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Mr. Regelbrugge

Holocaust Writing Contest

Henry Friedman was born in 1928 to a Jewish family in Brody, Poland. By the age of ten, he already began to experience hateful comments. "Wait 'til Hitler comes for you all. He'll take care of you!" At 14 years old, he went into hiding with his mother, brother and a teacher, while his dad lived in a different hiding place. They were forced to hide for their lives for 18 months, because the Nazis wanted to wipe all Jewish people from the face of Europe.

Recently, Mr. Friedman came to speak to students at my school. My friends and I couldn't believe so many things he told us, but then he explained how, when they went into hiding his mother was already three months pregnant. Of course, they had no idea how long they were going to be in hiding. As one day became a week, a month and then almost six months later, "my mother told us we needed to vote on what to do about the baby." A baby, certainly, would require more food and a baby would cry. Even the slightest sound could mean that they would be caught. Not only would they be murdered, but so would the Symchuks, the family hiding them. Mr. Friedman told us, in tears, that the decision they made haunts him every day, and he must live with it until he dies. What really affected me, and all of us, was when he angrily told us that this decision should never have been forced on them. This was not fair, and would never have happened if it were not for one group of people hating another group of people.

I was born in 2005 in Iraq. My family and I were forced to leave Iraq because of hate and war, and we moved to Syria. At that time, I was the only the child in my family until one day my mom and dad told me, "You are going to have a baby brother. After 8 months, the doctor informed my mother that she needed to have surgery. My mom agreed to have it the next day, and I had to stay in my uncle's house for two weeks. I did not know that my baby brother had died. My mother came home, and I asked my mom where is my baby brother and she did not answer. I did not ask her anymore because I was so young, and when I was 6 years old I asked my mom again, "Where is my brother?" She

said he is dead, and I did not cry because I did not understand what “dead” means. Later, I understood what this meant, and learned that if it was not for all of the stress and fear she felt from being so afraid running from the hate and war, my brother would have lived. I would have had a brother to love and play with.

My family and I know what it's like to lose someone because of hatred, and we also think, like Mr. Friedman, that life is very sad and unfair that hatred could ever make people feel so awful, force them to make terrible moral decisions, and, during the Holocaust and other genocides and wars since then, be killed. Over six million Jews, and about 11 million people were killed in the Holocaust because of hatred of other people's differences. I have learned this would never have happened if only people would have spoken out to defend the Jews. To me, a Muslim boy, this is not a story about Jewish people but about all human beings. Where I am from, I have heard many bad things about Jewish people in Israel, but that does not stop me from keeping an open mind about all people. I have learned I am no better or worse than anyone, so why does anyone think different than that? I hope I would, and will speak up for others in my life, and I hope to make Mr. Friedman proud of me for this essay, and for what I do to be a good person in this world. I will always try to honor him, and I hope everyone would think about other people in this way.