



keren or

A creative arts forum for teens

A special supplement sponsored by the American Jewish World, Rimon: The Minnesota Jewish Arts Council, the Karen Siegel-Jacobs Fund at the Adath Jeshurun Foundation, and Lerner Publishing Group.

Keren Or (Ray of Light) is a creative arts contest for Minnesota's Jewish teens. The contest, now in its fifteenth year, was founded in 2004 by Gerald and Eileen Siegel (z"l) to honor the memory of their daughter, Karen Siegel-Jacobs, who died in 2001 at the age of 40. Its goal is to showcase and encourage the artistic talents of Jewish youth in grades seven through twelve.

The contest is managed by Rimon: The Minnesota Jewish Arts Council and has become a much-anticipated community celebration of artistic achievement. This past year 73 teens—a record number—submitted 191 poems,

photographs, and pieces of creative prose to Keren Or. The participants represented eighteen schools throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan area and beyond. Also represented were twelve Twin Cities synagogues (Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Orthodox) as well as unaffiliated families.

Cash prizes are awarded in the categories of prose, poetry, and photography for students in grades 7-9 and grades 10-12. First-place winners receive \$100. Second-

and third-place winners receive \$50. Honorable mention is awarded \$36. The winning work will be on display in the lobby gallery of the Sabes JCC (May 1-31), at the St. Paul JCC (June 24-July 1), as well as at the Keren Or website. A public awards ceremony at the Sabes JCC will take place on Sunday, May 5 (2 pm) and is open to everyone.

This year's contest judges were Judy Brier, Heidi Schneider, and Robert Wolk for written work; and Robyn Awend, Ann Ginsburgh

Hofkin, and Maury Landsman for photography. Siegel-Jacobs (z"l) grew up in Minneapolis, attended the Minneapolis Talmud Torah, and was an active member of Adath Jeshurun Congregation and USY. As a teenager she wrote poems and short stories.

For information about the contest, the students, and winning entries from this year and previous years, visit www.kerenorcontest.org.

Rimon is an initiative of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation.



First Place, Photography, Grades 10-12

"Leap of Faith," Libby Cohen



Libby Cohen is in the 11th grade at Saint Paul Academy and Summit School. Libby loves to travel, play tennis and ultimate frisbee, and play with her dog.

First Place, Poetry, Grades 10-12

"she grows up a halo," Nora Cornell

she grows up a halo,
she grows up a lantern.
she lives in planetariums
and never stopped
reaching for the heavens.

the sky is her friend,
taught her mother
(who had friends in the grass).

she must stand at the edge,
climb the mountains and run,
to get closer to the stars.

so she learns the lessons of rooftops,
of chimney sweeps and charity,
of scraped knees and supermen.

so she stands,
and waits,
and learns
to fly.

Nora Cornell is in 10th grade at The Blake School. When not writing poems, Nora is a theater kid with a penchant for storytelling. She loves learning all sorts of things and cuddling with her two cats.

First Place, Poetry, Grades 7-9

"Poetry," Shira Hanovich

I don't understand how to write a poem.
How many lines should it have?
What is it supposed to look like?
Do I
Move down
A line
Every
Few
Words?
Am I supposed to rhyme
Each time
I add a line?
Am I supposed to
Count every syllable
For proper structure?
I should have some deeper meaning,
Shouldn't I?
Some higher understanding
Hidden between each line
Telling the reader how I truly feel.
That's what makes a poem,
Right?
Well.
I don't like hidden meanings and
I don't like awkward subtext and
I don't like talking about feelings and
I don't
Like
Poetry

Shira Hanovich is in 9th grade at St. Louis Park High School. She loves to read, write and participate in theater. This is her third time participating in Keren Or, winning a prize each year.

Second Place, Photography, Grades 10-12

"Whiner in the Wind," Nathaniel Klausner



Nathaniel Klausner is in 11th grade at Eagan High School.

Second Place, Poetry, Grades 10-12

"blossom," Nina Smetana

i am from music,
 from stuffed animals and velvety curtains.
 i am from the playhouse
 (backyard, never-clean, full of potential
 that never blossomed.)
 i am from the flowering orchids,
 from petunias the colors of spring.
 i am from friday nights and my mother's nose,
 from anne and norman and my father's hands.
 i am from laughter
 and open ears.
 from the tooth fairy's letters and
 'stop mothering your brother.'
 i am from hanukkah candles,
 the ones i fought with my brother to light,
 the ones that shone like twinkling stars through the darkness.
 i'm from the sixth floor and the eleventh floor,
 from apartments and houses,
 from cafe latte cake and convention grill milkshakes.
 i'm from the constant retelling of my grandfather's tales
 the ones that droned on and on without end
 the ones that he wouldn't be himself without
 and from my great-grandmother's constant wish to feed us;
 'you're too skinny' she would say lovingly.
 picture books and photographs
 shelved near the front window
 childhood memories i forget to remember
 as i lose the ones i remember to forget.
 they tell stories
 stories of me
 but also stories of before me,
 stories of the people i love
 and of the people i've lost.
 i am from me, but i am also from them,
 we fuse into one.

