

My Study Mission to Auschwitz-Birkenau

by Jennifer Hagan, Cold Spring Harbor High School, New York

It was the 13th of April, 2001, supposedly springtime, but snow fell nonetheless. Dark clouds blocked out the sun, making the air heavy and dank. I shivered, wearing only jeans and a light jacket. My eyes drifted, absorbing the panorama. There were no obvious signs of spring; no birds or green grass or buds on the trees. The gray land stretched forever it seemed, spotted only by a few gray, rundown buildings. Perhaps it was just the weather on that particular Friday, but to me it felt as though the clouds in the sky were permanent, hovering above the landscape, trying to suppress the horrible truth. The land was desolate; pitiful and tired, like a small child who had wept so much that no more tears were left.

I was uncomfortable revisiting this particular past, traveling back into this history. I walked around, sickened at what I saw and what I thought. My throat was tight and it was hard to breathe. No one spoke, or at least I heard nothing. My senses were overwhelmed by the void before me. My imagination was terrifying. I wanted to disappear from that place; where I was did not matter, just as long as I was not there. No pictures I had ever seen before did justice to being in the actual presence of this infamous, historical setting. This place was hauntingly eerie and fearsome.

How could I be so lucky, so privileged? How could I swim in a pool on a sunny, summer day, and eat ice cream? How could I sit outside my house on green grass underneath leafy trees, watching squirrels and listening to birds chirp? Why was I able to see rainbows and bright blue skies?



Jennifer Hagan, 3rd from the left

I had a sense of guilt, that on that Friday the 13th, I felt so fortunate, so lucky, in comparison to the lives of the people who had once lived and died in the place that lay before my eyes. My heart ached for those courageous and heroic human beings. The horror injected into their lives was a horror that I cannot even conceive. The terror, the hopelessness, and the despair that those people felt are incomprehensible.

At the same time I was outraged. How could one human torture another in such a way? How could the beliefs of the one person subvert the conscience of a country to destroy and entire people? I was sickened by the failure of the human race to prevent such evil. It was foreign to me: the idea of being stripped of human rights; the idea of one person taking over another person's mind, body, and maybe even their soul.

At that moment, I saw the world in its raw form. I saw something with my own eyes that I had never imagined. In my sheltered little town, where I took the bare necessities, like water, food, and shelter, for granted every day, I would never know a hardship such as that. Only in my worst nightmares would I have the memories that the wind whispered in my ear that day.

And so I left that place, changed forever. I have my home and I would return to sunshine and rainbows in my little town, but a window in the past, to the outside world, had been opened. As I walked away, I looked back on last time at the wrought iron gate. "So this is Auschwitz," I thought to myself. "What an awful place."



My Country at the Crossroads to Peace

By Palitha Aluthdunne, Sri Lanka

If you want to feel the sufferance or pain of a person you take his place and think, "If it happened to me how would it be?"

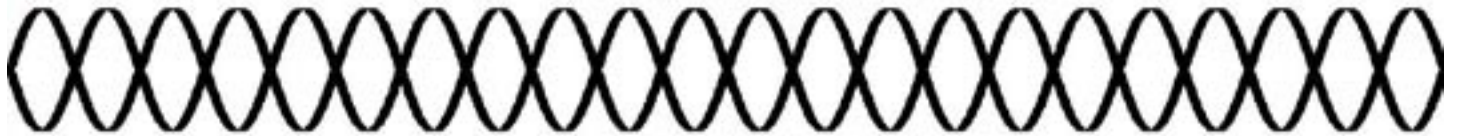
People were deported by cattle cars to concentration camps. How would you feel if your parents and siblings had been incinerated? Can somebody bear the smell of his own parents or siblings?

All cruel men had bitter experiences in their childhood. I have learned that Hitler was severely punished by his father during his childhood. His mother wanted him to become a priest. How ironic it was! What evil force made him become so cruel? It is believed that one of his teacher's visions made him become a dictator; later this horrible thought led to mass killings of Jews. I am of the opinion that his unpleasant childhood made him become so cruel. He hated his own father. That particular teacher must have been a "father-figure" to him.

Vital global issues such as child labour, child abuse, child soldiers, and street children produce cruel dictators and suicide

bombers. One Holocaust creates other holocausts. It is not much too hard to comprehend this simple logic. Holocausts are being reported from many countries. They are disastrous. It is a pathetic situation to see most countries allocate more money on warfare than child welfare.

As teachers, we should have sessions for students to feel and talk about their experience on hatred, cruelty, selfishness, and envy. We must let them divulge what they have gained or what they have lost from having these evil thoughts. We can ask our students to find out how incidents related to these evil thoughts have put people into troubles. I believe if members of the i*EARN family pool our continuous efforts to convince our children the evil side of these thoughts, our Earth would be safer place to live. This can be only possible if we can promise a pleasant childhood for every child. I deeply believe if we aim at a star, at least we can land on the moon. So, I BELIEVE WE CAN PREVENT HOLOCAUSTS!



The Danger of Modern Fascism

By Olga Chehnovich, School #429, Moscow, Russia

Skinheads, who show the main danger of fascism now, as I know, are the members of the special group, though it's difficult to call it so. I heard they want to have white race to become leaders of the world. I've heard also of many incidents when they beat people, black people, or Georgians, American and other nationalities. They want to encroach a total control on the world and so they are destroying all races which are not advantageous under their claim. But our skinheads are not so cruel as abroad. In the USA they beat to people to death but in our country skinheads only strike and frighten. It's terrible but it's better to survive than to die.

On the 20th of April, Hitler's birthday, a lot of people were afraid of going out and stayed at home. Isn't it terrible, that I heard this advice over the radio? Hitler was such a terrible evil in the universe; how is it possible that people follow his ideas after

the terrible war where their grandparents gave their lives to win?

