

KARL GORATH

b. December 12, 1912

d. March 18, 2003

AUSCHWITZ SURVIVOR

“I wore a pink triangle.”

**Karl Gorath was
imprisoned by the
Nazis at Auschwitz
for being gay.**

Karl Gorath was imprisoned at Auschwitz for being gay. He was arrested in his home in 1938, after a jealous lover reported him to the Nazis.

Paragraph 175 of the German code criminalized homosexuality. Though the law was on the books long before World War II, the Nazis used it as grounds to make wholesale arrests of homosexuals. Hitler launched a crackdown on gay individuals, organizations and activities after he came to power in 1933.

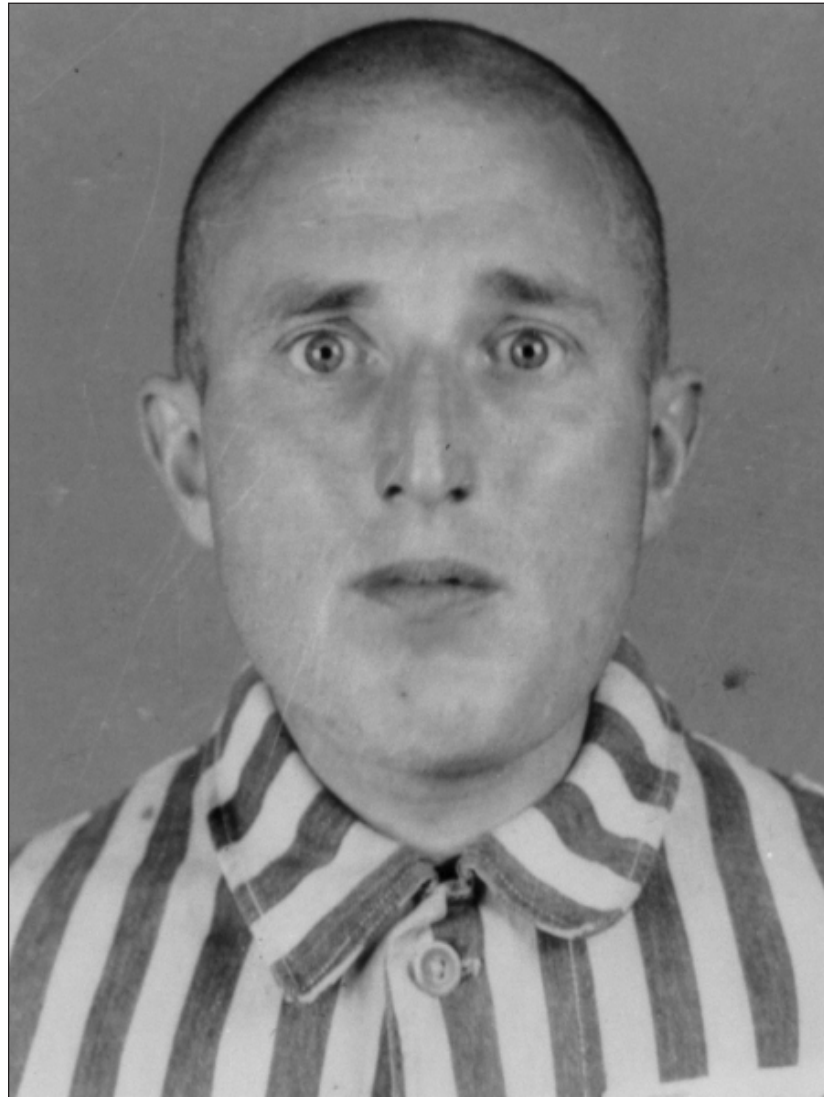
Gorath was born in a small town in northern Germany. When he was arrested by the Nazis at age 26, he was first imprisoned at Neuengamme, a concentration camp near Hamburg, Germany. He was forced to wear a pink triangle, the symbol used by the Nazi's to identify gay prisoners. In the camps, homosexuals were worked to death, subjected to torture and forced to endure horrific medical experiments. Because he had some training as a nurse, Gorath was transferred to a sub-camp, where the Nazis put him to work in a prison hospital. When he was ordered to decrease the already meager bread rations given to Polish patients, he refused. As punishment, the Nazis sent him Auschwitz—the largest and most notorious death camp, located in southern Poland. At Auschwitz he met a Polish man who became his lover.

According to estimates, the Nazi's murdered 1.1 million people at Auschwitz, including homosexuals. Gorath was one of the lucky ones. He was liberated in 1945.

After the war, Gorath continued to face discrimination. Because he was a “convicted homosexual,” most employers refused to hire him.

The German Legislature, the Bundestag, repealed Paragraph 175 in 1990. In 2002 the Bundestag vacated convictions of homosexuality by the Nazis, and in 2017 Germany pardoned and compensated gays who were convicted under the old law.

Gorath is one of six gay men profiled in the documentary, “Paragraph 175” (2000), which chronicles homosexual persecution during the Holocaust.



lgbtTM
HISTORY
MONTH

www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com

Copyright ©2017 – A Project of Equality Forum