Nina Smetana is in 11th grade at Saint Paul Academy and Summit School. Nina's interests include theater, piano, cross country running, and spending time with family and friends.

First Place, Prose, Grades 10-12

"Majdanek," Max Walker

As we drove through the land of death I wondered how people still lived here. My stomach tightened. The dead grass, illuminated mockingly by the surprise sun, screamed death. Death was everywhere. The sounds seeped through my defenses, and even as we stepped off the bus with no guards or dogs, the air screamed death. My senses interrogated me, "Why have you come here, to this forsaken place?" My hands battled the bottom of my pockets as we passed through the gate. Two thousand years of resistance struggled to break free. And yet I walked right into the abomination.

At Auschwitz I expected to feel something. I wanted to feel something. The movies, the books, my brother's college essay, all revolved around this one place, the most feared place on earth: Auschwitz. But I felt next to nothing. The knots in my stomach untied themselves as we walked through the camp. I stared with dry, emotionless eyes at all the luggage, the hair, the shoes, the plates, the photos, the holding cells, the gas chambers. I hadn't walked into a camp but rather a museum.

Days later, approaching Majdanek, I had no worries. Another day, another camp without emotion. On this bus ride I was neither scared nor nervous. Majdanek's fence was wimpy. We stepped through the first building, the one with the showers. The real showers where prisoners bathed, and the gas showers where they died. Tears began to come, but I wanted them. They were proof that I could feel in a way I couldn't at Auschwitz. Majdanek, preserved to appear just as it did in the Holocaust, wasn't the most famous camp. But I knew immediately it was going to change me.

From barrack to barrack we walked, reading the stories

and the diagrams, seeing the shoes and the bunks. The sturdy wood of the walls sheltered us from Poland's deceptively cold July wind. The barracks were ironically homey; the outside was cold.

Eventually we reached the end of more than a dozen barracks and walked across the camp. Passing through a larger gate, we turned onto a path. The path's perfect smoothness clashed with the rest of the camp's gravel roads. At the end was a set of stairs leading up to a plateau. On it sat a concrete dome, supported by beams just tall enough that one could walk inside. We strode briskly, hoping the dome would shield us from the chilling winds. It didn't. As we ascended the steps, the dome's inside came into view. "Is that...ash? That can't be ash," I said, squinting as the wind barraged my eyes.

"No, it can't be," my friend Shawn agreed, quickly ascending, excited for the shelter the dome would provide.

But our guide soon corrected us. This was not a shelter. It was a mausoleum.

My stomach instantly retied its knots. Under the dome there was a barrier that reached my waist. As I approached, more and more of the ash came into view. A pile. No, a mound. No, a hill. No, a mountain. Ash on top of ash on top of ash.

Realization came over me like a giant wave. At last I understood. My stomach tightened and tightened. Tears, generations of tears, overtook me. Shock. Fear. A piercing wail. A scream from the air: Death. I looked over my shoulder at the houses that border the camp like my house borders my backyard. People still live there. *How can those houses*

still stand? How can they be human and still watch from their windows as we suffer? I am standing at the edge of humanity. If I take one step forward, I will be among the dead, gone forever. If I retreat, I will return to ignorance of the ashes. Not knowing is worse than accepting. But before I step forward, I must enjoy one last moment of disbelief, of the in-between.

I turn in place back towards the larger city. A sunset has emerged from the grim clouds. I squint in disbelief. My tear-stained vision renders me blind. *Is this great beauty mocking me? Or can we recover after all?*

A sustained note cuts through the cold air. It holds, resonates and then dissipates. A church bell. *Why?* My fear turns to confusion, but the serenity is undeniable. It holds a weight the air's scream never did. Before me I no longer see a land of death. Instead, I see a nation, a world of life. And with the gleam of the sunset in my eyes and the tranquility of the church bell in my ears, I return to the bus, hope coursing through my veins.

Max Walker is in 11th grade at Central High School. He loves to play the saxophone and participate in United Synagogue Youth (USY). He also enjoys competing for his school's debate and tennis teams.

First Place, Prose, Grades 7-9

הסלקציה "The Selection," Noa Ní Aoláin Gross

The day they took me was like any regular day, any normal day. Again I sat in the cupboard. I've already forgotten how many days I'd been there, biting my knuckles to distract myself from my ever-empty stomach. Curled into the fetal position, using my free hand I drew a picture with the dirt on the ground, a picture of mother with the yellow sun behind her. I drew a cake and presents, and I allowed myself to imagine for just a moment that she was standing outside the doors, just waiting for me to come out. If only I had the strength to move, maybe I could have saved myself from the inevitable pain that would soon come.