With the black people in Russia, the situation is terrible. They are not like the other people. It's the color, but that it has nothing to do against them. But skinheads are supported by some people and it's strange for me. Also there is an opinion that skinheads are supported and helped by the police, and they can do anything. And I think likewise. I think it's the people's nature. So the skinheads were and will be existing. And the hatred among people is not disappearing, race will not be like one another. And nobody can do anything about it.

There is no peace under the olives, but we must do our best. If we show the good sides and our respect to tolerance and mutual understanding and our contempt for racial and national discrimination, I think will go down.

Is the Holocaust Possible Today?

By Sergey Pavlovsky, School #429, Moscow, Russia

The world recognized what “the Holocaust” means at the first half of the twentieth century. That time Nazis, with their leader Adolf Hitler, wanted to seize all the world. Hitler wanted to destroy all the people except the Aryans. Fascist soldiers destroyed many cities, villages, and their population. Nazis didn’t stop even to little children. Some millions of children perished in the World War II.

Hitler especially didn’t love Jews. About six million Jews were shot down and perished in concentration camps. Leaders of Nazis tried to hide the real face. Fascists behaved to Europeans as “civilized” invaders; they destroyed Europeans towns less than Soviet Union’s towns. German soldiers raged in USSR as nowhere; many Soviet villages were destroyed with their population. Very many people were sent to concentration camps in Germany. About twenty six million Soviet citizens perished in W.W.II. In all the world, about sixty million people perished.

There weren’t families in the country of ally which didn’t lose some relation. One would think that nobody will forget W.W.II, the Holocaust and will know who and what are fascists. But now, when most people who were touched by that event died, when the young generation grows which didn’t see the Holocaust, revival of fascism seems reality. There are many organizations similar to Nazi organization all the world. There are few such organizations in Russia. “RNE”, “skinheads” are some of nationalist organizations. Sometimes we recognize the terrible actions of skinheads or others from TV news. I know some boys from our school who belong to them. But they are of the sort I and

all my friends don’t respect. They have nothing to be proud of but belonging to Russians. It’s better to be proud of your results at the exam or personality.

I think that these odd groups can’t lead to a Holocaust because they are only groups of bandits now. But if they come to power, to authority, the Holocaust can be repeated, no matter who it will touch: Jews or Christians. But it can happen only if the citizens do support them. But as I can judge now, Russia doesn’t support Nazi organizations. But we must be on guard. Such situations are watched in the world. It was dangerous in France



St. Basil's Cathedral, Moscow, Russia

during the elections. It’s great that pro-fascists lost there. So the Holocaust can begin again if people are passive and won’t fight for peace in the world, won’t fight for toleration to all the people in the world no matter what their nationality, religion, or race is.

For I was a stranger and you welcomed me...

- Matthew 25:35

A group of lightly dressed people stood freezing at the bus station. Big bags with all the things they dared not sell or donate were scattered around them. They waited for a bus which would drive them to a new, better life. Their aim, Germany, seemed unattainable, but that feeling was reduced with every mile that the bus left behind and was completely replaced by excitement as they passed the German border. However, the sight which opened up to them was not quite what they had expected. Old, grey houses were packed tightly into narrow, straight streets; there was nobody to be seen. Each building that they passed could be their new home.

There is their hostel. It is an old castle surrounded by a national park in the east of Germany.

After living in Germany for four years this picture seems far away. Germany is not a foreign country anymore. We have settled in. The kids go to school. The parents work at their jobs. However, economic independence brought new problems. Emigrating is always a daring step. It is not in human nature to give up a warm nest for an uncertain future. Nevertheless, inconsiderate politicians force people to start their lives again in what are, for them, hardly known countries. This happened to us. In the long list of problems which came up, learning the language took the highest place. As is well-known, children can easily pick up new languages. But even as a child I had to fight against an imaginary barrier. Russian phrases overlap with German and English expressions; what remains of Moldavian (Romanian) mixes with this salad and makes any conversation a torture. The adults have even more problems. Six months which they get to improve their German after arriving in the country are obviously too short a period to acquire such a complex language. The next problem is to find any job at all. Although Germany is a country where nobody is left homeless, the financial assistance is such a small sum that you can just survive but not live as freely as you would want to. In addition, it gives you a very strange feeling to live at the cost of society. My parents



eventually found their niche in the working world, despite employment problems in Germany. Of course, that was not particularly easy because there are too few jobs in the east of the country, especially for foreigners who do not speak the language well. So we had to move on into the west.

After dealing with a strict bureaucracy the family was eventually allowed to move into the west of the German Republic. Nobody in their immigrant community had believed that some of them would ever dare to move from the place of arrival to look for a better life somewhere else. Approaching and seeing the metropolis of Cologne on the Rhine was like a dream replacing the nightmare of living in a hostel in the east.

Our decision couldn't find broad agreement in the Russian-Jewish immigrant community there, either. They believe that immigration is a means for the German nation to make good for the Holocaust. From my point of view, though, this topic is more current and important here than it was in Moldova and also than in the former Soviet Union. How guilty must a nation feel not to forget such a dark chapter of their history? There are fierce debates on the issue in all the media in here for this reason. I often hear my friends in Israel and the USA say that racism obviously is a very important subject in today's Germany, that mainly the young people fall prey to the brown plague of neo-Nazism and that they cause violence to foreigners. However, I haven't seen anything like it myself yet, neither in the school (where, I would say, the kids are more peaceful with each other than in Moldova) nor in the streets. But in my opinion there are a lot more conflicts between ethnic minorities like Russians and Turks or Russians and Poles. Schooling in Germany is a different subject, however. At first I couldn't believe how uncomplicated school was here but, on the other hand, how superior the former Soviet education seemed to have been. In the first three years that I spent here, it appears to me that I learnt very little in addition to what I knew already. So I had more free time to improve

my language skills. Now (in 11th grade) I have reached my own standard. Perhaps this apparent difference in learning is due to the fact that there are different kinds of schooling in Germany which are the same only after 10th grade if your results are good enough to pass onto this level. In contrast, I do not see any difference with regards to culture. After the collapse of Soviet Union Western culture flooded the countries of the former Soviet Republics and we, the children of this change, have been westernized since our childhood. However, different views of the world or different values may sometimes cause conflicts between the younger and the older generations, especially amongst immigrants.

