

The Alumni Podium (continued)

Often hearing from graduates of the Holocaust/Genocide Project, we posted a letter and a short questionnaire to our discussion forum so that we could find out some specific information about where life has led former HGP members, what they're doing now, and how and if the HGP affected their life choices. The results, so far, are very interesting. Here is a sample of the questions and answers we received. Our goal is to keep everyone "in the link" through telecommunications. If you are a grad, and would like to reply, write to us!

Questions for Alumni: Please use these questions as a "guideline" to formulate your reply in a paragraph or two. Again, thanks for your help.

1. Name
2. Country
3. What are you doing now?
4. When did you participate in the HGP and what was your role in it? Did your participation in the HGP have an impact on your school experience?
5. Why did you join the HGP; was it what you thought it was going to be? (Explain briefly).
6. Did you take part in *An End to Intolerance* (magazine), the Spielberg Shoah interviews, or the Study Missions? How was that experience?
7. Have you taken part in workshops to explain the HGP? How were these experiences for you ? for others?
8. Since the tragedy of 9/11, what new challenges are we facing that would be appropriate for the HGP to focus on?
9. One of the stated goals of the HGP is to educate ourselves and others in order to take an active role to make a more peaceful world. Did the HGP meet this goal for you? How?
10. Did the HGP have an impact on who you are today? Explain, please.
11. As an "Alumni", have you stayed "connected to the HGP in any way? How?
12. Are there any other related matters, stories or experiences that you would like to share with us on the HGP?

My name is **Sarah Golub**, and right now I am a sophomore at Johns Hopkins University. I'm studying public health, and possibly considering a career in medicine, or some other health-related area. Throughout high school, I was an art editor for the HGP, and wrote several articles as well. I have to say that I was mostly influenced to join the HGP by persuasion from my fabulous English teacher, Mrs. Kern (☺), but I also loved what it stood for, and the message it sent out to not only those who contribute to it, but those who read it as well.

I think one of the most important lessons I have taken away from my time spent working on the HGP has been the need for global communication and understanding. Learning about "intolerance" in high school was a valuable lesson, and being able to express not only the pain that others have felt, but also the strength that they have built up in response, was an incredible way to feel the impact of acts of intolerance throughout history. Whether through paintings, poetry, interviews, museum visits, or discussions, I think that the students involved in the HGP have had a fabulous learning experience, and in the process have allowed themselves to become more open-minded individuals.

Along those lines, something I have learned to understand a little more this year is the issue of respect for others' beliefs and cultures. Through my involvement in the Hopkins Hillel and Jewish Students Association this year, I have actually learned a lot about the extremely diverse levels of observance among Jews. It is amazing how differently Jews carry out their traditions and rituals, despite the fact that we all share the same religion.

This difference obviously does not only exist among Jews, and this lesson in appreciation for others should be extrapolated and practiced worldwide, if we hope to aim for a peaceful coexistence of nations. I think this ties in very much with the events of 9/11 as well, and it is a crucial point in understanding the challenges of the world today.

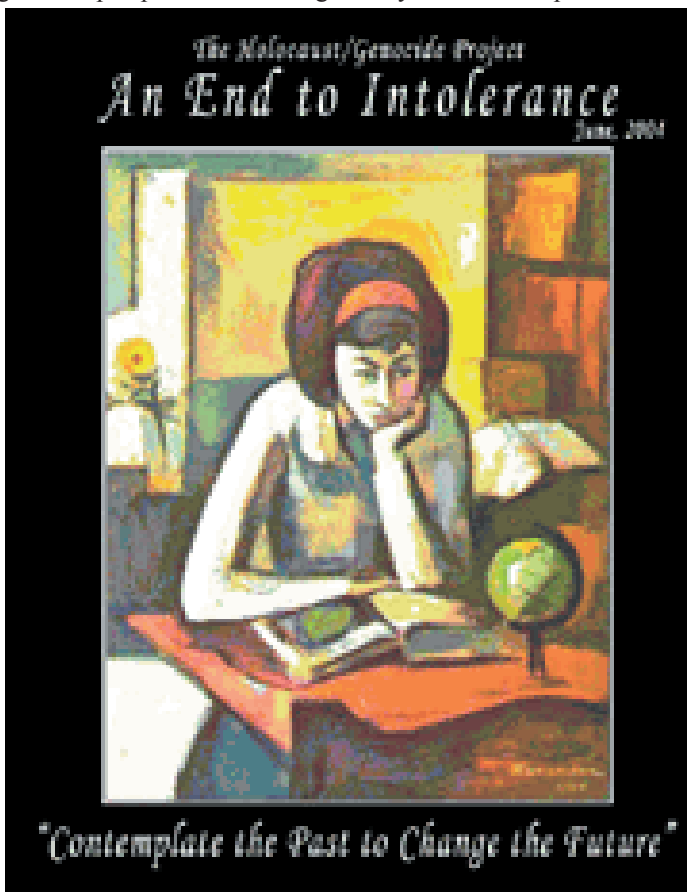
My participation in *An End to Intolerance* was a significant part of my high school experience, and I'm glad to see that its members continue to work diligently and spread its valuable message!

