

HOLOCAUST & HUMAN RIGHTS
ART & WRITING CONTEST
HIGH SCHOOL ART / POETRY
FIRST PLACE

LIZZY OSINSKI

Lizzy Osinski
Horace Greeley High School
10th grade

Title of work: Unluckiest Luck
Source: *Night* by Elie Wiesel

In my 10th grade English class at Horace Greeley High School, we read the book *Night* by Elie Wiesel. While I was reading, I couldn't stop contemplating how to describe the luck of Elie and the other survivors. It was lucky that he wasn't separated from his father; it was lucky that they were sent to a labor camp rather than a death camp; and it was lucky that Elie remained healthy enough to endure the most horrific circumstances--but how can we describe any of this as lucky? I wanted to further explore the word "luck" with this poem.

Unluckiest Luck

It began with a simple choice.
Left
Or right.

Left was the lucky side.
The people forced into slave labor
Who faced starvation,
And beatings,
And fear,
Were lucky.

The ones who lived with the reeking smell of burning flesh,
The sight of smoldering smoke,
The sound of excruciating screams,
Were lucky.

And the ones to the right?
They *were* the burning flesh,

And they were *in* the smoldering smoke,
And they *made* the excruciating screams.

The ones who lived in fear
Rather than die in fear
Were the lucky ones.

It began with a simple choice.
Left
Or right.
Live
Or die.

But the Jews did not make that choice.
It was their enemies,
Their perpetrators,
Their *murderers*,
Who made the choice.

How lucky can a Holocaust survivor be?
How lucky can someone who escaped the murder
Of six million of their own people be?

Getting stripped from your family
Is not lucky.

Living in hatred and fear
Is not lucky.

And surviving,
Something that billions of people can do every day
With no effort at all,
Is not lucky.

And so,
With the unluckiest luck of all,
Some people
Lived.

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SECOND PLACE

CLAIRE NAM

Cathartic Reminiscence

"It was impossible to talk human, to be human, to act human, to express ourselves like a human being... I have no animosity... But I do hope for my grandchildren and great-grandchildren that life for them will be a little more humane." - Helen Colin, Holocaust Survivor, USC Shoah Foundation

To revive the rivers spilling
 from ghetto cities, delusioned child
chin sticky with bubbling blood
 skin taut over sedimentary bones.
To feel honey sugar coating my tongue,
 wash it clean of decaying fibers
slip the ocean's welled tear in my throat.
 Remember this: she killed
her own crying baby yesterday,
 choked him quiet.
and we tried to look away as her arm stiffened
 harbored her sacrifice; I'd like to forget that.
To cleanse the streets of bodies
 limbs twisted in a tango of death.
To liberate me from smothering my nose
 under straw mattresses, watch
infants tumble off the balcony
 push the mother down after.
To suffocate this air of loss.
 Remember this: mama said humanity
could never harm another human being.
 Remember this: daddy died with
a loaf of bread and a prayer in each hand.
 To run after my sister without shepherds
lodging canines into heels. To flee the barbed wires
 of lipstick slurs and bile
distilled of syllables. To reclaim dignity
 from the men who bathe us in chlorine.
To ask without consequence.
 To love without consequence.
Remember this: brother's skull split
 open at my feet, trenches in the flesh
I ask myself every day *why?*
 why did this happen? I remember
his crumb-coated fingers, touch them,
 intertwine them with mine at night. Yes.
I'll even forgive that.

Artist's Statement:

My name is Claire Nam and I listened to Helen Colin's testimony. During Helen's video, I was shocked by the vividness of Helen's memories, and felt her pain when she spoke about her family. However, the most memorable moment for me was when Helen smiled and said, "I know no strangers because everyone I touch always remains a friend of mine. Because I love humanity! I still love human beings." Helen's desire to love everyone even after her traumatic experiences is truly beautiful. In *Cathartic Reminiscence*, I tried to capture her tragic memories and end with her willingness to forgive.

Sources:

USC Shoah Foundation, dir. *Holocaust Survivor Helen Colin Full Testimony*. 2016.

"Remembering Holocaust Survivor Helen Colin on Her Birthday." USC Shoah

Foundation. Last modified April 14, 2017. <https://sfi.usc.edu/news/2017/04/14786-remembering-holocaust-survivor-helen-colin-her-birthday>.

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THIRD PLACE

ZOE HERMAN

Zoe Herman, Horace Greeley High School

“It is over, God is no longer with us.” (Wiesel 76)



The Mourner's Kaddish is the prayer that a Jewish person recites when a loved one has died. Ironically, the prayer is about exalting God, not about the dead. In *Night*, we see Elie Wiesel's faith in his religion slowly disappear. Why would God let the Nazis commit genocide of his “chosen” people? In my artwork, **crisis of faith**, a broken Jewish star is surrounded by thousands of Jewish corpses. And we bear witness to this carnage through a veil of barbed wire, which evokes the concentration camps, which were surrounded by barbed wire to prevent their victims from escaping this horror.

Copyright acknowledgment:



I used the font used on the Jewish star that the Jews wore in my drawing



I took the idea of an abundance of skulls from this political cartoon. I did not copy the exact design, and it was also meant for a different idea.

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HONORABLE MENTION

JANICE SEONG

Janice Seong

Elegy of the Gallows

My memory works like clockwork,
cogs whirring like the inner machinations of my mind.

I remember the emaciated children
with gaping pothole eyes walking like corpuscles,
massless particles along a straight line,
pleading for morsels of food and wearing scraps of clothes.
Pills of despair were lodged in their throats by men
in gray baying for the spill of blood.

In the barracks, a man lay on his wooden bunk,
unmoving and head lolling to the side.
Papery, jaundiced flesh stretched over
tissue and sinew, silent and unflinching.
He oscillated between technicolor and grayscale as
lacquered, antiquated eyes opened and closed slowly.
He was the antithesis of living as the ground swallowed him
and keeps its bloodstained secret.

My dreams, once smelling like manna and soup,
were plagued by the man's hollow face,
and I wondered if I would be next.
When I awoke, the warmth of sunlight crept in,
shining through from the blemished sky.
A sure-fire sign of a day renewed,
of another body drained of vitality
and another melancholy day of mourning.

The specter of my mother's face etched
with pain lingers in my mind
like a phantom limb with its ephemeral presence.
But there is no panacea for my memories,
only remembering the elegy of the gallows.