All in all, you can say that although Germany is actively trying to be an attractive country for immigrants, there

are some old prejudices, remnants of Old Prussia, which make foreigners build their own closed communities. There are Russian newspapers, Russian stores, and even Russian bakeries. Of course these businesses are part of the German economy and create plenty of jobs for the ethnic communities (Turks, Poles, Russians for example), but at the same time this forms some kind of ghetto — and as we know from history, this situation may cause fear and misunderstanding, which can lead to violence.

The blue flicker of the monitor illuminated the room. The parents were already asleep after a hard day, also the sister. Only the son was in front of the computer screen and he was writing down his memories.

By: Boris Seiner, Heinrich-Bohl Gesamtschule, Koeln, Germany

Special thanks to teacher, Jutta Schaffarczyk

Our Pilot Program with the Committee on Conscience of the USHMM

By Colby Kane, Cold Spring Harbor High School, New York

After reading the memoir, *Night*, by Elie Wiesel, our English class had a “distance learning” discussion with Dr. Bridget Conley, a representative from the Committee on Conscience at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, DC. Through video conferencing, we heard a lecture by Dr. Conley and were able to ask her questions relating to genocides. Although we did have some technical problems in the beginning, everything from then on went smoothly, and we were able to learn more about the Holocaust and even other genocides in the past century. Mr. Monastero, our technology coordinator, set up the equipment and connected us to the museum with the assistance of Christine Vitto of the museum’s technology department. Lance Shapiro, a student in our class, helped too.

We learned many things. The term genocide originates from the Greek “genos” meaning race and the Latin “cide” meaning “to kill”. The legal definition, according to the United Nations, is “the intent to destroy, in whole or in part; a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.” In 1944, Raphael Lemkin was the first to “coin the word genocide when referring to the Holocaust, based on his research about other groups specifically targeted with violence,” according to Dr. Conley. Even though the

Holocaust is the most well known genocide, there are many others that have happened recently, for example, Bosnia (1992-1995), and Rwanda (1994).

The Committee on Conscience’s mission is to educate and to alert national conscience. There are three stages, called the “Standing Agenda” that they use to alert people of genocides. The first stage is to watch a specific region where certain actions

(such as mass violence) would indicate potential of a genocide to the Committee on Conscience; the second is a warning that violence going on in that region, and the third stage is to declare that region in a state of emergency because crimes against humanity are occurring there.

Winston Churchill stated that a genocide is: “a crime without a name.” The purpose

of the Committee on Conscience of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is to put a spotlight on this crime and to prevent the occurrence of it now and in the future.

This distance learning lesson was a “first” for Cold Spring Harbor High School. It enabled our English 10 Honors class and Mrs. Kern to actually “enter” the museum, see a video clip, and hear a scholarly lesson from that site. Most students thought it was a very interesting experience.

... GENOCIDE IS:

“A CRIME WITHOUT A NAME.”

—WINSTON CHURCHILL

Colleges Show More Interest in Holocaust/Genocide Project Graduates

In February, 2004, senior student Jamie Kates, who will be attending New York University in the fall, interviewed Phil Macaluso, the Director of College Counseling at Cold Spring Harbor High School, New York. Mr. Macaluso has been at CSHHS for 17 years and has visited over 700 college campuses. He is a member of the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC) and has not only made presentations about the college admissions process at other schools, but met with thousands of students over the years to assist them with their college preparation. Jamie's questions are followed by Mr. Macaluso's answers below.



Mr. Macaluso and Jamie Kates

1) We feel very privileged that you would think that the Holocaust/Genocide Project (HGP) is a factor in how a college reviews a candidate from Cold Spring Harbor High School. Why is that so?

It is very difficult for colleges to differentiate one student from another. This is because the launching point for a college admission is the statistical information and academic record. What people have to understand is that admissions to a college are much more than a student's statistical profile. Colleges want to take a look at what a student has done outside the classroom meaning the "extracurricular activities". But often, colleges see too much of the typical type of activities, sports being one of these "typical activities", the newspaper being another. The question comes down to this: "What makes this student unique and different"? The Holocaust Genocide Project is both unique and different; you just don't find this type of program in other schools. The reason why this program is a factor in how colleges review a candidate is because it is an activity that promotes world awareness for students. I see it in its broad spectrum. Regardless of one's race or religion, this activity is devoted to making people conscious of others around them; it's raising students' attention to regarding social issues, and especially human rights violation which is why colleges are taking notice.

2) We want to thank you for emphasizing the Holocaust/Genocide Project with colleges. How well known, do you think the Holocaust Genocide Project is, among the colleges you are in contact with?

While it is not very well known, when brought to a college's attention, it illicit an interesting and significant response. It strikes a college's attention which is very important in making it become better known. Plus, when you show the finished product, the magazine itself, (*An End to Intolerance*), colleges are genuinely interested because it represents a culmination of ideas from students around the world. This makes the magazine something of primary focus.