As I waited in silence for her to come bursting through the door with my little sister waddling behind her, each moment that passed felt like a vise slowly closing in, stealing my last breaths. As my hope faded, I thought to myself that I've already forgiven her for missing my birthday. Maybe next year when she had returned and Peter had stopped hitting me when I passed him, and we could be friends again. Just maybe we could share our birthdays... Just maybe.

I scolded myself. I would not let myself hope for the impossible. The pain only worsens when there is hope. I thought about the promise mother made me make. "If people come for you, remember, even if they look like Peter or Hans from down the street, you do not know them, do you understand?"

I looked at her wide-eyed. "What if it really is Peter? How will I know the difference?"

Mother looked down at me. Her eyes brimmed with tears. "Most men can tell the difference between monsters and people."

Then I remembered how she gave me one last hug, exited the cupboard and gave the signal to close the door. That was a while ago though. No one had knocked at the door for some time, leaving me alone with my thoughts and ever-rumbling belly.

Suddenly a noise snapped me back into the real world. I opened my eyes, held my breath and listened. I heard German. It was of no use trying to hide; there was nowhere left to hide. As the Germans entered the closet, I wished Mother were here.

She would have known how to stop the soldiers, or at least hold my hand. I would be fine without her, I told myself. I'm grown up now, I'm already nine.

The soldiers yelled at me and kicked me and stomped. When they lifted their feet, all that remained was scattered dust. One soldier even put a gun to my head as if to shoot me, but of course he didn't. We all know how expensive bullets are.

I thought I recognized a soldier as my old neighbor who used to give me a piece of candy whenever I saw him. I reached out, pleading with my eyes. He returned my look with a stone-cold glare full of nothingness. I still naively asked him for help, pushing the words meekly out of my dry, cracked lips. He looked down at me, and for a minute I thought he was going to offer me his hand. I never expected the spit, and all the soldiers laughed as I tried to scrub it off my face, leaving dirt smudges everywhere.

The soldiers forced me out of the locker and into town. As we passed houses with the shutters tightly locked as if to keep a secret, I cried and shouted, but it was as if the entire world was wearing earmuffs.

As I was dragged through town, I saw the grass which had begun to fill with snow. It was as if sugar or my mother's cream had been dusted over the field. The sky was a light blue color starting to grey, and I thought how beautiful it could have been here if only the shattered windows and broken glass which were streaked with yellow and black paint were cleaned up.

I had the odd feeling that I would never return to this place. But before I could think about it, I was thrown onto a train car. The car was crowded. I thought I was going to suffocate. The proximity left little oxygen, and the smell of death invaded my nostrils as I was squeezed between the dead and the dying. I felt like an ant, as if the tiniest of things could crush me. I wished Mother were here. She could have helped the woman who suffered a heart attack, the child struggling to catch a breath in his father's arms. I sat on the side holding my head high as Mother had taught me to, and with my fingernails I drew a picture on the wall. I drew my old house and our happy family. The sun was so yellow like a piece of cheese, and on

the grass I played a game. In the picture my little sister was still alive and playing with her toys. In the picture I could protect her from harm. I could ensure she never starved, that she was never taken.

On the train ride hours passed, but I don't remember if I was awake or asleep. Either way, the nightmare was the same. Frightening shadows in crisp uniforms with their guns at the ready lurked at every corner, and the walls of the sentenced were inescapable. Eventually the train came to a dejected halt, as if it were a bystander watching as thousands met their predetermined fate. The masses of people exited the train in a zombie-like state, trying to distance themselves from the dead. As I exited the train, soldiers entered, carelessly dragging the dead, the lifeless out of the car. When a soldier laughed, I felt a familiar despondency as I wondered what lay ahead for me. I wondered if Mother had told soldiers to respect those who have passed when she arrived.

As I stepped into the camp, I felt like a bird without wings, trapped and with no escape. As I walked past the gate, past the sneers of the guards, I saw a finger moving back and forth like one of my games. Side to side. It did not stop even when people cried, even when people died. Side to side. Side to side. People forcibly separated from their loved ones into lines. I wondered where those lines led. In which line would I end up? Side to side. When I reached the front of the line, I saw the eyes like something unworldly, with no compassion. They stared through me, and for a moment I thought I was already dead. The second that I awaited my sentence felt like an eternity.

As I was dragged to my fate, I looked to the sky. Drifting away from the camp, the music and smoke intermingled in a never-ending embrace.

Noa Ní Aoláin Gross is in 9th grade at Saint Paul Academy and Summit School. Noa enjoys spending time with family, reading a good book curled up on the couch, playing piano and running cross country.

Honorable Mention, Photography, Grades 7-9

"Half 'n Half," Zoe Ziessman



Zoe Ziessman is in 7th grade at Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School. She loves to travel, do volleyball, gymnastics, and hang out with her friends and family.

