HOLOCAUST & HUMAN RIGHTS
ART & WRITING CONTEST 2023
MIDDLE SCHOOL ART
FIRST PLACE

ADITI VIJIL
Parks and Ice skating

His own memories haunt him,

Like an ancient story read at night

A utopia, a fantasy

A fairytale, a paradise

A day and night when the grass was green

Hours filled by parks and ice skating

The breeze tickling the trees

The clouds blanketing the sea

This life, was it ever reality?

His legs carry him,

Gliding softly through the night

As he leaves his remnants

Chillingly behind

Though everything aches,

And everything pains,

He keeps running

With his heavy chains

He sits on the pavement,

The orphanage aglow

The moon a mere pearl in the sky

Crying, wailing, praying for reply

Alone, abandoned

Left with only his heart,
A metronome, a drum, ripping him apart

Surrounding him a sea of men
Their heads shaved bare
And pajamas striped
Numbers etched upon their arms
Each one a sign of what they've lost
A name no longer
Reduced to mere numbers

Whatever happened to the parks and iceskating?
The days full of bliss and unknowing?

Grief,
As thick as molasses
Anger,
As hot as fire
Hopelessness,
As vast as an ocean
Threaten to break him
His own spirit begins to falter
His hope begins to drain
Leaving in its place
A blood red stain

Though days like these filled his life A
wisp of faith kept him alive And
when he dulled his eyes to sleep, He
often pictured paradise

The sun in all its glory,
   Dipped in pinks and reds
Parks and iceskating,
Drifting through his head
Birds and emerald trees
With that soft, country breeze
But most of all,
And above all,
He pictured,
Peace.
This poem is inspired by the life of Arek Hersh, a young Jewish boy that was forced to flee on foot after the German Army invaded Poland. He remembers that he had a happy childhood that consisted of “going to the park, ice skating, and singing solos in the school choir.” From this line, I chose to write a poem about how young children’s lives changed instantly when the Holocaust started. They were robbed of their childhood and their innocence, forced at an early age to grapple with grief and fear.
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MIDDLE SCHOOL ART
SECOND PLACE

AVA SCHREIBER
Final Lies

Traveling for ages
The only thing that kept us going was
The promise of a better life
A better future
They broke their promise

When we arrived
They brought us to a farmhouse
Told us it was for bathing
Made us take away everything
But swore it would be replaced
Crossed their fingers behind their backs

Told us afterwards we would be given something to eat
But we never ate again
Told us to tie our shoes together so later we could find the pair
The shoes would never rest on our feet again

Ready to wash away the sorrow and dirt from our past
Walked into the bathhouse
Shower heads scattered across the ceiling like stars
But no water came out

Then the gas did
It did not wash away the filth the soldiers caused upon us
It washed away our existence

They stole everything
Our clothes
Our families
Our lives
They took away our final words
We just had final lies
I wrote this poem about what holocaust survivor, Walter Rosenberg, witnessed from a Nazi concentration camp. He was forced to work at a railroad platform and soon began to realize the soldiers were telling the Jews that they were being brought to a new settlement for a better life, not an ended one. My poem is written to show how the Nazis stole the Jews' lives and rights. I titled the poem Final Lies to express how instead of being able to share their final words with their families, the Jews were abused and lied to until their last breath.

Source: Escape from Auschwitz: the most extraordinary Holocaust story you’ve never heard | Holocaust | The Guardian
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MIDDLE SCHOOL ART
THIRD PLACE

LIVIA LOW
Artist Statement:
This art piece is called “Voices of the Lost”. It's about how Jews were often dehumanized and reduced to mere numbers (prisoners were often identified by the numbers tattooed on their left forearm). The yellow flower in the corner is called a freesia which represents freedom and innocence. The holocaust was a dark chapter of history where millions of jews were brutally persecuted and killed but I want people to honor those who suffered and perished during the Holocaust by witnessing their stories and reminding others of the importance of compassion.

Sources:
- https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/killing-centers-in-depth
- https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/holocaust
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MIDDLE SCHOOL ART
HONORABLE MENTION

ANANYA MENON
Artist’s Statement

I chose a quote by a Holocaust survivor and author, Elie Wiesel. The quote is “The Holocaust... was a failure of humanity.” The Nazis and the German government treated Jews subhuman. Jews had to endure unthinkable torture because of their religion and identity. My painting shows a Jewish prisoner's unjust death. I hope no one in this world suffers a similar fate.

Sources