3) Could you recall if the Holocaust/Genocide Project has ever been influential in a student's acceptance to a college?

Yes, without getting too specific, I can assure you that has been the case in some instances. However, the reason why a college was interested has not been because of membership alone. It's a student's genuine involvement, leadership, and assertion of responsibility. Colleges want to see kids taking a project and implementing it to the world around them. The membership alone is not enough to get a college interested. Colleges want

to see demonstrative leadership involving a sense of assuming responsibility; this has made a difference.

4) Are there any particular types of colleges who seek students involved in the Holocaust/ Genocide Project?

On the whole, I think this program interests more of the small- to- medium sized liberal arts colleges with communities that pride themselves on student interaction and community involvement. This is because they are more dependent on student involvement. And a good thing to know is that the small- to-medium liberal arts colleges outnumber large universities.

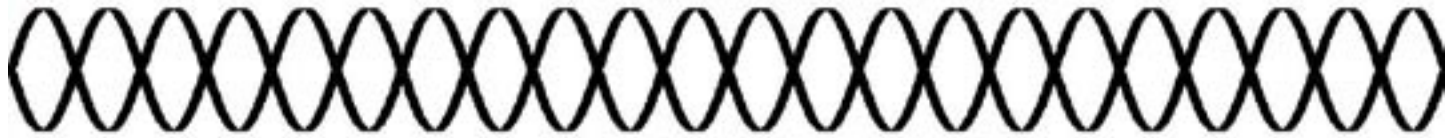
5) We would like to have the Holocaust Genocide Project even more geared towards influencing college acceptance. What can the Holocaust/ Genocide Project do to make participants more attractive to colleges and universities?

Well most importantly, colleges have to see the magazine. Students should highlight it and allude to it on their resume as well as write a description. It is important to send the magazine, *An End to Intolerance*, with sections separated by tabs. It is also important to have Mrs. Kern write what the program is in detail, than make it personal by writing the student's particular role in it.

The student should include: a cover sheet, the magazine, sections tabbed, and a personal letter from Mrs. Kern because this will substantiate the record.

6) What can the Holocaust/Genocide Project do to connect more to colleges and universities?

Most colleges that are interested assume that there will be a follow-through with these activities' goals. Small liberal arts colleges, especially, want to see continued activity because it generates student interaction on campus. Now more than ever, colleges are looking for kids who wish to become more politically active. This is because kids who are active politically and socially are more aware of the world and issues that involve other people. What students should know if they wish to connect more to colleges is that college is not a place to go and find a career. Career choices should be made in graduate school. College is a place where students go to broaden their intellectual horizons and awareness of the world around them, and the Holocaust/ Genocide Project accomplishes the same end result. Students involved in this activity are looking to broaden their awareness to the world around them, broaden their intellectual horizon, and ultimately, make a difference in the world, and these are the types of students that colleges are looking for.



Night: The Holocaust Memoir Read Around the World

For twelve years, this magazine has published student comments about their reading of Elie Wiesel's Holocaust experience. Students have been affected very deeply. The introduction to this article was written by Kacie Thompson, a student at Blue Ridge High School; Lakeside, Arizona. Thanks to Kacie's teacher, Judy Peterson. The comments that follow Kacie's were written by students at Cold Spring Harbor High School, New York.

Burdened with hunger, imprisonment, and dehumanization, Elie Wiesel feels a guilty freedom when his father dies. Even after spending the crucial days with his father in the camps and on the Death March, he does not respond to his father's last plea to him and doesn't even cry at his death. Without understanding the situation, one might blame Wiesel for these feelings. It is important to realize that he has no choice but to remain silent and so feels hauntingly guilty that his father's words are Elie's name. Wiesel no longer has the energy or strength to take care of his father and

needs to be eating his own rations rather than sharing them with a dying man. His ability to help his father has been taken from him because it has become a choice between saving himself or saving his father who is already suffering from starvation, beatings and a death march.

In *Night*, the memory of the last 'rattling noise" (106) that Wiesel hears from his father torments him still. It is one word, his name being called out as a cry of help. Wiesel know that his father will not get better. If he saves him this time, there will only be more situations like this one and he is becoming weaker each time. Having to care for his father is such a burden and with others prompting him, he begins to question if it is worth doing. A doctor warns him that his father's condition is irreversible and advises Wiesel, "there is nothing you can do for him. And you're killing yourself." (105) The message penetrates his strong will for only a fraction of a second before he goes to fetch his father some food, but Wiesel is becoming weaker each day. After keeping his parent alive for some time, Wiesel finally becomes too weak to save him any longer.

Over a course of time, even a strong spirit like Wiesel's becomes stripped of everything it has. From the immediate loss of his mother, sister, clothes, hair and all his possessions, he eventually loses his faith, ability to care for others, and make decisions. Living a life in camp, "every man has to fight for himself and not think of anyone else. Even his father...there is no fathers, no brothers. No friends." (104) As Primo Levi explains it, "others have decided for us, and that was the only way it could have happened because our ability to decide had been amputated. Therefore, we are not responsible and cannot be punished." (*The Drowned and the Saved*, 29) After hearing of Wiesel's story, it is important for us to know that we can not blame him because, like everything else he once owned, his ability to choose has been taken away. One of the important lessons we learn in *Night*, as well as other stories of the Holocaust is that we, the readers, or those living today, cannot judge the actions of those who endured during the events of the Holocaust. We must not pass judgment, but must learn greater lessons of strength and compassion.

