HOLOCAUST & HUMAN RIGHTS
ART & WRITING CONTEST 2024
HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY
FIRST PLACE

BAILEY CARD
We The Keepers

Memories can outlive any human, or they can be buried in a grave with their keeper. They can be fragile, delicate, and temporary. We are the keepers of our memories. We hold the key to keep these reminders alive throughout our lifetime and beyond. We can also become the keepers of others’ shared memories.

My grandmother’s memory is now fragile. My mother, her daughter, is now my window into her life; I won’t let Alzheimer's win. I will become one of her keepers. Her mind holds memories from a world before me. Soon all will fade like her recent memories that have already begun evaporating. I hold memories that were once hers in a small filing cabinet in my brain. To keep her memories alive, I will spill these filing cabinets’ contents, to my children, and they will to theirs. Memory is a power that holds its own dimension separate from time and space. We are the keepers of memories. We are their door, lock, and key into reality and truth.

The Holocaust has created one collective memory of nightmares and lessons. As the remaining survivors dwindle, so does this echo. Those remaining tell of abuse, degradation, deception, betrayal, and inhumanity at the hands of Nazis. They tell of the time leading to the rise, when half-truths spread across Europe and beyond like the plague, creating a false deadly narrative. They tell of intimidation of bystanders and betrayal by friends. Now as a community of listeners, we have become these story’s keepers. We hold the power to keep their experiences alive.

Today, as antisemitism sparks, we cannot forget how this once began, and how everything often begins. It begins as ideas, ideas of hate spread through scapegoating, propaganda, and racism. Propaganda sneaks its way into societal beliefs, progressing to eventual
actions. Today, antisemitism on school campuses has forced many Jewish individuals to be marginalized. This hate facilitates the rationalization of terrorist actions such as what occurred on October 7th. Hamas went door to door, torturing, raping, beating, and murdering over a thousand peaceful Jewish people, even taking many hostages. Regardless of pre-existing conflicts between Israel and Palestine, in no time, world, or humanity are actions such as those acceptable. Remembering past human failures and making room for new filing cabinets in our brains will help humanity ensure a more enlightened future.

My grandma’s memory is fading. Soon I will be one of her few memory keepers. Out of love, family, and humanity, I hold an individual responsibility to keep her recollections alive past the bounds of a human lifetime. I have the responsibility to never forget. If I were to discard these filed memories, my family history could be erased, tainted, and lost. The same is true for the Holocaust. We, as a community of listeners, have the collective responsibility to hold the memory of this treacherous time. This memory however horrifying must remain truthful, and transparent. We must learn as a community. To remember is to ensure, “never again.”
HOLOCAUST & HUMAN RIGHTS
ART & WRITING CONTEST 2024
HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY
SECOND PLACE

EZRA GOLDSTEIN
Ashkenazi, Sephardim, Mizrahim, no matter the origin we are Jews, we are human. But, to some, we aren’t deserving of that title. To others, we are subhuman, not worthy enough to grace this holy plane. The Nazis didn’t care for the well-being of our people, they were blinded by hate, and the thirst for power against the “faulty.” This horrid mindset isn’t new, nor has it yet ceased to disappear. We’ve been scapegoated throughout history, targeted for our beliefs, blamed for baking children into matzah, and everything else under the sun; people just want a reason to hate. Even now we see this treatment with an expedited increase in antisemitism worldwide and people like Marjorie Taylor Green saying we control the world with our space lasers. Antisemitism is not a new phenomenon, and nowadays there is so much education on the topic but a lack of those willing to learn, and care. People are losing the ability to connect with others, we can’t contribute our moral values because they are far and few. Many don’t want to learn and schools aren’t taking enough of a stand to tackle this injustice. I worry that this may smother the hope of those who wish to take and stand and speak out; not just to save the Jewish race, but to promote equality, inclusion, and safety for all.

לְדוֹר וָדוֹר (L’dor Vador), from generation to generation. It’s simply put the idea that as Jews it’s our responsibility to pass our memories and teachings between each generation in our family. It’s a value that every one of us holds close and strong. When we share memories and experiences we connect and gain an understanding second to none. It’s our most basic “instincts of self-preservation, of self-defense, of pride” (Weisel, 37). It’s our utmost duty, Jewish or not, to ensure that experiences and lessons are taught throughout the world. Night by Elie Weisel represents our responsibility to educate. It promotes not only the struggle of those during the holocaust but its existence itself. Frighteningly, only twenty-three states in America have mandatory Holocaust education. Twenty-Three. That’s millions of people not knowing the
suffering my family endured, not knowing the “elimination” of millions of innocent Jews.

