have a football the start a game? No. Let's call B.!”

**This ball was a magic thing for me and helped me to develop me as a child and further to the person I am today.**

(B., Romania)

# The braceled circle

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At the age of 8 years old I received a watch, the braceled circle as I called it at that time.

Thill that moment I don't remember to follow the flow of time, I was going outside to play, doing this everyday, but not knowing to return at a specific hour. **I only knew that at sunset I had to return home, otherwise The Bogeyman, Bau-Bau we call him in Romanian, will abduct me.**

When the watch started to measure the time was a launch into time-space for me.

The educator of the center was a sort of "God" for me, he offered me the opportunity to know that you can do a activity into a measure of time, you can programme it. **All started to have a meaning for me!**

(E., Romania)





[www.careleavernetwork.eu](http://www.careleavernetwork.eu)

