

HOLOCAUST:

RESISTANCE, RESCUE AND SURVIVAL

“What is Liberation?”

Each year WSHERC sponsors the Jacob Friedman Holocaust Creative Writing Contest. The contest is open to Washington state students in grades 5 - 12.

The years 2004 - 2005 mark the 60-year anniversary of the liberation of Nazi occupied territories and associated camps. There were many liberation experiences. This year's creative writing contest asked students to respond to several selected photos and quotes.

(On view at www.wsherc.org.)

WSHERC received over 600 entries from across the state. Below are excerpts from the winners. (Read entire winning entries at www.wsherc.org.)

Fifth/Sixth Grades

“When the soldiers came, other people were happy. Groups huddled together, laughing and crying and hugging. But I had no one to hug, and nothing to be happy about. The day was overcast and cold. I shivered. The Soviet soldiers herded us ... somewhere, I wasn't quite sure where ...”

My palms were sweaty and I felt like choking. What would happen to me? I was said to be free, but in reality, I wasn't. I wasn't free of the fear, and I wasn't free of the memories ... Wasn't I still a prisoner? I had no friends, no money, and no possessions, apart from the clothes on my body ...”

1st Place - “The Barbed Wire of Liberation.”
Miriam Pollock, Sixth Grade
Seattle Country Day School, Seattle

Seventh/Eighth Grades

“... Those who survived bore both physical and emotional scars, many of which can never be fully healed ... The longest-lasting effects the Holocaust had on those who survived were emotional. Distress over family members whose fates were unknown, sorrow for those known to be dead, self-sympathy for surviving ... Many survivors,

though, felt an eternal hope for the survival of the people they'd known before and during the Holocaust, as well as the feeling that they should relish their lives, and live them to the fullest. They thought, ‘God had given them a chance to live, and so live they would.’”

1st Place - “Emotional and Physical Liberation: Can Both Ever Be Achieved?” Guy Gудay, Eighth Grade,
Redmond Junior High School, Redmond

Ninth/10th Grades

“What does the liberation mean to me? Liberation is a time to commemorate what the Holocaust taught our world; what we learned can actually happen if we let rage and hate take over. The murder of six million Jews is proof. And, it's our generation's responsibility to show how equality, acceptance, and love can really make all the difference.”

1st Place - “What Liberation Means to Me.”
Tera Jannusch, Ninth Grade
Eastside Catholic High School, Bellevue

11th/12th Grades

“... Stand, don't fall ...”

Don't fall to them. Believe.

Believe in what? Her mind screamed, reeling from pain and driven beyond rationality.

What was left? The names continued in the background. How much longer? It was death out here, stealing even the feeling of coldness from her limbs ... Yet still she stood, when everything told her to cave in.

Why?

Because she was free. As she stood there in the muck and filth of refuse and inhumanity, facing impending death that was never more than a heartbeat away from catching her, surrounded by hatred, barbed wire, and the lowest reaches of deprivation, she was free. Because she stood, held on to life when they told her it was worthless - that was her

rebellion. Buried away so deep they could never find or break it by sheer force. Only she could lay it down, surrender, chain herself to their expectations and judgments. And so even as they were herded along to receive the inconsequential gruel that the soldiers had the audacity to call food, and the roaring smokestack of the crematory began spewing its waste, the tall pillar of smoke rising to heaven, raining down upon them like a last farewell from those who had once been among them, she fought without quite knowing it for something she had no idea lay contained within her broken body.”

Freedom.

1st Place - “Amidst the Ashes.”

Chanelle Creal, 11th Grade

Sky Valley Education Center, Monroe

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