Something almost as frightening is that only 43% of Americans understand that Hitler
democratically became Chancellor of Germany (Study from Pew Research Center). If we don’t
take a stand and make sure that people understand what the Holocaust is and how it started, what
boundaries can we set in place to stop the ignorant from letting it occur again?

Kol Kolot (Kol Kolot), every voice. Change doesn’t stand idly by, to create change we
must speak up, encourage others, and share experiences. During the Holocaust it wasn’t a given,
it was something they had to learn, learn to “stay together. It will make us stronger” (Weisel, 77).
Hope will always be a pillar for the Jewish people. The Nazis knew that they knew hope was
what set us apart from any others, and that it could never be crushed. The people in camps didn’t
take this for granted; this hope mended them together and bonded them to each other spiritually.
They gave tips, saving the lives of many innocent people, for instance, when Elie Weisel and his
father were up for inspection, a fellow POC (Prisoners of Concentration Camps) beckoned them
to “increase your chances. Before you go into the next room, try to move your limbs, and give
yourself some color. Don’t walk slowly, run! Run as if you had the devil at your heels. Don’t
look at the SS. Run, straight in front of you” (Weisel 77). Even in unfaltering darkness, they
maintained morality, not caring to get rid of each other for more bread but caring for human life
and the sanctity of their people. Nowadays though, there remains much evil in the world; people
can’t believe in much anymore because they don’t think there’s any morality to believe in. If we
make a conscious effort to stand, to use our voice, and to show the world that our morality and
hope haven’t faltered we can fight to restore the idea of morality to the masses. If we can give
humanity to the atrocities of the Holocaust we can spread the message, proving irrefutable that
this did happen. We need to shout for education, for people to learn the names of each person who died.

רוח (Ruach), spirit. The passion of the Jewish people is unparalleled and never-ending; we fight for what we believe in, the sanctity of our people. This has stayed stagnant throughout history, from when we trekked through the Red Sea to escape the Egyptians, or how we made one night’s oil in the last eight days. No matter what we stay and fight for what we believe in. We always keep moving forward, never backing down. Even during the Holocaust they kept this spirit to keep going, they knew there was a “long road of suffering ahead [. But don't lose courage” (Weisel, 41). They kept hope for the future and the promise of better times. Each selection wasn’t a time to mourn but a place of celebration knowing that you were that much closer to liberation. This spirit remained within our connection to god. Many lost this connection, a particular quote that has remained with me for years represents this despair. “If there is a G[-]d, he will have to beg my forgiveness” (Jewish POC). The Nazis didn’t care for us; they broke people, massacred lives, spliced the bond between father and son, separated mother and child. Even while writing this my heart writhes in agony, recollecting the atrocities, knowing some people don’t care, who think the Holocaust was the Jew’s fault, that Hitler was a messiah. He was the devil incarnate. Many today don’t care for the facts, they haven’t tried to understand the gravity of the millions of lives lost and there isn’t enough of a stand being done to make sure they do. We need to envelop the world with passion and kindness. Show them the רוח of the Jewish people, how we don’t have sharp horns but open arms. There will never be healing, but there can be prevention. If we can educate we can make a difference and show the world the insurmountable passion and love of the Jewish people.
Hope guides everything we care for. It led Weisel through the death of his parents, leads us today to educate, and hopefully leads future generations to understand. Millions died in the holocaust, lives we will never get back. We can’t ever heal from the injustices, ‘nor is it fair to say we must. Education is the only path, it is our solemn duty as those privileged with education to do what we can. It’s shocking and horrifying to consider the millions who don’t care but we can’t let them drown us out. We need to use our voice, our spirit, our experiences. Show the world that the Holocaust is never to be forgotten. “Give ear, O heavens, let me speak; Let the earth hear the words I utter!”

הַאֲזִ֥ינוּ הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם וַאֲדַבֵּ֑רָה וְתִשְׁמַ֥ע הָאָ֖רֶץ אִמְרֵי־פִֽי (Deuteronomy, 32:1)

Work Cited

Fear, Extremism, and the Holocaust

The Great War has just ended, and Germany has surrendered. The Allies forced Germany to accept the harsh conditions of the Treaty of Versailles, despite the fact that it would crush Germany’s economy. You are a German citizen in post-war Germany. The price of a single loaf of bread has increased from 160 marks in 1922 to more than 400 billion marks in late 1923. Your country’s defeat, along with the Great Depression, leaves you feeling humiliated and betrayed by your government. You believe that the war could have been won if the current government—including Socialists, Communists, and Jews—had not surrendered, and you fear that worse times will come if those groups remain in power. These were the conditions that allowed for the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party.

