

SECOND PLACE HIGH SCHOOL POETRY

In Remembrance

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Survivor Testimony: Selene Bruk

How could she ever forget the place
Where thousands of her fellow Jews were burned alive in their own religious temples,
Where she embraced her once proud and beautiful aunt,
Whose sanity was taken away by the horrifying experimentation of Block 10,
Where she watched as her grandmother's lifeless body was added
To a pile of dozens of others laid scattered in the streets?

How could she ever forget the place
Where she sat a breath away from a young mother and child,
Concealed away in a tiny clothes closet among forty other Jews,
Where she watched as one terrified person held a pillow over the baby's face
In the hopes of quieting their cries to the ears of patrolling German soldiers?

How could she ever forget the place
Where she once trembled under the bed of an uninhabited house,
Begging her pounding heartbeat to be quiet,
Where her face reflected in the polished boot of a Nazi standing not a foot away and
She realized that the outcome of her life could change in just one moment?

Selene Bruk fought to forget for decades before she finally returned to Bialystok, Poland,
Where, on the outside, little remained of the place she had left behind.
And as she thought about what future generations would see when they visited this place,
She realized: the important question was not how to forget, but how to remember.

How to remember the people whose ashes the flowers that now cover the ground bloom upon.
How to remember the Jews' song that used to flow throughout her village, but is heard no longer.
How to remember "a way of life that will never be again."

As I listen to Selene's testimony, I am amazed by
The ease by which the Jews' tragic history can be forgotten by others, but more importantly, by
The courage it took for her to share her memories of the Holocaust and
The impact one person can make by simply speaking up.
So as I, too, reflect on my life and think about the ways that I can use my voice, I choose
To follow Selene's example, to be a witness to her story, and to carry on her message, that it may
Not be forgotten, but remembered.