

Fifth Annual Holocaust Art and Writing Contest

Conscience and Courage: Heroes of the Holocaust

We invite you to participate in the Fifth Annual Holocaust Art and Writing Contest, sponsored by Chapman University and The "1939" Club, one of the largest and most active Holocaust survivor organizations in the United States.

Each school is invited to submit a total of three entries, consisting of essay(s) and/or poem(s) and/or works of art for the first and second prizes in the middle school and high school competitions. These school representatives will be eligible to win the first prize of \$500 and the second prize of \$250 in each category in the middle and high school competitions.

School representatives in attendance at the awards ceremony will receive certificates and a copy of *The Holocaust Chronicle: A History in Words and Pictures*, a unique one-volume history of the Holocaust.

Each school in attendance at the awards ceremony will receive one copy of each of the following: *A Guide to the Film Schindler's List*, published by Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc.; *Friedl Dicker-Brandeis: Vienna 1898-Auschwitz 1944*, written by Elena Makarova, international coordinator Regina Seidman Miller, and published by Tallfellow Press in association with The Simon Wiesenthal Center/Museum of Tolerance, and *The Hidden Child*, published by the Hidden Child Foundation of the Anti-Defamation League, with the accompanying lesson plan.

The three student representatives from each school, with their teacher and/or principal (depending on seat availability), are invited to the awards ceremony on **Friday, March 19, 2004 at 12 p.m. in Memorial Auditorium at Chapman University, One University Drive, Orange, CA 92866.** The highlights of the event will include:

- the reading of the two winning essays (one middle school and one high school)
- the reading of the two winning poems (one middle school and one high school)
- the announcement of the two winning works of art (one middle school and one high school) and their display during the reception. These art works will become part of the collection of the Sala and Aron Samuelli Holocaust Memorial Library at Chapman University



Thomas Blatt at the site of the Sobibor death camp.

Thomas "Toivi" Blatt was 12 years old when the Nazis invaded his homeland of Poland. From that moment on his life would never be the same. In April 1943, he and his family were sent to the infamous death camp Sobibor. There he was selected to work while his father, mother, and younger brother were gassed. On his own, he struggled to survive so that he might tell the world about the camp where more than 250,000 Jews were killed. In autumn 1943, he joined a group of prisoners who chose to revolt, killing their oppressors and igniting a mass escape. Later, in hiding, he was shot by a Polish farmer. The bullet remains imbedded under his chin to this day. Pretending to be dead, Toivi was able to escape to the forest. Wandering from forest to forest and village to village, he eventually joined a partisan group fighting the Nazis. He was liberated in July 1944. Toivi Blatt is one of only 62 Sobibor prisoners to survive the war.

Photo credits:

Blatt photo courtesy of Thomas Blatt; Dicker-Brandeis photo from *Friedl Dicker-Brandeis: Vienna 1898-Auschwitz 1944*, written by Elena Makarova, international coordinator Regina Seidman Miller, published by Tallfellow Press in association with The Simon Wiesenthal Center/Museum of Tolerance; Schindler photo from the collection of Leopold Pfefferberg Page; Scholl photo from Stadtarchiv Ulm, Germany, USHMM Photo Archives



Friedl Dicker-Brandeis in 1916.

Friedl Dicker-Brandeis was a talented and accomplished artist. Born and educated in Vienna, Austria, she went on to become a student in the new Bauhaus school of art and design. Friedl developed into an extraordinarily creative artist in many different media—from theater design to architecture to painting. In December 1942, she and her husband were deported to Theresienstadt, a ghetto/concentration camp near Prague. Limited to only a few possessions, Friedl Dicker-Brandeis chose to bring her art supplies so that she could teach the children. She brought joy and creativity into the lives of hundreds of lonely and frightened children. Friedl Dicker-Brandeis perished with her husband in Auschwitz-Birkenau in October 1944. Some of the remarkable art produced by the children she taught is collected in Hana Volavkova, ed., *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* (Schocken Press).

- a reception to honor our guests
- the opportunity to meet and talk with Holocaust survivors

Background for Art and Writing Prompt:

Heroism took many different forms during the years of the Holocaust. As soon as the Nazis took power in Germany in 1933, they sought to separate from society those they depicted as the *other*—those with disabilities, political and religious opponents, gays, Jehovah's Witnesses—and most especially, the Jews. In Nazi Germany and the countries the Nazis would later occupy, people were pressured actively to support Nazi ideology or to remain obedient bystanders.

In these circumstances, when silence seemed the safest choice, some chose to become heroes, voicing their opposition and placing conscience above conformity. Daring to reach out to those in need was an act of heroism. For those separated from their neighbors and sent to ghettos and camps, struggling to live another day and resisting the crushing inhumanity designed to break body and spirit were acts of heroism. In the bleakest of circumstances, amidst hunger and hopelessness, teaching and fostering creativity were heroic actions.

To paraphrase author Joseph Campbell, heroes are ordinary people who do the very best of deeds in the worst of times. Those who lived during the Holocaust offer us diverse models of heroism. Although we will never face such desperate and dehumanizing circumstances, each of us is challenged to find ways to exercise conscience and courage within our own communities. Each of us has the chance to become an "ordinary hero" and to change our society for the better by our actions.

