

# Fourth Place Division I – Writing

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*Holocaust Hands*

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## Holocaust Hands

Hands do beautiful things when they are gentle and kind.  
Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.” -Martin Luther King, Jr.  
We can choose where our hands go, and what our hands do.

I was a young Jewish boy when the Nazis took my country.  
When I was born, the tender hands of my mother lovingly caressed me with care and attention.  
Those beautiful hands were soft and gentle, guiding me in the right direction.  
Those hands, blistered from endless hours of hard work provided for all my needs.

I remember holding the hands of my friends as we played childhood games in the schoolyard.  
Educated hands of our instructors helped us learn as we wrote our studies on the chalkboard.  
The sounds of laughter and fun from the cheering crowd of family and friends resonated in my head the day I made the winning catch.  
I saw the delicate hands of my sister as I heard her play Chopin on the piano.

I never thought that those same hands of compassion, friendship, and kindness would be only tangible in my memory.  
The glorious hands of my youth were silenced little by little as the days passed and the war came to fruition.  
Those whom I loved were taken from me, and the sweet caresses of my mother seemed nothing more than a dream.

Hands do ugly things when their purposes are sinister and apathetic.  
“Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.” -Martin Luther King, Jr.  
We can choose where our hands go, and what our hands do.

When I was fifteen, I encountered thick, rough hands that forced me to go places that still haunt my memory.  
These hands were led by a mind that was filled with hate.  
One that was submissive to the will of others, more powerful than they.  
Ignorant hands slapped and abused me as I heard chaotic shouts in a language that was foreign to me.  
Hands held guns to our heads, and voices laughed as they watched us sweat in fear.  
“Bewegt euch, Sklaven!” (Move, slaves!).  
Gloved hands isolated the compassion of human flesh as they cared less if we live or die.

These hands have tortured and killed.  
Hands like these were not meant for human beings.

Yet, the hands that forced pain and evil were no more than slaves themselves, marionettes being manipulated by the supreme evil puppeteer.  
As I kept my head down, I noticed no wrinkle nor ring on the hands that held the weapons of destruction.  
They were the hands of youth, not much older than mine.  
How could their young hearts be hardened, more calloused than the hands of the laborers whom they abused?  
They were blinded by their ignorance.

Hands that disappeared each night when I came back to the barracks are the hands now held by Yahweh, God of everlasting mercy.  
“Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.” -Martin Luther King, Jr.  
We can choose where our hands go, and what our hands do.

Hands worked to the bone, dark and filthy, resting quietly in the shadows of death.  
These innocent, denatured hands were constantly replaced by other hands still held in bondage.  
To the weary hands, these motionless bodies seemed to be given the greatest gift of kindness.  
I often thought, “Let my hands be still, let me be the next one exterminated.”  
Gas chamber, the “bakery,” or merely a simple shot through my head, let me join my mother.

But what if the veins in her hands still pulse with her life blood?  
What if I am not worthy to join the heavenly abode with those who have gone before me?  
I must carry on, for Yahweh has a purpose for me, and He will lead me to salvation.  
While I wait to be called, my painfully bruised hands carry on, shoveling heavy loads of dirt as I am forced to do.  
When will salvation come?

Hands become contaminated when not treated properly.  
“Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.” -Martin Luther King, Jr.  
We can choose where our hands go, and what our hands do.

Soap was a luxury, and disgusting hands that were not clean enough to touch even dirt, were the hands that were used to prepare the watery, nearly inedible broth that they called dinner.  
It's no wonder that our hands became the agents of disease.  
Diarrhea, hepatitis, cholera, dysentery, and other ailments led to more disease.

With nowhere to truly bathe, lice found a home in our very being.  
I could feel them crawl across my body at night, and my hands would scratch at my  
leathery, crusted skin until I could feel blood oozing from my pores.

What has happened to these once clean, innocent, gentle hands?  
When I was a child, I hid from my mother when it was time for my bath.  
Now, I can only dream of the soapy bubbles of a warm and soothing bath.  
I must never let anyone know when I feel ill, or my hands will be silenced, and all hope will  
be extinguished.

Hands can be saved when treated with love and care.  
“Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.” -Martin Luther King, Jr.  
We can choose where our hands go, and what our hands do.

When darkness seemed to smother the camp, a single ray of light illuminated the Earth.  
Helping hands found their way to us from all around the world.  
America, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Bulgaria.  
Their loving hands were not bothered by our poor, repulsive, bony hands, yearning to be  
free.  
My hands hoarded the food from which I was deprived for so long.  
Has my mother found safety and security from the tender hands of these angels of mercy?  
Perhaps the young hands of a simple Jewish boy, the hands I gaze upon each day, will live  
to give and serve others for many years to come.

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