My name is **Amanda Zoe Del Balso** from the USA, and right now I am a freshman in the Honors Program at Boston College in Massachusetts. I'm undecided as a major, but am taking psychology, communications, and English classes. I am also interested in studying Spanish and international studies in the future. For extracurricular activities, I write for our school newspaper, *The Heights*, and play club lacrosse.

I participated in HGP from 10th grade until I graduated. I published poems in 10th and 11th grade, and in 12th grade I helped out with editing and wrote a few other articles. My participation with HGP had an extremely positive impact on my high school experience. I first became interested in HGP because Mrs. Kern was my 10th grade English teacher. It was a great experience for me to be able to talk to so many different people, even students from different countries, on the online forum. I have to confess

to pushing some homework aside in order to post a few things on the message board or scan what other people had written. It was really my first time getting to do anything like that, and it has definitely incited an interest and concern for social justice issues that I continue to carry with me.

My most vivid memory from HGP was when I had the opportunity to show three foreign teachers around Cold Spring Harbor High School. As we walked the hallways that I considered so familiar, the teachers seemed impressed by our access to technology and comfortable, desk-filled classrooms. Having them tell me what teaching was like outside of the United States really gave me perspective on how great my academic experience was.



Also, I remember feeling so lucky to engage in dialogue with these three teachers. Their students sent us cute little hair clips as a thank you a few weeks later, and I keep mine in my desk drawer as a reminder.

I joined HGP because Mrs. Kern made it sound like it would be a great way for me to get an opportunity to write (both poetry and more serious articles), as well as become more aware of issues related to tolerance and justice. I knew it would expose me to things that I would have never come upon independently, and it was also a great way for me to meet with peers who felt the same compassion towards improving the world as I do.

I took part in the magazines by publishing articles. The most memorable things I had published were two poems. I had always really enjoyed writing poetry, but being able to put the emotions I felt about the Holocaust behind a poem turned out to be a really great way for me to express my views and compassion

about the Holocaust into a productive piece of literature that would reach people.

I have explained HGP to many people. During college interviews and other things of that nature, I was surprised at how frequently I found myself mentioning HGP and the way it has affected my views on the world. Having to probe into what makes me different as a person, I have to say that HGP really provided an eye-opening experience in me. I was able to push past the comfort zone of Cold Spring Harbor, New York and make contact with people who lived extremely different, and in many cases more difficult, lives than I did. It's an experience I appreciate as being extremely unique and rewarding.

It's ironic. During senior year Sevan Angacian and I worked on the HGP project together, and she was the one I found myself hugging tightly as we watched the events of September 11th unfold on the television in the library two years earlier. I feel like that connection speaks for itself in that HGP has a responsibility to promote justice. The way that Americans came together after 9/11 was remarkable and touching. However, the backlash of intolerance towards those who do not look traditionally "American" is something that as a project, the HGP should seek to point out and prevent.

HGP definitely met this role for me. I really felt that I was making a difference by participating in the HGP. The responses from the message board and the publication of the magazine at the end of year offer tangible evidence that the efforts of the project are really helping to reach and enlighten people.