"At about ten o'clock, the air-raid sirens began to wail. An alert." (56)

This quote takes place in Auschwitz concentration camp, the site of most of the plot. Previously, Elie was forced to have his gold tooth removed by a dentist, and had just come out of the hospital. In addition, he was also just whipped in front of a large group of men for witnessing Idek doing something that he should not have. I find this quote amazing because it is weird being under attack while being held as a prisoner and even running from the bombs that could save them. More clearly, the Allied forces were attacking German strong-points and camps at the same time as Jews were held captive in camps being bombed. I felt this to be very ironic and scary for those prisoners. It is almost like having two enemies in a sense.

-Lance Shapiro

"The yellow star? Oh well, what of it? You don't die of it... (Poor Father! Of what then did you die)" (9)

Just think about that for a little bit. Yeah, that's scary. No one realized it at the time. I'm sure many people felt degraded and dehumanized because they were secluded and identified by all. To them the star said that they were Jewish and it told other people that they were Jewish. Almost NO ONE thought that by wearing this yellow star they were living in impending doom! If Elie's father had not worn the star, if he had snuck away and escaped with his family, his family would probably have lived to a ripe old age. But this yellow star sewn on to the apparel of Elie's father, and to every other Jewish person, selected them to be victims of terrifying concentration camps, where around ninety percent of the people imprisoned in these camps died. And one of these millions of people was Elie Wiesel's father.

-Joe Locicero

"Two Gestapo officers strolled about on the platform, smiling: all things considered, everything had gone off very well. A prolonged whistle split the air. The wheels began to grind. We were on our way." (20)

I chose this quote from the memoir *Night*, to show Elie's first feelings towards his beginning of a new, harsh life. This quote explains the deportation of the Jews from the ghetto. It shows how naive they were to where they were being taken. The line: "We were on our way." leads the reader to believe Elie and his family were not reluctant to leave, but almost relieved. Unaware of what they were being thrown into; their views on the situation were positive and were somewhat alarming. The Jewish people were hopeful and unexpectant to the horrors they would soon be subjected to. This quote is also upsetting because of the part about the Gestapo officers smiling. It shows how they had no heart and were numb to the cruelty of their actions. They treated the Jews like they weren't human after taking away their rights, homes, and, soon to their dismay, their families. This quote shows the beginning of the end for the Jews in the story, except for the few who had the will and strength to survive.

-Ashley Foxen

"He was playing his life. The whole of his life was gliding on the strings--- his lost hopes, his charred past, his extinguished future. He played as he would never play again."(90)

This quote is taken from the book *Night*. During this scene, Juliek manages to get into a position to play his violin and plays his heart out. He played a fragment from Beethoven's concerto. The next morning, Juliek is found slumped over dead with his broken violin besides him. Juliek's final acts show much human strength and the unwillingness to surrender even after all hope has been lost. He has the courage to play his violin until his last breath. Not only does he play to the death, but what he chose to play was Beethoven, a composer whose music was forbidden to be played by Jews. This alone is a sole act of resistance to Nazi authority. Juliek is telling the Nazis that he doesn't care what they threaten to do and say...he cannot be broken.

-Keith Casadei

"Then the whole camp, block after block, had to march past the hanged man and stare at the dimmed eyes, the lolling tongue of death. The Kapos and heads of each block forced everyone to look him full in the face. After the march, we were given permission to return to the blocks for our meal. I remember that I found the soup excellent that evening..."(60)

This quote stood out in my mind because of its ability to show more completely the extent to which those in concentration camps were dehumanized. Elie, after having viewed the death of one of his fellow prisoners, having been able to describe in detail



Elie Wiesel (Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archive)

the look upon the man's face, was most easily able to comment on the excellent quality of the soup he ate afterwards. While such a detail might seem insignificant at first glance, it does say something important about the mind-set of Elie and his fellow prisoners. Death has become routine. The prisoners stare death in the face every day. The conditions are as such that a gruesome death is far more common than a good meal, and the prisoners have been made so desensitized to the principle of death that they are able to witness it while feeling barely any emotion at all.

-Peter Finocchiaro

“He knew that I would have to go in a few moments. He would have to stay behind alone, so very alone.

‘Look, take this knife,’ he said to me. ‘I don’t need it any longer. It might be useful to you. And take this spoon as well. Don’t sell them. Quickly! Go on. Take what I’m giving you!’

“The inheritance.” (71)

The last line struck home for me. People normally associate the word inheritance with a timely death and the writing of a will. For someone to give his son an inheritance while he is still alive is a gesture that evokes a lot of emotion. Eliezer's father is certain of his forthcoming death. He gives Elie all he has, everything he has. For the love and survival of his son, all a father has to offer is a spoon and a knife.

Elie's father has been more of a burden to him than a protector throughout the book. On some deep level, I'm sure that his father knows that. He must feel extremely grateful to his son, and love him all the more for it. Elie is aware of his father's frailties and he loves his father enough to protect him and not abandon him for his own better survival. I remember one occasion in

the book when Elie's father is sick and Ellie gave him half his soup. Elie is fifteen years old and protecting his own father from things I couldn't even imagine my parents would be able to protect me from. He is fifteen years old.

By not abandoning his father Elie is demonstrating what this book is all about; acts of kindness and resistance. That is what the inheritance is, kindness.

