

Honorable Mention
Division II - Writing

Tylin Penna, Grade 9

“Unintentional Cruelty”

Our Lady of the Elms

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Unintentional Cruelty

Our decisions make up our entire life; our actions can change everything in a blink of an eye. Perhaps that could be the reason people live by the saying, you only live once. But what if that so-called life gets taken from you? What if that life gets snatched out of your hands and leaves your hands bruised and broken? There is no bringing back people who have been stripped of their rights and dehumanized. Remembering can only take us so far, but what about the people who have lost all that they had, and then themselves? Who is to blame?

1940 Nelly F.

“The floor was hard and the walls were dull; I tried to catch myself before thinking about what I once had. I think about the times when I complained about how cold the snowflakes were when they melted on my face; I dreamt of playing with my sisters in the snow and whining to Mama whenever my sister shoved snow down my shirt; the times when I was at school and complained that only three minutes of recess remained. I try, and fail, not to think about those days, because all they bring is a hollow feeling accompanied by the yearning for understanding. I used to think, what if all of this will soon be over? But now I know that I can't escape from the dread I sink into, and only one question, “Why?”

1940 Oliver W.

In America, your career is day in and day out. Some people decide to work to make a living, or perhaps there was no choice. From a young age people have worked to get where they are now; that's how the cycle goes. Get a job, make money, pay money, and sooner or later, pass that onto others. I work as a journalist, covering the unimaginable. Not many people cause disruption, or so I thought. I am called to my supervisor's office. I walk in and nervously take a seat in front of Miss Rainford's desk.

“Good Afternoon, I am highly aware of your ability to cover all kinds of stories, but this one is unique.” I nod my head to show my understanding. She begins again. “I need you to cover these cases from Germany.”

As she said that, she looked into my eyes, but I could not make out what was going on behind them. “Germany? Apologies for the question, but what coverage needs to be done?” I ask with curiosity.

“Well, I have a feeling that this can be important in the future. I don't have the best feeling about this. Something about your writing and how you capture the essence and make people realize the gravity of the situation is needed for this case.” I stay silent, perhaps burdened or content with the new job. I nod my head at her once again. “It is your job to capture this and highlight it for people to see; we need to spread awareness throughout the United States and perhaps stop it before it escalates.” She spoke in a voice I don't associate with her, mysterious and cold. She turned her head away from me and I didn't dare to say anything about it. “Thank you ma'am, I will not disappoint.

Unintentional Cruelty

Our faults cannot make us monsters, they only show our incapability to succeed. Or perhaps the saying, the dog that weeps after it kills is no better than the dog that doesn't. In Germany, right now, with every blink, someone loses their life. The question is, are we going to sit back and not get involved until something interrupts our way of living, or are we going to take action and save millions dying? A new concentration camp is being opened and more people are forced in, only never to come out and experience freedom again. They never asked for the injustices being imposed upon them. They never asked to be ripped from their loved ones. The

primary purpose of these camps is to kill. Not only is this inhumane, but it's purely disgusting that people with families and people they love, are killing fellow humans with intent. This is America's chance to show that they care and it's time to take action.

I look at my work one last time before I publish it. I begin to think, will this change anything? Perhaps not. But, you can only speak to people who are willing to listen.

Nelly F.

“I listen to the heavy footsteps approaching the quarters my family and I were kept in. I smell the stench of sweat and taste my salty tears. The door opens and two tall men appear; one of them, revolted by the smell, tells us to get up. Due to malnutrition, it takes us longer than expected. Eventually, we arrive at a door that reads, ‘*Duschen.*’ One guard opens the large metal door, and it creaks loudly. “Take off your clothes then enter.” One by one, people hurriedly discard their clothing, disgusted by their own stench. They file into the shower chambers as I follow behind. It is dark, and cold. I call out to my family in the dark room, searching for their voices, but no one answers. Nothing comes but the sound of hissing. I begin to search for my mother, in need of her comforting touch. Why is everything dark and cold? Why does there seem to be nobody in here? I begin to panic, continuously searching for somebody, something or someone. My hands grasp the air, to no avail. I collapse, the air leaving my lungs. I feel myself drifting off, my heartbeat slowing, little by little, until there is nothing left but my unheard cries.

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