Graduating from Cold Spring Harbor, NY after participating in HGP made me look forward to getting out into the world and continuing to make a difference. I don't think that I would have felt the desire to improve the world and promote social justice issues in the way I do now had I not been actively involved in HGP. Right now I am a member of the Appalachia Volunteer group at Boston College. Through this volunteer group, I will be traveling to Weirwood, Virginia, USA for Spring Break to help the community there improve their life. We will be helping these people, all of whom live in extreme poverty, rebuild their homes, clean up, and offer any other kind of aid the community may need. We will also be talking to the people down there about their situation and how we can help. My desire to help the people of Weirwood through this trip is largely a result of my feeling like I have a responsibility to improve the conditions of the world we live in, and this responsibility was taught to me by HGP. I also write for the news section of *The Heights*, the student newspaper of Boston College. Through that, I have had the opportunity to cover a lecture given by Holocaust survivor Sonia Schreiber Weitz. I have also written an article about two Palestinian students who came to campus and spoke to us about their situation and how we could help. I am drawn towards spreading the word about stories like this because I feel like I can continue to help, in the way I did though HGP, by writing these things.

I've stayed connected to HGP largely thanks to my communication with Mrs. Kern and the current staff of HGP. I passed the article about Sonia Weitz on to Mrs. Kern, and I am always happy to respond to alumni surveys like this one. It's such a great and rewarding project, so however I can help, even now

that I've graduated, I'm happy to do!

I'd encourage people to use HGP as a springboard for getting involved in the community around you wherever you are. I would have never met the amazing people I have in writing for the *Heights* or being a member of Appalachia had it not been for my inspiration to participate in these activities from HGP. I'd also like to thank Mrs. Kern for all her efforts in the project. She served and continues to serve as a great mentor for me. Her compassion for human beings is truly inspirational, and I feel thankful that I have been fueled to make a difference by her empathy for all humankind.

My name is **Marissa Prianti** and I attended Cold Spring Harbor High School where I participated in the Holocaust Genocide Project under the direction of Mrs. Honey Kern. (I am currently a freshman at Bryn Mawr College.) I participated in HGP from grades nine through twelve, and I wrote articles for *An End to Intolerance* magazine in addition to being a section editor during my junior and senior year. My participation in HGP had a definite impact on my school experience because it taught me to take a broader and more comprehensive view of events both past and present.

When I joined HGP in ninth grade I was not sure what to expect and only knew what I had heard from older students who were already participating. In addition to writing for the magazine, I participated in the 1999 Study Mission to Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. The trip was an amazing experience and visiting the Auschwitz concentration camp allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the scope and magnitude of the tragedy that took place there.

In light of the 9/11 tragedy, I think it would be appropriate for HGP to focus on the issue of intolerance towards Muslims in the United States. This issue is a very serious one which clearly needs to be addressed. HGP's efforts to make the world a more peaceful and tolerant place are definitely achieving that goal even though the process may be gradual and at times not apparent. HGP has had a major impact on me as an individual because I am acutely aware of the need for racial and ethnic tolerance and the horrors that can result when this

need is not met. As an alumni, I have stayed connected to HGP by visiting Mrs. Kern at Cold Spring Harbor when I come home for breaks in addition to visiting the website.

My name is **Heather Morante**. I am a citizen of the United States of America. Currently, I am attending St. John's University School of Law. I participated in HGP when I attended Cold Spring Harbor High School. Participating in the HGP allowed me to reflect on the importance of tolerance and has made me more cognizant of issues that concern the Jewish community.

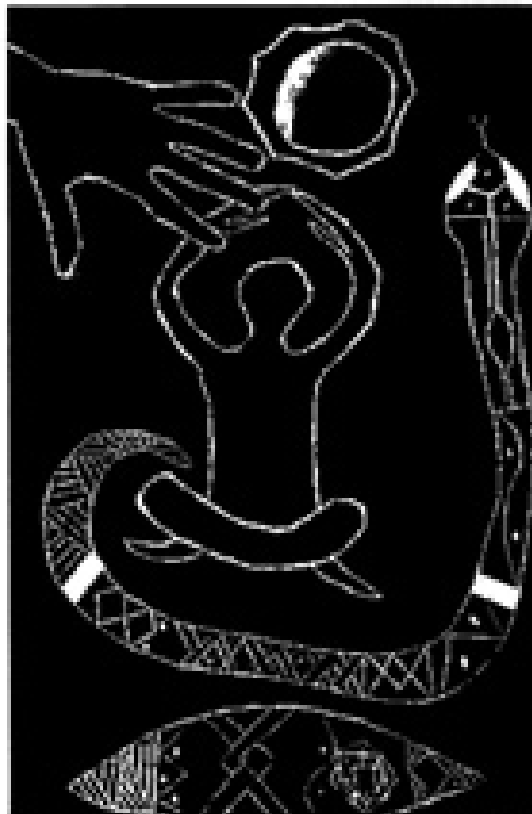
I joined HGP to become more involved with activities at my high school. I was, and to this day, remain concerned about social issues. I thought HGP would give me a great opportunity to learn more about an area that I was not that educated about. I took a role in HGP by writing an article for the magazine. Writing the article increased my awareness of social justice issues and allowed me to develop my writing ability.