-Tara Dolan

“I looked at my little sister Tzipora, her fair hair well combed, a red coat over her arm, a little girl of seven. The bundle on her back was too heavy for her. She gritted her teeth. She knew by now that it would be useless to complain.”(17)

The quote describes Elie Wiesel's trip to the little ghetto. He describes how his father was crying, and how his mother walked with a set

expression on her face. I could have easily chosen any other quote from this book that could have shown suffering or great sacrifice. For me, this quote touched me. I remember actually crying at this part because I felt that children should not have to deal with the worry and stress that adults have learned to live with. This little girl of seven was forced to meet these worries and concerns at an early age, and she learned to cope with them in her silent struggle. I can easily imagine the scene Elie Wiesel describes while he and his family transfer from the larger ghetto to the smaller ghetto. In my mind I can clearly distinguish Tzipora's red coat from the struggles surrounding her. I found myself thinking of a photograph that was black and white; all except for a red rose. I think of Tzipora's red coat now as a rose of hope, a strand of courage, as a symbol for her determination to live her normal life once again. The coat also stands for innocence: Tzipora's innocence. Being a child she's hardly had a chance to sin. Yet, she is forced to watch her parents suffer so. Tzipora could have easily cried at any time and asked for her mother. Yet she faced the struggle and remained quiet. In remaining silent she fights her own struggle possibly only known to the worries of children. I think of how long this memoir was originally going to be. I think of all that Elie Wiesel extracted. I realize that every sentence has great meaning, for the story survived its own "selection" period. This quote clearly had great meaning to Elie Wiesel, although, maybe not the same meaning it had to me.

-Kim Barba

“Yes, man is very strong, greater than God. When You were deceived by Adam and Eve, You drove them out of Paradise. When Noah's generation displeased You, You brought down the Flood. When Sodom no longer found favor in Your eyes, You made the sky rain down fire and sulphur. But these men here, whom You have betrayed, whom You have allowed to be tortured, butchered, gassed, burned, what do they do? They

pray before You! They praise Your name!”(64)

Elie Wiesel as says this while everybody is praying during the night of Rosh Hashanah, the last day of the Jewish year which is a very important holiday. I found this quote very moving because here, all these Jewish people are being murdered for their religion, for their god, and Elie comes to realize that they are stronger than the god they are dying for. They all died for their religion; for their belief that there was a force stronger than them, existing that is worth dying for. Yet Elie realizes that this idea is not worth dying for. This must have been a very harsh reality for him.

-Rebecca Scully

“I did not fast, mainly to please my father, who had forbidden me to do so. But further, there was no longer any reason why I should fast. I no longer accepted God’s silence. As I swallowed my bowl of soup, I saw in gesture an act of rebellion and protest against Him.” (66)

For me, reading this quote put the Holocaust into perspective. Elie no longer accepted god. Fasting was a way of protesting against God because Jewish people normally fast on Yom Kippur to show their respect towards God, but Elie did not have anymore respect for Him. He was angry at God for doing this to him and his people. This anger made me realize how horrible the lives of the prisoners truly were. Before the Holocaust they would praise god and worship him in synagogue, but now after all they have been through they possessed a hatred for Him. This must mean their lives are unbearably dreadful that they no longer accept God. I think that in this quote Elie Wiesel is blaming God for what he and the rest of the prisoners are going through.

-Ali Bressler

“Have faith in life. Above all else, have faith. Drive out despair, and you will keep death away from yourselves.” (38)

In this scene the prisoner in charge of Auschwitz is warning and giving advice to the new prisoners who come to the camp. He emphasizes that faith is a very important part of their survival. The prisoners are losing their faith in God because they can’t believe how he could let such a terrible thing happen to them. I think that what the prisoner said to the people was very motivating and encouraging. I think he also gave a lot of new hope to people who were slowly giving up. His advice gives everyone a boost of confidence. There is hope if everyone works together and helps one another. The most important thing for people though, is to keep up their faith.

-Lily Worledge

“I did not weep, and it pained me that I could not weep. But I had no more tears. And, in the depths of my being, in the recesses of my weakened conscience, could have searched it, I might perhaps have found something like - free at last!” (106)

There are so many different things that could be said about this quote; either about the fact that Elie Wiesel could not cry for the death of his father or about the comment “free at last.” When Elie stated that he could not cry, I realized at that moment the pain that he was experiencing. Elie and his father’s relationship was one that was unique. With everything that happened, for example the loss of their mother and sisters, starvation, and death, they stuck together. The closest of people even lost hope for one another, for example the rabbi and his son. For Elie not to be able to cry shows the severity of their lives. I interpreted the final statement, “free at last,” differently from the other students in my class. Many of my classmates felt as though this statement meant that Elie was finally able to care for himself and not have his father drag him down. But I thought that Elie thought that his father, this innocent man, was finally free of the hardship that he was experiencing. Elie always cared and thought of his father before himself, so at that moment, I think his anxiety went away and felt that his father was in a better place. This quote really moved me and stood out to me in the non-fiction memoir *Night* by Elie Wiesel. I hope it did the same for you.

- Colby Kane

“One day I was able to get up, after gathering all my strength. I wanted to see myself in the mirror hanging on the opposite wall. I had not seen myself since the ghetto.

From the depths of the mirror, a corpse gazed back at me.

The look in his eyes, as they stared into mine, has never left me.” (109)

This quote is from Elie’s last words in his entire story written in his book. He was at a hospital in Buchenwald right after that camp had been liberated. He was sick with food poisoning. To me, this quote is shocking Elie gathers all of the strength in him just so that he can see himself in the mirror. And the thing that he sees is a corpse, not himself. Perhaps the person that he sees in the depths of the mirror is his father.

-Colin McGeough

“Never shall I forget the nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live.”(32)

This sentence really moved me, as the true realities of the horrors of the Holocaust came at me in a rush. To deprive a human being of all their desires to live is unfathomable to people like me who have not been through anything even close to the evil of this genocide. What is even more amazing is that Elie said this after spending just ONE night in Birkenau. He had seen the faces of little children burning under a quiet night sky. He had seen dead babies being thrown into the fires as if it was an every-day affair. He had seen the rising smoke of the dead and it killed him. These things Elie Wiesel experienced and witnessed in that one night took away his will to live.