Honorable Mention, Poetry, Grades 7-9

"When you lose a friend,"

Caroline Epstein

When you lose a friend,
Everything boils down,
Death seems better than loss,
When she told me the news I laughed it off,
She couldn't be telling the truth,

She was.

The words didn't sink in until the first day of
7th grade,
She wasn't here,
Not here at all,
The tension built up,
I didn't say goodbye
I could feel the tears escape my eyes,
I imagined crows,
They flew through my mind,
Trying to peck at my memories with her,
And one by one flying off with them,
Only to be replaced with new ones,
Until almost every memory was replaced with
a new one,
I can barely remember her,
I would never get to sit with her at lunch,
I was alone

Carolyn Epstein is in 8th grade at The Blake School. She loves to travel, draw and do many forms of art! She especially loves her cat, Figaro.

First Place, Photography, Grades 7-9

"Page Turner," Dvorah Leah Kvasnik



Dvorah Leah Kvasnik is in 9th grade at Bais Yaakov High School. She loves to write, act, play sports and, of course, photograph!

Second Place, Photography, Grades 7-9

"Windy Day in Jerusalem," Jonah Halper



Jonah Halper is in 9th grade at The Blake School. He loves to play both soccer and Ultimate Frisbee as well as spend his summers attending camp Herzl.

Second Place, Poetry, Grades 7-9

"Softly," Emma Hausman

The light crunch under my feet,
The sparkling snow,
The crisp, cold air gently brushing my cheeks
Then suddenly, enveloped in the warm air
Of the house.

Arms wrap around
The neon purple jacket,
Keeping me warm.
Our voices come down to a hush.

The joyful light of the dining room
Is lonely without the laughter of people.
The menorahs sit anxiously,
Waiting for us to give them their time
To shine brightly into the darkness
Of the neighborhood.

The strike of the match
Is a rip through the patient silence of the room.
The small fire is passed from the match
To the tall shamash who stands tall,
Awaiting his orders.

The glowing flame ignites the first candle
As the flame grows between the two soldiers.
Our voices encourage the small spark.

The small, growing flame
Of the second candle emerges and then
Disappears into a small, swirling pillar
Of smoke.

The stubborn candle refuses the spark
Of the diligent shamash,
Who presses its light into
The blackened wick, until it lights.

The glow of all eight candles
Is magnificent in the window,
Spreading softly their light into
The dark night of the neighborhood.

Emma Hausman is in 8th grade at The Blake School. Some of Emma's interests are playing the cello, writing, traveling and learning about Jewish culture.

Third Place, Poetry, Grades 7-9

"My Hands," Caroline Epstein

My hands created my story,
They put the words together to form a poem,

They built Legos and created a house,
Only to be destroyed and rebuilt in another way,

They've drawn my artwork,
They've signed the bottom,

Their swift movements have emotions,
Displayed through various ways,
They do what no leg can do,
No face,
No stomach,

Nothing.

