What can we learn from the stories of Holocaust survivors?

Winning entries from the 2008 Jacob Friedman Holocaust Writing and Art Contest.

A panel of 16 judges selected the winners. Their task was not an easy one – the entries were outstanding this year.

Here is a selection of excerpts from the winning entries. To see all of the winning entries, please visit the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center's Web site at www.wsherc.org.

1st Place: Writing Grades 5 – 8
Steven Weier, Grade 8
Cedar Heights Middle School, Covington
Teacher: Sylvia O'Brien

By acquainting ourselves with the stories of these survivors, we can learn things that only people who have experienced such atrocities could ever teach. They are willing to share their knowledge, but if the future is to be spared of any iniquity that is at all comparable to the Holocaust, then we, the people of today, must listen with the utmost intent. The stories of Holocaust survivors contain keys that will unlock the doors of a brighter future ... I feel privileged to have the opportunity to carry history into the future, especially because the knowledge at hand is of such importance.

1st Place: Writing Grades 9 – 12
Olivia Vargas, Grade 10
Seattle Preparatory School, Seattle
Teacher: Chris Kiehn

We as a world community, need to confront injustice directly and not think about ourselves as individuals, but as a whole. It is only through this collective mindset and direct action that we will truly achieve “Never Again.”

3rd Place: Writing Grades 5 – 8
Nathan Poindexter, Grade 7
Seattle Academy, Seattle
Teacher: Emily Cherkin

We can help make a world of compassion and peace, and stop anything like the Holocaust from ever happening again. We can do this by telling others what happened, contributing support in our everyday lives and finding compassion instead of anger and hate.

1st Place: Art Grades 5 – 8
Sungmin Ro, Grade 8
St. Luke School, Shoreline
Teacher: Rosemary Conroy

Never Again: My picture shows how hatred and discrimination can take away hope and life. We must remember so that events like the Shoah never happen again.

2nd Place: Art Grades 9 – 12
Krissa Beyer, Grade 10
Seattle Preparatory School, Seattle
Teacher: Tim Reilly

Ring of Hope: One major lesson we should learn from stories of the Holocaust is to join our neighbors and fight the racism that lies within our community.

3rd Place: Writing Grades 9 – 12
Sofia Smith, Grade 10
Seattle Preparatory School, Seattle
Teacher: Tim Reilly

This [essay] is my feeble attempt to honor my Omi as well as all the other brave souls who lived through the Holocaust.

Honorable Mention: Art Grades 5 – 8
Skye Phinizy, Grade 5
Seattle Academy, Seattle
Teacher: Mari Atkinson

Never Give Up Hope Even When Hope Seems to Break Apart: One important thing I learned from stories of the survivors is to never give up hope. Even though they were separated from their families at times, frightened of being discovered by the Nazi soldiers and being put in concentration camps and/or death camps, they never gave up hope.

Interested in participating in next year’s contest? E-mail Ilana Cone Kennedy, Director of Education at the Holocaust Center: ikennedy@wsherc.org, and she will notify you when the 2008-2009 topic is announced.