-Brian Mulderrig

“One day I was able to get up, after gathering all my strength. I wanted to see myself in the mirror hanging on the opposite wall. I had not seen myself since the ghetto. From the depths of a mirror, a corpse gazed back at me. The look in his eyes, as they stared in to mine, has never left me.” (109)

This was the ending quote of Elie Wiesel’s memoir *Night*. Elie was on the verge of death in a hospital after the liberation of Buchenwald. He was suffering severe food poisoning. For two weeks Elie was under intense care and treatment for his illness. Finally he found enough strength to leave his bed and walk around. Elie went to a mirror and stared into it. He had not seen his own self for many years. As Elie looked into the mirror, not only did he view himself, but maybe a vivid image of his father’s corpse, staring him down; the image never left his mind. Stating what Elie has seen proves the harshness of the life he had lived, and his father’s unfortunate death both imprinted in his mind and soul.

-James Schubel

“The two adults were no longer alive... But the third rope was still moving; being so light, the child was still alive... For more than half an hour he stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying in slow agony under our eyes. And we had to look him full in the face. He was still alive when I passed in front of him... Behind me, I heard..[a] man asking: ‘ Where is God now?’ And I heard a voice from within me answer him: ‘ Where is He? Here He is-He is hanging here on these gallows....’ That night the soup tasted of corpses.” (61-62)

This quote completely unveils the true horror that occurred in the death camps during the Holocaust. The Nazis and S. S. officers showed absolutely no sympathy toward these people, and three of them were perfectly willing to hang a young, angel-faced child and watch him die. Elie’s fellow prisoners were then forced to watch, so they would not commit any crimes. The worst part of this incident was that the angel-faced boy suffered a slow, agonizing death. The significance of Elie’s thought of God at the gallows is that, to him, God was dead. God had suffered the same horrible end as had the young boy, at the gallows at the hands of the S. S. officers, for all to see. This is reflected by the soup tasting of corpses. At that moment, for Elie, the whole world seemed to die.

-Krista Rose

“Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never” (32).

The previous quote was the one quote that stuck out in my mind while I was reading *Night* by Elie Wiesel. This quote shows the intense struggle that Elie has between his faith and his experiences during the Holocaust. Elie and the rest of the Jews in the concentration camps must keep faith in their God and in their will to survive. The instant that a person loses the belief that they can go on, that person just gave up all chances of their survival. Before being shipped in cattle cars to Auschwitz, Elie was an extremely religious person. Although he tried to keep believing in God, it was very hard for him to have faith in God when he is living in a place where he is not even treated like a human, but instead a beast. When arriving at Auschwitz, Elie sees pits filled with bodies and smoke coming out of crematories. While at the camp, Elie feels like each day and night is one long nightmare filled with horror and evil. Because Elie is always witnessing horrible deaths and living in fear, he gets understandably angry towards his God for letting these horrors happen to him. In the quote above Elie describes the moments in the camp as murdering his God and soul but then still as the quote goes on Elie refers to God as existing when he says “...even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself.” It is apparent that he faces a conflict in his beliefs.

-Mary O’Connor



“A crowd of workmen and curious spectators had collected along the train. They had probably never seen a train with such a cargo. Soon nearly everywhere, pieces of bread were being dropped into the wagons. The audience stared at these skeletons of men, fighting one another to the death for a mouthful” (95)

This quote describes a situation where Elie and his father are being transported by a cattle car which has no roof. The car has no roof, and the workmen and people in the area are using the Jewish people as a form of entertainment by throwing bread into the car to watch them fight over it. Due to the treatment they have been through, the Jews are struggling for life and when something that has been so scarce for days is given to them, they are compelled to fight for it. This act shows the inhumanity that the Holocaust brought upon the Jewish people. There are a couple of words that stood out in my mind when reading this quote. The use of the word “cargo” to describe people struck me as something out of the ordinary. To the average person, cargo is merchandise or something in the category of goods to be transported. This word also dehumanizes the Jewish people. To be referred to as merchandise instead of a human is degrading and insulting. The use of the word “audience” is also distinctive; suggesting that the onlookers are an audience is also saying that what they are watching is a show. The people in the cattle car are not putting on a show for anyone who wants to watch. They are literally killing each other for a piece of bread and this is what these people call amusing? The last word that caught my attention was how Elie referred to the Jews. He said they were “skeletons” of men. This means that these people are no longer men; they are what is left of what used to be considered a man.

The people who are dropping bread into the car are examples of the cruelty of the Holocaust and genocide. What drove this people to do such a thing was not anything relating to kindness and resistance, which this book is supposed to show.

-Elisabeth Murphy

“There were no prayers at his grave. No candles were lit to his memory. His last words were my name. A summons, to which I did not respond”(106).

This quote takes place as Elie wakes up on the morning of January 29th, discovering that his father is no longer lying beside



him. Elie thinks his father was probably brought to the crematory, maybe even still alive. In doing so, his existence was erased without a trace. There would be no one to mourn for him and no mementos to remember him by. It must have been extremely difficult for Elie, but he did not cry because he had no more tears left. If I were him, I may regret not responding to my father’s “summons”, but in that instance I can understand why Elie did not.

I am very distraught at the horrible stories told by Elie, and would not be able to deal with the thought of my father possibly being burned alive or dying alone. This one simple paragraph alone fully convinces me that we should never let anything like the Holocaust happen again.

-Towny Swiggett

Dear Ruth (Riva) Sender

For over a decade, 8th grade students at Cold Spring Harbor Junior High School have been reading, in their English classes, Ruth Minsky Sender's Holocaust memoir: *The Cage*. Because they are so interested in Ruth and her writing, many students go on to read Ruth's other books: *To Life* and *The Holocaust Lady*. As a Holocaust survivor, teacher, and author, Ruth has been a frequent visitor to our school, meeting with 8th graders and answering their many questions. Here are some works written for Ruth by last year's 8th graders.

