

Biography of Gisele Braka

Gisele Braka was born in 1920 to a well-to-do Ashkenazi family in Tunis, Tunisia. The family moved to Paris in 1935.

After obtaining their nurses' diplomas, Gisèle and her sister volunteered in June 1940 to nurse POW interned by the Germans in Drancy. During her five months there, Gisèle helped hundreds of prisoners escape in the ambulance that the Germans supplied to take the sick to a nearby hospital.

When the Germans decided to transfer the POWs and the staff to Germany in November 1940, Gisele decided to return to Tunisia. The Germans occupied Tunisia in 1942 and Gisele's brothers had to do forced labour at the city's port. In 1943 Tunis was liberated and Gisèle enlisted to work in the military hospital of Tunis, while her brothers took part in the Allied landings in southern France.

Gisele returned to Paris in 1945 and worked for *l'Oeuvre de secours aux enfants* (OSE), a French Jewish humanitarian organization that helped mainly Jewish refugee children. In 1947 she set up the Tunisian OSE. She lived in Israel for several years and then the Congo with her family before moving to France in the mid-1960s. Gisele came to Montreal in 1987 to reunite with her children who had settled there. She died in 2013.