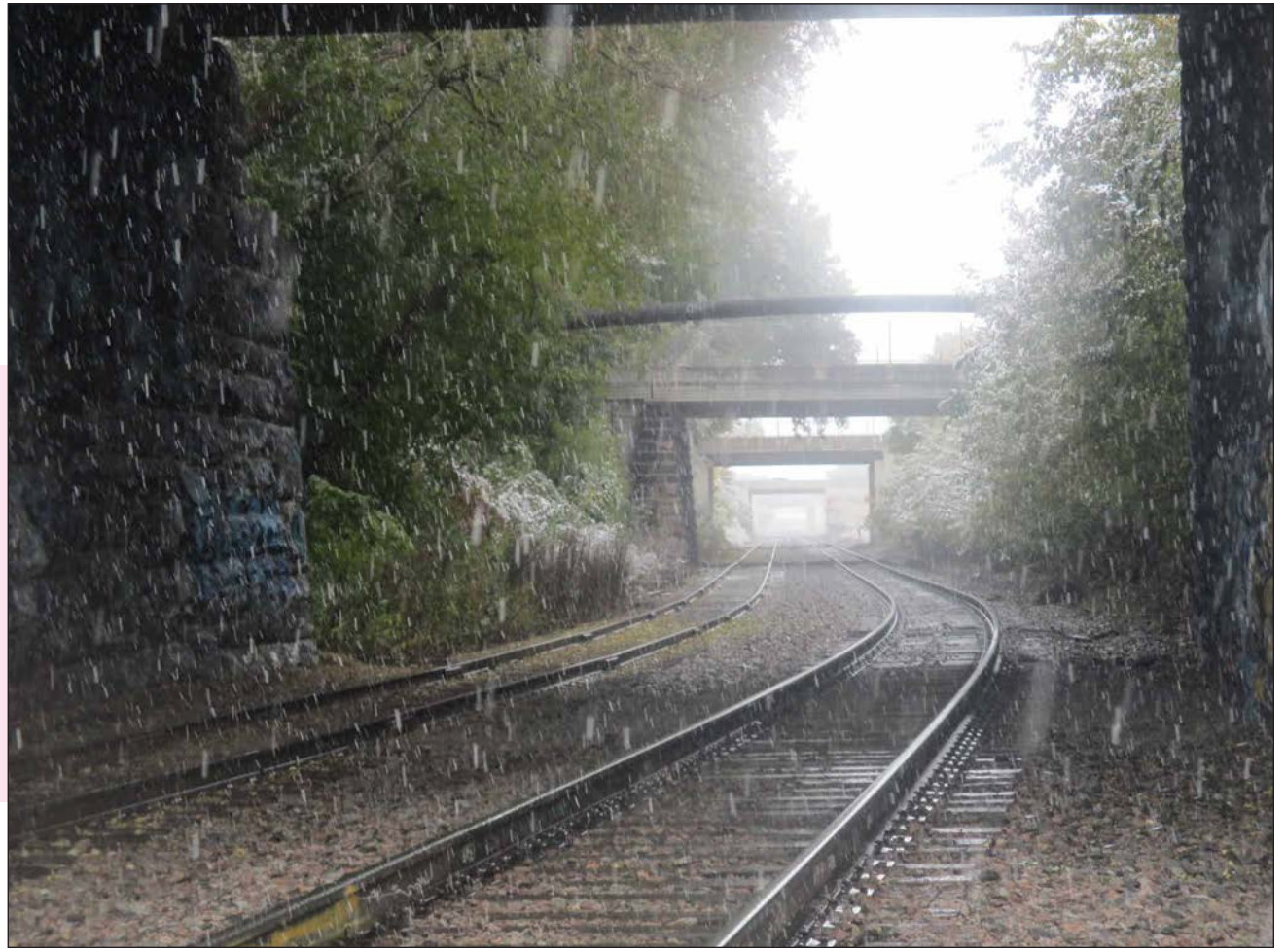
They give me good grades,
And they give me bad grades,
They write my essays,
They fill out tests,

Beautiful hands,
Fly away,
Be free,
That is what you're meant to be.

Carolyn Epstein is in 8th grade at The Blake School. She loves to travel, draw and do many forms of art! She especially loves her cat, Figaro.

Third Place, Photography, Grades 7-9

"Endless," Solomon Lubka



Solomon Lubka is in 7th grade at Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School.

Honorable Mention, Poetry, Grades 7-9

"Roses," Shira Hanovich

The first time I saw him, my cheeks flushed,
Like roses
But the flowers spread from my face to my lungs,
Blocking my airways.
Stealing my breath.

One cough could dislodge an entire bouquet,
More roses
Pale pink petals, dripping with crimson,
Coating my tongue.
Killing my voice.

I wanted to tell him what he planted
Fatal roses
Each beautiful bud a death sentence
Filling my lungs
Stopping my heart.

Shira Hanovich is in 9th grade at St. Louis Park High School. She loves to read, write and participate in theater. This is her third time participating in Keren Or, winning a prize each year.

Third Place, Photography, Grades 10-12

"A Lychee in the Market on a Thursday," Ruby Stillman



Ruby Stillman is a junior at St. Louis Park High School. She is involved in theatre, USY and social activism. This is Ruby's fifth time participating in the Keren Or contest, having won an award in each of those years.

Honorable Mention, Photography, Grades 7-9

“Nancy Drew and the Dragon Tattoo,” Sophia Lamin



Sophia Lamin is in 7th grade at Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School.

2nd Place, Prose, Grades 7-9

“Reality,” Jonathan Cohen

Dear Reality,

Let me come clean. The way you've been running this place has been problematic. I know we are friends, but friends can have disagreements, can't they? So don't take this too personally, but everyone else and I think you need to make some changes. There's been a lot of unhealthy stuff going on without any explanation, so we were hoping that you could fix that immediately.

Please reply as soon as you see this.

Sincerely,
Humanity

Dear Reality,

Maybe my first email didn't go through. You haven't replied after a week and you usually reply right away. I'll send this message just in case. I've been having some issues with the way you run things here. The foundation of the living world is beginning to crumble. That's not just my opinion. Everyone seems to be against your system right now. If you'd just clean up your act, that would be great. Please respond.

Sincerely,
Humanity

Dear Reality,

Why are you ignoring me? I talk to you about making a better world, and you just block me out? It has been another week now. I know you're there. People on Earth need you to step up to the plate and handle all that's going on. It seems as though you've left everything to chance, even events concerning life and death. You're making a bad example of yourself. Just please, fix this mess. Do it for me. Respond to me, please.