Written by Angelique Cesar:

Hello Riva,

I have been on the go since I left Henry's house. It runs out that the Nazis never stopped looking for me. I am moving from one house to another, seeking help from strangers. I have met one girl, whom I have had an eye on. She is very pretty and kind-hearted. The only problem is that she is German and her father is in the war, acting as a commandant at one of the men's camps out there. If he were to ever find out about us, I don't know what he would do. We were thinking about running away from all of this, but I know in her heart, it is not what she wants.

I ran into your friend Harry and his mother. You never told me he joined the Hitler Youth Organization. What a traitor; it is so pitiful how someone who was so close to you can turn his back on you so quickly. It is a shame that people in this world can be so prejudiced. We are all the same, just different backgrounds, religions, and beliefs. While I was talking to Harry, he seemed ashamed of himself. I doubt it though. His mother looks terrible; when she saw me, she looked as though she saw a ghost. I was probably the only Jewish person she has seen in years.

I know that I should not be walking out in the open, but when we saw each other, it was by accident. I have nothing to live for; the Nazis have ruined all of our lives. Because of them, I cannot marry the woman I love. I must not state her name because if this letter falls into the wrong hands, her family will pay, and I don't want anything to happen to her or her no-good father.

I also ran into a young boy around your age, I think. His name was Yulek. He told me about a girl named Riva that blew his heart away. When he said that, I thought, could he be talking about my Riva? Then he said that you had two brothers named Motele and Moishele and one deceased brother named Laibele. Then I knew that it had to be you. My little Riva, all grown up with a love life? Is it true? I'm sorry but I cannot send you a return address just yet. I am not sure if you are living in the same house. I'm not sure if you are still living. I do hope you are. Good luck in life!

Remember "If Hope is lost, All is Lost",
Schmulek

Written by Krikor Angacian:

Freedom, Freedom at Last

The Nazis walked us out of the camp
With us whispering about
When all of a sudden there came a big cry
"The Russians are coming! The Russians are coming!"
We asked, "Could this be the day? Our day of freedom?"
A man came up to us atop a white horse
His name I do not know but whoever he was he came from God
And just like that we were FREE!

Written by Janna D'Ambrisi:

One moment of pleasure, one moment of peace
One second of paradise, one slice of a feast
We work and we slave all day and all night.
We starve for a week for that one special bite.
How long will we be trapped in this cage?
How many will die before something will change?
How many will survive to tell what they have seen?
How much will we suffer for one tangerine?
This life is so hard.
When will it end?
God, if you're there,
Hear this prayer that I send:
*Lord, give me strength, courage, and health.
I don't ask for much, no riches or wealth.
Please let this nightmare come to an end.
Awaken me and this will just be pretend.
Guide me to peace; show me the way.
Or help me to live for just one more day.
Show me the love and good in this life.
Lead me away from the pain and the strife.
Please help my friends, the poor, and the cold.
God, save the Jews, the young and the old.*



Written by Remy Perrone:

In the book, *The Cage*, Ruth Minsky Sender describes the horrors of the Holocaust as experienced by a young Polish girl. The story is told in flashback, beginning with Riva as a thirteen-year old, living in Lodz, Poland in 1939. Acts of courage and love enabled Riva and her family to survive this ordeal which came to an end in 1945.

Love between Riva and her brothers was seen through many courageous acts. As brother Laiblele lay sick on his bed, Riva spoke to him of a better tomorrow. "This day will come, my darling brother. You'll see; you'll see. We'll walk out of this cage, free to build a new life, a new world. No more hunger. Freedom, happiness. A world of brotherhood. A world of love and peace" (33). Riva was trying to ease his pain and worry. She was thinking that this war will end soon. She thought that everything will go back to normal and everyone will be back together.

Sacrificing for each other shows brotherly love and courage. As a homemaker, Riva got to stay home but had to give up her daily soup ration. The brothers, "Motele and Moishlele save their portions of soup until they come home at five. We all share their soup for our dinner" (40). When Riva became sick, Motele and Moishlele sacrifice their bread in order to bring a tangerine home for Riva for its vitamin C content. Riva is asked to close her eyes and open her mouth as the boys slip the tangerine into her mouth. "We traded our bread for it at the black market. This will help you get well. You'll see, you'll see" (43). The boys were very

young to be making such a large sacrifice.

When the social worker came from the Welfare Department to investigate Riva and her siblings, she observed strong love and devotion between Riva and her brothers. As a result, Riva was allowed to be

"the only sixteen year old to be a legal guardian of younger children. This means you are adopting your own brothers!" (59) This is very unusual for a sixteen- year old girl to be taking so much responsibility.

"At the same time I must point this out to you before you sign—you are losing the rights of a child. Today you become an adult"(59). This ruling gave Riva adult responsibilities. She became an adult by signing the adoption paper. Riva was very courageous to do this and very loving toward her family.

There was lots of love and courage in the Minsky family during the Holocaust that enabled Riva and her siblings to survive this nightmare. Her brothers sacrificed food for their siblings, and Riva gave up her rights as a child to keep the family together. Unfortunately, Riva's younger brothers did not survive. After the Holocaust ended, Riva found her three older siblings: Mala, Chana, and Yankele who crossed the border to Russia in the beginning of the book. Riva found her older siblings after seven years in the Displaced Persons camps in Germany. They all came to America together: Riva, her two sisters and her brother. I don't think I could have survived myself if this had happened to me. Riva's mother's words, "As long as there is life, there is hope," were so powerful that they enabled Riva to survive.