As a result of 9/11 one must be reflective with regards to the religious and cultural differences between our country and other nations of the world. This year I would suggest the HGP focus on how religious and cultural differences affect relations between the United States, Israel, and Palestine. I also think it is important for HGP to address how the views of our society regarding the Arab world have been shaped by the attacks.

Unfortunately, as a second year law student, I find I have very little time available to educate myself about current political issues. Yet, I think it is my responsibility to stay informed and not solely focus on my studies. It is everyone's responsibility to remain updated on the current news. I would suggest people read their news from a variety of sources (not just strictly CNN). Perhaps, use European newspapers, as a source. The BBC is a great source (<http://www.bbc.co.uk>). Also, the Drudge Report (www.drudgereport.com) is another source of news that will provide students with a balance of information to digest.

The battle for social justice continues to be fought all over the world, as well as in our country. Importantly, there needs to be more of a focus on the individual's interaction with the community - our community of friends, our high school, and our extended

The Holocaust/Genocide Project
An End to Intolerance
 May, 1998



In The Schools: What Have I Learned?

The Holocaust/Genocide Project
An End to Intolerance

June, 1997



Humanitarians: Making Moral Decisions

global community. We need to concern ourselves with issues of social justice that do not only affect us, but issues that affect people all over the world. Dorothy Day once wrote, "The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart." We must examine our own hearts and then attempt to affect change – revolution – in the hearts of others.

My name is **Andrew Sanjanwala**, a graduate of Cold Spring Harbor High School in America. I am a student at Rochester Institute of Technology. I first learned about the Holocaust/genocide Project and its student magazine, **An End to Intolerance (AETI)**, during the middle of my high school education. The idea of the students compiling their work and having it published made me rather curious.

Acting on this, I started watching then staff: Brendan Condon and David Lebensfeld working on the magazine and learned what I could about how they did what they did (using Adobe Indesign to hand-craft the raw articles and images into something unique). Later, I would use the skills I picked up to take over their roles in **AETI** when in my 11th and 12th grade, I served as Layout and Design Editor for the project as well as Editor-in-Chief for the latter of the two years.

One of the most notable benefits I received from working on the HGP during these two years was that relating to the actual compilation and layout of **AETI** in the computer. Using the

programs daily, I gained an unbelievable amount of proficiency in the "tools of the trade," learning skills which would later be of direct use to me for my major in college.

When it comes to representing the HGP after my departure, I find myself somewhat lacking. For the most part, I have remained somewhat quiet and reserved, generally not appearing in events where I have to speak in front of an audience (something I've never found terribly pleasant). However, I did have the pleasure of participating in the "Survivor Speaks" events occurring while I was still in high school. It was there that I got the chance to hear personal accounts of the stories we often read about in second or third-hand renditions. There is just something truly fascinating about being face-to-face with the speaker and being able to interact on such a personal level, something that can not be found anywhere else.

Now that I'm a full-time student in college, I've found myself feeling a bit distanced from the work being done on the project. Even with instantaneous communication over both phone and instant messenger available, I have found it to be somewhat less effective than just being there in person, which is exactly what I do on occasion. During my breaks from college, I try to make a point of dropping by my old high school to check out how everything has progressed, to lend a hand (if needed), and otherwise just revisit a bit of my not-so-distant past.