Sincerely,
Humanity

Dear Reality,

You are disgusting. Another two weeks have gone by. You haven't replied to any of my messages. You are making this world a pile of garbage. I feel as though you're doing it on purpose. You have been putting people through sickness, injury, poverty, rape, drugs and sometimes even death. I don't know why you're doing this. Please just respond to my email. Everyone is pretty sick of your agenda, and that shouldn't be taken lightly.

Sincerely,
Humanity

Dear Reality,

I hope you're happy. I really do, since a lot of people aren't. Everyone cracked and is now living in a fantasy world. Everyone is now pretending that there's nothing going on and nothing to do. They're using whatever they can to distract themselves from what you've done. And who can really blame them? After all of this, I've got one question for you: what is wrong with you? The ones who aren't distracted are torn apart, and the ones who are distracted are on the verge of collapse. So really, what is wrong with you? I'd really like to know. The way you've made this all turn out makes one thing clear about what goes on in your head. No need to respond anymore.

Go torture another planet.

Sincerely,
Humanity

Dear Humanity,

You guys really are a bunch of idiots. Whatever I do, it's because of logic, rationality and reason. A lot of the time things may not go your way, so when they do, it's up to you to fix them. And sure, a lot of things that happen probably make no sense to you. So it's up to you to get past it. You've been whining to me forever about how I've caused all your problems, but you've never talked about how I gave you many solutions that you annoyingly passed on. You think it's my job to fix my mess. That's not how this works. What I do you clean up because that's how the system works. That's how this planet will grow and become better. It's not my fault when faced with a challenge, you all looked the other way. So if you really want to take a stand and change the world, I'm not the one you should be writing those letters to. That person is yourself.

Insincerely,
Reality

Jonathan Cohen is in 8th grade at Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School. Jonathan loves geography, volleyball, astronomy, and his two dogs Moishie and Ruby.

Third Place, Poetry, Grades 10-12

“The Cattle Car,” Ahuva Roberts

I used to hear the sound of animals lowing,
And so patiently stowing.

I once felt hours stretch long and easy,
and their slick fur combed so neatly.
But something has changed.

I used to see lush meadows of green
and a countryside so serene.

I once heard cattle called by a name,
and smelled the earthy scent of dry hay.
But something has changed.

I now hear the sound of young children groaning
And adults so feverishly moaning.

I now feel the yoke of countless bodies thrust upon me,
And a burden that makes me want to burst free.

Now I see barren acres of dry soil
And endless fields of nothing; no toil

Now I hear only odd numbers rather than names
And appalling odors that the memory will always retain.

No longer are there cattle resting in peace
But human beings standing crammed together on two feet.
Each day they stand, their legs so weak
More bodies add to the piling heap.

And as the days continue to give
There is more room to sit
As more hearts continue to quit.

Ahuva Roberts is in the 12th grade at Bais Yaakov High School. Ahuva enjoys baking, playing sports and hanging out with friends.

Honorable Mention, Prose, Grades 10-12

“The Woman Sitting behind Me,” Sara Shiff

We will not discuss the woman sitting behind me.

Her perfect American accent that I hear her speak on the phone may be misleading perhaps, if you cannot visually see her. Because if you cannot see her, you cannot see her outfit. If you cannot see her outfit, you cannot make judgements or assumptions based on her outfit. Then you righteously exemplify how all of us should react when seeing this woman.

Just because we ought to react righteously, though, doesn't mean we do.

So we will not discuss the woman sitting behind me. One backwards glance is fine, I suppose, but two is suspicious. For discussing this woman based on her outfit might stereotype her for something that she, hopefully, does not represent or even believe in something heinous, monstrous, unspeakable. In fact, I believe the opposite is true.

But still, these stereotypes instill not exactly the warmest feelings in those who are within her possible collateral-damage radius. 'Those,' as in an unprejudiced person like me, who chooses to write their prose about a woman sitting behind them in the Uptown Sencha Tea Bar.

A woman wearing a burka, that is.

I will not discuss the woman sitting behind me.

Sara Shiff is in 11th grade at Robbinsdale High School. Her interests include singing, theater, travel and art. Sara leads her school's Relay for Life team and has created her own art business to sell her work.

Honorable Mention, Poetry, Grades 10-12

“sparkling grapes: spring, adulthood and remembering,” Nora Cornell

i swirl the bubbles in my delicate glass.
it feels familiar already, and i want to
let myself become more like this motion —
spring, after all, is delicate and swooping,
rarely invasive, and bringing a sort of precocious smile.
i sit with my neck and chin perched
as lightly as i can manage above my chest,
fold my hands like fallen flowers in my lap,
and it takes until *ma nishtana* to remember —
spring is also a renewing cycle of chaos,
of rainstorms and sneezes and muddy toes,
and that my growth can move this way, too.

Nora Cornell is in 10th grade at The Blake School. When not writing poems, Nora is a theater kid with a penchant for storytelling. She loves learning all sorts of things and cuddling with her two cats.