The individuals whose stories are told below are only a few of those who can be called heroes of the Holocaust.



Oskar Schindler is greeted by several members of the "List" and their families upon his arrival in Los Angeles in 1968. From left to right: Marie Knecht; "List" survivor David Leyson; Lis Leyson; "List" survivors Ludmila Page and Leon Leyson; Oskar Schindler; "List" survivors Tosia Lieberman and Leopold Page; Steven Krumholz, and "List" survivor Lola Krumholz.

Oskar Schindler might seem an unlikely hero. Born in the Sudetenland, which became part of Germany in 1938, he chose to join the Nazi Party, hoping it would help him to make his fortune. Soon after the invasion of Poland in 1939, he moved to Krakow where he took over a company, "Emalia," and began to produce enamelware. To run his factory, Schindler utilized Jewish slave labor from the Krakow ghetto. However, while other factory owners saw their Jews as mere objects, Schindler saw them as people, learning their names and doing small acts of kindness, such as arranging for one of his young workers, Leon Leyson, to receive an extra ration of soup. As Germany's defeat neared, Schindler feared what might happen to his workers. In October 1944, he bribed Nazi authorities to allow him to move his factory and workers to safety in Brünnlitz in the Sudetenland. In the end, Schindler spent his entire fortune to save the lives of the Jews who worked for him, members of "Schindler's List."



Sophie Scholl, a member of the White Rose student resistance group in Germany.

Sophie Scholl was only 22 years old when she was executed on February 22, 1943, a few days after her arrest. Her brother Hans was only 24. Convicted of high treason by the Nazi courts, the Scholls were members of a student resistance group at the University of Munich called "The White Rose." They were sentenced to death for printing and distributing leaflets urging German citizens to rise up against their unjust government and bring the war to an end. In a society which mandated obedience to the Fuehrer, the Scholls called people to a higher obedience—to one of conscience. Daringly, in their fourth leaflet, they wrote: "We must attack evil where it is strongest, and it is strongest in the power of Hitler." The Scholls might have chosen silence and obedience; instead, they dared to question and to raise their voices against injustice.

Art and Writing Prompt:

Each of us chooses our heroes. Sometimes our choices define us as heroes. During the Holocaust, many "ordinary people" became heroes. Choose an individual from the time of the Holocaust, whether or not in the examples included, who embodies *heroism*. After appropriate research, write an essay or poem or create a work of art that reflects the spirit of this individual. Your work should be based upon specific knowledge of the individual's choices and actions. As you face ethical dilemmas and complex choices, how will this individual help you to develop into a person of conscience and courage, an "ordinary hero"?

Research Suggestions:

The following web sites will help you in your research:

<http://www.ushmm.org>

<http://www.holocaustchronicle.org>

<http://www.motlc.wiesenthal.com>

<http://www.vhf.org>

<http://www.yadvashem.org>

<http://www.sobibor.info>

Teachers may also wish to consult:

<http://www.facinghistory.org>

<http://www.holocaust-trc.org>

<http://www.adl.org>

Please visit our web site: <http://www.chapman.edu/holocaust> for lesson plans and other resources.

You may also contact: Dr. Marilyn Harran at (714) 628-7377 or harran@chapman.edu or Professor Jan Osborn at (714) 628-7221 or josborn@chapman.edu

Art and Writing Contest Criteria:

Essay/Poetry Criteria

Essay/poem must be typed or word processed.

Essay must be no more than 1000 words in length. Word count should be included at end.

Poem must be no more than 30 lines. Line count should be included at end.

Essay/poem must include a reference sheet, citing resources consulted.

Essay/poem must demonstrate historical accuracy, specific knowledge of the individual hero, originality, personal connection, and correct use of conventions of writing.

Entries must include a cover sheet with student name, grade, school, word or line count; and teacher name, telephone number, and, if available, email address.

Art Criteria

Art work may include photography and may be in charcoal, pencil, watercolors or oils.

Entries must be unframed and not matted.

Entries may only be two-dimensional and must not exceed 12" x 18".

Entries must include fixatives so that works will not smudge or be altered by handling.

Entries must include a separate sheet that includes the following: title of the work, resources consulted, and a statement of no more than 100 words explaining how this work addresses the prompt.

Entries must demonstrate connection to prompt with specific knowledge of individual hero; effectiveness in visually communicating idea, metaphorically or literally; originality, and overall aesthetic quality.

Entries must include a cover sheet with student name, grade, school; and teacher name, telephone number, and if available, email address.

Essays, poems and art work should not include the name of or refer to the specific school.

All entries become the property of the Sala and Aron Samuelli Holocaust Memorial Library at Chapman University. Chapman University retains the right to retain or discard all entries.

Your school's winning entries must be **postmarked by February 13, 2004** and mailed to:

Dr. Marilyn Harran
Rodgers Center for Holocaust Education
Chapman University
One University Drive, Orange, CA 92866