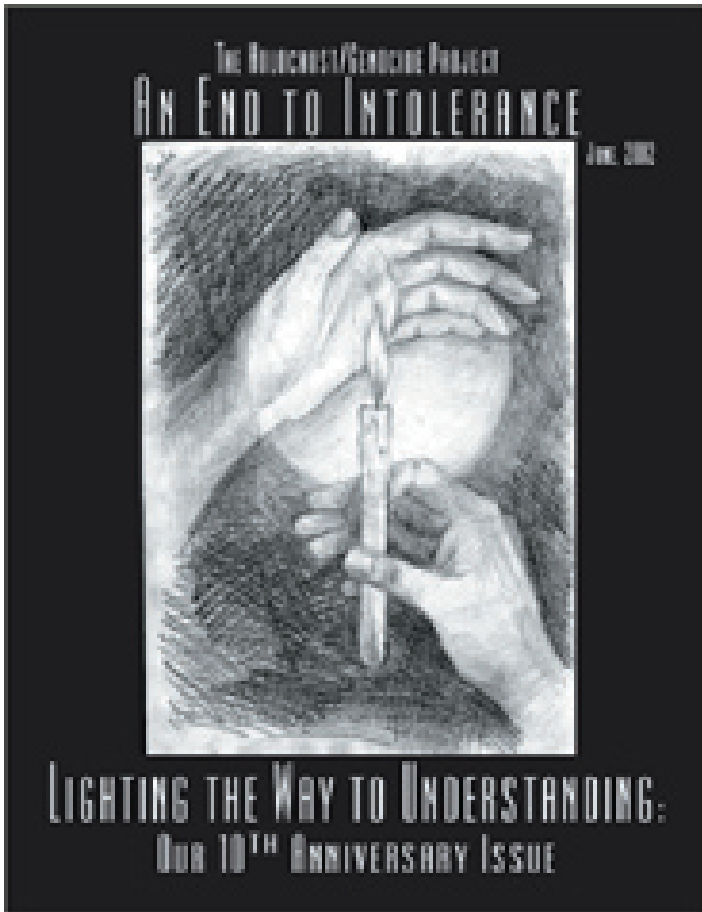
Regarding September 11, one of the problems I feel is most likely to affect us down the road is that of blind hatred and

THE HOLOCAUST/GENOCIDE PROJECT
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REACHING OUT TO ONE ANOTHER



the past; however, they are still prevalent in modern times. I was able to expand my knowledge of the world beyond my provincial thinking and was exposed to much of human history that students in high school social studies classes are never taught. Being a member of the organization allowed me to have a complete and accurate view of both the past and present human condition.

I certainly feel that the HGP educated myself and others on how to take a more active role to make the world a peaceful, better place to live. Without being presented with many of society's problems, one is never able to be an agent of change. However, the HGP not only increased my awareness of discrimination due to race, gender, ethnicity, and religion, but it also made me want to actively try to change the world by reducing the amount of such hate. I have always felt a need to correct anything in the world that I saw was wrong and the HGP allowed me to have the opportunity to become "an agent of change". I feel that the HGP has helped to mold the young adult I am today. I feel that it has made me realize how lucky I have been thus far in my life to have never experienced the levels of discrimination that many other people have experienced. The organization also helped to make me a more worldly person; I am less sheltered and extremely open to all people, ideas, and ideals because of the HGP. Although I have not actively been involved with the HGP since I graduated high school, I try to keep current by reading *An End to Intolerance* every spring when a new edition is published.



discrimination under the guise of "patriotism". With terrorism, we as a nation are faced with the potential for an attack to come at almost any time and be carried about from almost anybody. All that is needed of a person to become a terrorist is for them to simply perform acts of terror. This is not all too difficult to accomplish and does not require the individual or group to be of any specific nationality or ethnicity. Because of this, I believe the potential for a second era of McCarthyism to begin exists, even if remotely so. The best way to deal with this possibility is to try our best to educate people about the sheer irrationality of it, hopefully preventing simple arrogance and anger from taking over. However, this is a somewhat extreme possibility and most likely will not come to pass. And if doesn't, at least those who tried to teach can say that they did their part; they helped better society through whatever means they could.

I am **Kristen Aliano** and currently a sophomore biology major concentrating in neurobiology and behavior at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA. I was involved in the Holocaust-Genocide project during the last three years of my high school career at Cold Spring Harbor High School. Being a member of the HGP completed the educational experience I had in tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. Not only was I able to participate in the Project as a writer and editor for *An End to Intolerance*, but I was also able to learn a great deal about many of the injustices that occur in our world today. We often think of prejudice and hate as relics of