Honorable Mention, Photography, Grades 10-12

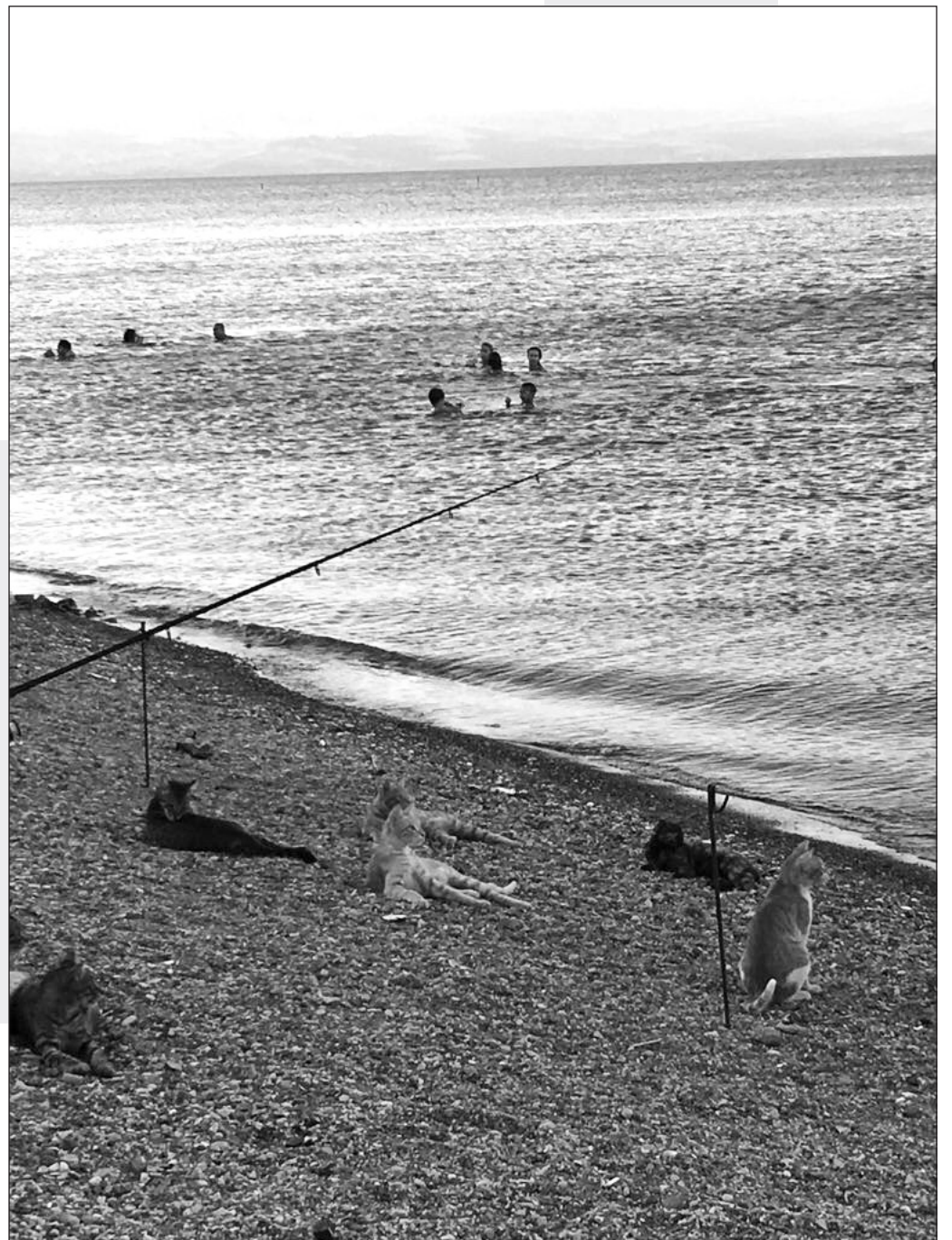
“Resilience,” Ruthie Posada



Ruthie Posada is in 11th grade at St. Louis Park High School. Ruthie enjoys traveling, photography, Ultimate Frisbee, listening to music and playing with her dog.

Honorable Mention, Photography, Grades 7-9

“Cats of the Kinneret,” Haya Fine



Haya Fine is in 9th grade at The Blake School. She has previously won awards in the Keren Or contest in both photography and prose.

Honorable Mention, Poetry, Grades 10-12

“I Carry Words,” Kalman Greenberger

What do I carry?
I carry words
I carry them wherever I go
I carry them when I wake up
And to when I fall asleep.

I carry the weight of the words I've whispered
And the weight of those I've screamed
And I carry the weight of every word that I've said in between.

It doesn't take a lot
Any word will do
I'll take the word and carry it
Knowing that someday I may carry you.

The weight of words may seem great
But that isn't always the case
Because if you have the strength
You can take those words and look them in the face
You can tell them that you are strong
You can say you can't be stopped
You look at those words and you know they won't be dropped.

