

## **AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SUSY RAFUL ESSAY CONTEST**

Dear Friend;

My name is Susy Raful. My children and grandchildren, on the occasion of my seventy-fifth birthday, honored me by establishing a prize to be awarded to the winner of a countywide essay contest about reflections on the Shoah (the Holocaust).

I was born in 1925 in Budapest, Hungary, the daughter of Andor and Netka Taubner. I was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp in 1944, and was a prisoner on the Helmsbrecht Death March on the day the war ended in 1945. Although near death and suffering from malnutrition and illness, I was nursed back to health by U.S. Army soldiers and doctors. I came to the United States in 1947 to marry Robert Raful, an Army soldier I met soon after the war ended. Since that time, I have had two sons and two daughters-in-law, and five grandchildren, and have spent a great deal of my life dedicated to serving the Jewish community in America and in Israel. The Raful family established this prize to promote greater reflection by young people about the Shoah and each teenager's individual life. We hope that the young people who write these essays will never forget what their ancestors endured because of their faith and heritage. May their memory be a blessing for us all.

**Requirements for the Essay Contest:** The annual essay contest is open to any Jewish high school student who is a resident of Sonoma County. Students who intend to participate in the contest are asked to write an essay of 500 - 700 words, typed, double-spaced, on white paper. Pages should be numbered. Footnotes are not necessary and quotations and footnotes from original source material should be kept to a minimum. A cover page should include the title of the essay, the name of the author, and the last four digits of the author's Social Security Number or telephone number. These same four digits should be placed on the top right-hand corner of each page of the essay. The cover page will be removed so that the judges do not know the identity of each author. The main purpose of the paper is personal reflection by the participant. The Shoah is now more than 65 years in the past, and in a few years, all the survivors of the atrocities will have died, leaving you and your children and generations to come with only memories, pictures, and stories.

Susy Rafal, for whom this contest is named, has handed down her personal story of suffering and survival to her children and grandchildren, and likewise, you have heard stories, read books, visited museums, and seen pictures and movies about that terrible period in Jewish history.

- What do you think today about the Shoah?
- What do you think you will tell your children when they ask you about the Shoah?
- What thoughts and images of the Shoah do you think you will keep with you as you grow into an adult?
- What do you think you will tell those of other faiths, as you grow older, when they ask you about your views of the Shoah?
- Do you have enough information in order to make a decision about your feelings?
- Do you think you will be able to talk about the Shoah, or even reflect on the Shoah, 50 more years from now, when all survivors are gone and World War II is very old history?

This essay contest does not seek a recounting of historical events; rather we seek your feelings, your inner thoughts, your concerns, and your reflections about what you have learned about the Shoah and the Jewish people.

Your essay must be submitted to **Congregation Beth Ami, 4676 Mayette Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95405**, by the close of business on March 20, 2008. Late submissions will not be accepted, so you are responsible for making sure that the office is open to receive your essay. Please keep a personal copy for your files. The judging will be based on originality, clarity, depth of feeling, and understanding of the nature of the Shoah. The winner will be presented with a check for \$500, at a public Yom HaShoah event, and his or her name will be inscribed on a permanent plaque at Beth Ami. All submissions become the property of Beth Ami and can not be returned. For further information and questions, please contact 707/523-3253. I invite you to participate as a way of honoring all those who had their teenage years stolen away from them. We honor the memory of the dead and of those who survived, that their memory might be for a blessing for all of us.

**Previous Winners:**

2001 Logan Guttenberg; 2002 Ruben Brosbe; 2003 Julie Aronowitz; 2004 Rachel Dwight; 2005 Robbie Pleasant; 2006 James Nagel; 2007 Haley Pleasant