The Nazis gained mass support in the aftermath of WWI. By blaming Germany’s downfall on Jews and spreading other antisemitic sentiments to the public, they perpetuated feelings of fear, anger, and desperation. Fear, especially, played a significant role in turning people against their fellow citizens. Hitler took advantage of the widespread paranoia and directed it at Jews, claiming that they were responsible for Germany’s problems—despite the many contributions of German Jews during the war. They were subject to a witch hunt fueled by propaganda and misinformation. Films, newspapers, and other media exploited people’s fears by painting them as less than human. In his memoir Night, Elie Wiesel recalls how the guards in concentration camps treated the prisoners like animals: “We were naked, holding our shoes and belts…In a few seconds, we had ceased to be men.” Their shoes, possessions, and even their names were taken from them. Dehumanization justified acts of violence.
When discussing the Holocaust, we often question how such cruelty could have occurred, how such inhumanity could have been tolerated. In the words of Piotr Cywinski, we have “trouble connecting our historical knowledge with our moral choices today”. According to the Pew Research Center, fewer than half of Americans knew how Adolf Hitler came to power, and teens displayed “lower levels of knowledge about the Holocaust” than adults. To combat genocide in the modern day, we must go beyond merely memorizing historical events and instead analyze how past atrocities were able to occur.

The stoking of mass hysteria can be seen throughout all of history, from the Salem witch trials to the yellow journalism of the late 1800s to the current polarized media landscape. In the 1930s, the Nazis took advantage of an unstable and conflicted Germany. They promoted fanatic antisemitism and nationalism, desensitizing the public to genocide. We cannot allow fear and hatred to control us. Although the Holocaust may seem to be in the distant past, we can still listen to the testimonies of survivors and learn from their experiences. Through their stories, we can gain a more immediate and personal connection to the lessons of history. As Elie Weisel said in Night, “To forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time.”
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ART & WRITING CONTEST 2024
HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY
HONORABLE MENTION

CHANAKYA (CHANY) NAYUDU
Harnessing the Power of Social Media: Combating Antisemitism in the Digital Age

With the rise of social media in the 21st century, spreading ideas has never been easier. Yet, as with any accessible tool, it brings inherent downsides. One such downside is the alarmingly fast spread of anti-Semitic ideologies, highlighting the urgent need for intervention. Despite this, social media can be used to promote education, awareness, and counter-narratives to challenge anti-Semitism. This requires raising awareness, building community, and monitoring content, each important for creating a safe digital environment that discourages hate speech and promotes tolerance and support for all.

Raising awareness through social media campaigns is crucial in educating communities about anti-Semitism. One notable example is the #ShowUpForShabbat movement, which urged non-Jewish individuals to attend Shabbat services as a show of solidarity with Jewish communities in the wake of anti-Semitic attacks. This initiative not only provided support to the victims but also served as a powerful educational tool, fostering understanding and empathy among participants.

The role of platform policies and their enforcement cannot be understated in the effort to minimize anti-Semitism online. For example, Facebook has developed community standards that explicitly prohibit hate speech. The enforcement of these policies involves a combination of user reporting mechanisms as well as automated moderation tools. In addition to human moderation, Facebook has also invested in AI-driven moderation tools to help identify and remove hate speech more efficiently. These tools use machine learning algorithms to analyze and categorize content, flagging potentially problematic posts for review by human moderators. While AI
Moderation has shown promise in improving the platform's ability to combat anti-Semitism and other forms of hate speech, it is not without its challenges, particularly in accurately distinguishing context in complex scenarios. Overall, Facebook's platform policies and enforcement mechanisms play a critical role in minimizing anti-Semitism online.

Even though social media platforms provide tools to combat anti-Semitism, challenges exist. One notable example of a social media platform navigating the complexities of combating anti-Semitism while upholding free speech principles is Twitter. Through its community guidelines, Twitter prohibits hateful conduct, including anti-Semitic content, and employs a combination of user reporting and automated moderation tools to enforce these policies. Overall, Twitter is committed to fostering a safer digital environment by actively engaging with users and advocacy groups, refining its policies, and promoting education and awareness campaigns.

Social media is a powerful tool when it comes to fighting anti-Semitism. While digital platforms offer unparalleled opportunities to educate, tackling hate speech remains complex. Social media campaigns like the #ShowUpForShabbat have shown how platforms can unite people globally in the fight against hate. However, significant challenges remain, including balancing free expression with preventing hate speech, accountability, anonymity, and limitations of content moderation. Thus, a continuous, evolving response that prioritizes technology, policy, and community engagement is essential to stop hate speech on social media. Fighting anti-Semitism on social media is everyone's responsibility and we must rise to the occasion, for the fight against hate will only be won through collective effort and unwavering dedication.