

## 2012 Youth Writing Contest

### Third Place Winner: Lower Division (8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Grade)

Micaela, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, Congregation Ner Tamid, NV

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The women of the partisans. Now, respectable elderly women at a glance. But, upon closer investigation, you learn of their tumultuous histories: ones borne of loyalty to family and remaining alive, of unwillingness to let forces seemingly beyond control siphon away their humanity. Their wrinkles belong to the same women who were once Jewish guerrilla fighters working against their oppressors during one of the ugliest eras of time. Those circumstances required them to learn two universal truths that most living comfortably might never have to consider. The first truth is that we are all blessedly gifted with the capability and willingness to survive, and that we as individuals decide whether or not we will recognize it. The second is that one must protect and preserve the lives of others to be protected and preserved as well. These truths, in conjunction with each other, have driven mankind in its entirety.

These soldiers could be called brave to defy the Nazi regime. Clever, intuitive, persevering, revolutionary: these traits are commonly used to describe one who has done a noble deed, and they all accurately describe these women fighters. But, these truly human talents more often than not bubble and rise to the surface when a human knows that, without action, the breaths one takes are numbered. With the impending threat of a life filled with groping through the sorrows of a camp, the future partisans fled and then retaliated. Navigating through nightmares, the partisans plotted and fought to regain the lives that had made them want to live.

To fight within the male-dominated world was a daunting, harrowing task in itself for these women. But war cannot belong to one gender. This was not a man's war. This was not a woman's war. It was a people's war, and perhaps the partisans' odds-defying success was due to the combined skill sets of men and women that their opposition did not possess. The love and camaraderie shared with one another cemented their efforts, and the hate-driven enemy became a barrier to destroy to keep each other alive. Without such a mutual protection, survival is improbable.

The people of the partisans. Respectable elderly folks at a glance. But, upon further investigation, you learn of the histories intertwined with loved ones, sacrifice, and survival. Their past inspires us to perform the drastic acts necessary to create a world better than the one before. To live as they did would mean that, at some point in our lives, we will all just be people, bearing our superficial characteristics outside, fighting to survive, and using our loving predilections to turn the gears of the universe within.