So now you know my tale
The boy who carries words
Through even the strongest gale,
I take these words and hold them.

But what will you do with this?
Will you carry words too?
For if you do, know it won't be easy
Know that you may fail
But also know that in the end, you will prevail.

Kalman Greenberger is in 10th grade at Hopkins High School. He enjoys reading, playing Ultimate Frisbee and participating with his robotics team.

Honorable Mention, Photography, Grades 10-12

"Down the Stream," Tyler Herman



Tyler Herman is in 10th grade at Wayzata High School. He likes to spend time with his friends, take photos and play Ultimate Frisbee for his school.

3rd Place, Prose, Grades 7-9

"The Big Mistake," Caroline Epstein

The air swarmed me, corrupted me, as I fell. It felt like I had been falling forever. Pain was searing up my spine, through my arms and cycling around my body, not wanting to leave. Blood flooded through my eyes. All I could see was thick red blood, stinging my eyes. I never wanted to die this way. My wound was gushing, bubbling with blood. I felt it sear through my stomach.

Light flashes through my eyes, yet I cannot see. All I can do is remember. I remember the guy, the way he punched me with anger, kicked me without skill, just fury. Each kick was randomly placed, and I could tell he wasn't thinking straight. I recall how he shot me with his gun four times out of fright that I could survive and put him in jail. I remember his words, striking me harder than the blows. Shock had kept me from fighting. I felt paralyzed, not able to move my legs to run or arms to fight back. I would never hurt someone. I remember the way he ran when he realized how badly hurt I was, what he had done. By then my eyes were filled, salty tears mixed with new blood, as I heard his footsteps run away.

I thought of my family back at home in Nashville, who knew I shouldn't have been friends with him, how disappointed they will be in me if I come home hurt. They always told me, "Sam, you're only 15! Find friends who are nicer, who will support you. Please..." The look in their faces was fear, yet I did not listen. Now I am in Franklin, far away from them so I wouldn't get caught and left with no hope of them finding me, or even trying.

School was also a struggle, another reason my parents hated me. My average was a C, and I don't care to try in my classes. I knew I was friends with bad influences, but they were the only ones I could find. At school I was considered mean, a slacker and a show-off. There was no way around it, I had sewn the label myself.

My thoughts were interrupted as my head slammed

the ground, spraying blood everywhere and sending everyone around me to silence. Even through the pain, I could hear people murmuring, the call of the phone, the footsteps running. What was I supposed to do? I couldn't feel my arm and my phone was gone. I was hopeless. I wanted to run, to call for help, to get off the ground, but the excruciating pain was impossible to overcome. I didn't even know where the pain started, but I knew I was losing a lot of blood. I could feel my head getting lighter, my legs weaker with every breath. My clothes were soaked, I could feel the wetness spread through my body. Was I drowning? Memories flooded my brain, but I only looked for one. The one where I angered him, my best friend, Dan. I did something. I had to have, but I couldn't pinpoint what happened. My breath was staggered. Every breath seemed harder.

Another wave of pain rushed over me, stimulating all of my nerves to go haywire, but causing a once-distant memory to be close. Dan. He wanted money, I owed him money. It was money I didn't have, and I shouldn't have borrowed. \$5000, barely enough to pay my car bills, yet I thought I could pay him back. Dan had threatened me. I had owed him \$6000 because of interest, which was way more than I had. I remember shrinking and trying to hand him my \$102.34, but he wanted more. He always wanted more.

My head jerked to the side, my eyes squinted, trying to see through the blood. All I could see was the night sky and the moon, which was full. I could hear the clock inside me ticking, its ticks diminishing, slowing down, dying. I knew I had to act, but I couldn't. I looked strong on the outside, but inside I was as weak as an infant. I didn't know how many times I had been hit, but I knew it was a lot. Mustering all my strength, I drew up my left hand, shaking and weak, and wiped the blood from my eyes. For

a few seconds I had clear vision. I caught sight of a person, urgently calling someone, perhaps it was help. I could see black figures running on the street. A woman with her child was running, the woman protecting her child from my attacker, who was probably far away now and wasn't a threat anymore. I tried to talk to someone, anyone, but my throat was dry. My eyes filled up again. I couldn't see, and I didn't have enough strength to do anything.

My mind wandered away from the moment for only a second, trying to recover my entire life's memories. My brain failed, the pain wouldn't let me think straight, and I was left with total blankness. Suddenly I wasn't sure what would happen to me. Would I live? Would I die? What would happen if I did survive? I couldn't change now, but high school was almost over. I could start fresh in college. New thoughts swooped in. Could I even get into college? My blood flowed faster. Tears rushed down my face, first one, then four, bringing my health down with them. As my body started to shut down, all I could hear were sirens, louder and louder with each beat of my heart, which was slowing down until I could no longer gasp for air.

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