

# SALA AND ARON SAMUELI HOLOCAUST ART & WRITING CONTEST

Presented by Chapman University and The 1939 Society

**27** YEARS

## Holding on to Hope

### ENTRY POSTMARK DATE

February 2, 2026

### DIGITAL SUBMISSION DUE DATE

February 4, 2026

### AWARDS CEREMONY

Friday, March 13, 2026



**Rodgers Center for  
Holocaust Education**



# INSPIRATION

## Sala and Aron Samueli Holocaust Art & Writing Contest

### Holding on to Hope

Fragile as the seeds of a dandelion, hope became a source of strength for those persecuted during the Holocaust. Hope took many forms, grounded in memories from the past and dreams for the future. In her memoir, *All But My Life*, survivor Gerda Weissmann Klein recalls an act of hope when she and her friend looked toward the future and bet on when the war would end and freedom would come.

Memories of good times became a source of hope as a person recalled birthdays and religious holidays celebrated with family and friends and dreamed of such occasions in the future.

Hope also inspired courageous action. Young Tom Blatt knew that the odds of successfully escaping from the Sobibor killing center were extremely slim and yet he dared to crawl under a barbed wire fence and run through a field filled with land mines. When he was shot by the farmer who had agreed to hide him, he hoped that playing dead would enable him to live.

The 24-year-old leader of the Warsaw ghetto uprising Mordechai Anieliewicz knew his fighters were vastly outnumbered by German forces. Though they managed to resist the Nazis for 27 days, military victory was never a real possibility. Instead, Mordechai hoped that their defiance would send a powerful message of resistance and hope into the future, inspiring people to remember and bear witness.

In hiding, young Peter Feigl kept a diary in the hope that one day he could share it with his parents so they could learn of his life when separated from them. Desperately clinging to the railings in an elevator shaft, Eva Brettler's mother hoped that she could hold on long enough to return to her small daughter hidden in a basket on the top of a wardrobe.

To retain hope under the most inhumane conditions took courage and a belief that one's actions had purpose. Holding on to hope was never easy, but it was crucial both to survival and to retaining one's humanity.



We hope that these words will inspire you and  
your school to participate in the

## Sala and Aron Samueli Holocaust Art & Writing Contest

Participating schools may submit a total of three entries  
(one entry per student) in any combination of the following  
categories: art, film, poetry, or prose.



Students will be eligible to win a first prize award of \$400 in each category. Educators and schools will also be eligible to win a first prize of \$200 each.

Students awarded second prize in each category will receive \$200 and their sponsoring educator and school will receive \$100 each.

### COMING SOON

Information about a special opportunity available to a limited number of students (accompanied by one parent or guardian each), and educators to participate in a unique educational program from June 22-26, 2026 at venues in Los Angeles and Orange County.

Holding on to Hope



# PROMPT

1. Select and view one full-length survivor or rescuer testimony from any of the following:
  - Samueli Holocaust Art & Writing Contest website, featuring video testimonies from the collection of the USC Shoah Foundation - The Institute for Visual History and Education at [Chapman.edu/contest-testimonies](http://Chapman.edu/contest-testimonies)
  - South Carolina Council on the Holocaust website at [scholocaustcouncil.org/survivor.php](http://scholocaustcouncil.org/survivor.php)
  - The 1939 Society website at [the1939society.org](http://the1939society.org)
  - USC Shoah Foundation - The Institute for Visual History and Education's YouTube channel at [Youtube.com/uscshoahfoundation](http://Youtube.com/uscshoahfoundation) ("Full-Length Testimonies" playlists only)
  - USC Shoah Foundation's iWitness site at [iwitness.usc.edu](http://iwitness.usc.edu)

\*\*Lists of testimonies that are one to two hours in length are available in the educator guide and on the contest website.

2. As you listen to the survivor's or rescuer's testimony, note a word, phrase, or sentence referencing a specific experience that offered hope and gave strength. Reflect on how this experience motivated that person to find meaning and purpose in the midst of their struggle to survive or their efforts to help others to survive.

*Please note the timestamp from the video testimony where the specific word, phrase, or sentence occurs.*

3. As the person now entrusted with this individual's story, through your creativity in art, poetry, prose, or film, explore this word, phrase, or sentence as central to the survivor's or rescuer's experience, and highlight how holding on to hope enabled that person to endure their circumstances and persist against adversity.
4. In your response, include a personal reflection about how the survivor's or rescuer's story of holding on to hope will empower and motivate you as you face your own challenges.

We encourage teachers to consult [Chapman.edu/holocaust-arts-contest](http://Chapman.edu/holocaust-arts-contest) for rubrics and other information.



*The 1939 Society is an organization of Holocaust survivors, descendants, and friends. It takes its name from the year that Germany invaded Poland, changing forever the lives of those who would join together in Los Angeles in 1952 to form the Society.*

*The 1939 Society has available on its website nearly 100 full-length oral testimonies. Some of these oral histories were recorded in the early 1980s at the University of California, Los Angeles; others were recorded in the mid-1990s in Orange County by the Anti-Defamation League.*

*South Carolina Council on the Holocaust hosts 37 testimonies of Holocaust survivors on its website, which were recorded in the 1990s together with SCE-TV. The website also includes a brief summary of each testimony and a written transcript.*

*USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education has an archive of more than 55,000 videotaped testimonies from Holocaust survivors and other witnesses. The USC Shoah Foundation is part of the Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern California.*



# CRITERIA

*Please see the resource guide or visit [Chapman.edu/holocaust-arts-contest](https://Chapman.edu/holocaust-arts-contest) for specific criteria, including word limits (prose) and line limits (poetry), rubrics for the various categories, and other supporting information.*

## General Criteria - All Categories

Regardless of delivery method (digital or hard copy), all entrants must complete the online submission form (available at [Chapman.edu/holocaust-arts-contest](https://Chapman.edu/holocaust-arts-contest)).

Entries must reflect genuine engagement with the survivor's or rescuer's testimony in its historical context and constitute a thoughtful and creative response.

Entries must be based on the survivor's or rescuer's testimony available from one of the following sources:

- The 1939 Society website at [the1939society.org](https://the1939society.org)
- Samueli Holocaust Art & Writing Contest website featuring video testimonies from the collection of the USC Shoah Foundation — The Institute for Visual History and Education at [Chapman.edu/contest-testimonies](https://Chapman.edu/contest-testimonies)
- South Carolina Council on the Holocaust website at [scholocaustcouncil.org/survivor.php](https://scholocaustcouncil.org/survivor.php)
- USC Shoah Foundation - The Institute for Visual History and Education's YouTube channel at [youtube.com/uscshoahfoundation](https://youtube.com/uscshoahfoundation) ("Full-Length Testimonies" playlists only)
- USC Shoah Foundation's iWitness site at [iwitness.usc.edu](https://iwitness.usc.edu)

**Entries that do not follow the criteria will be disqualified.**



*A Moment to Treasure,  
Avalon Galonsky, 2025.*

**Holding on to Hope**



*Love Survives,  
Esther Oh, 2025.*



## SUBMISSIONS

Your school's three entries may be submitted beginning December 1, 2025 and must be postmarked by February 2, 2026 or digitally submitted by February 4, 2026. Entries may be submitted electronically using the online submission form on the contest website. Art may also be submitted via postal mail to:

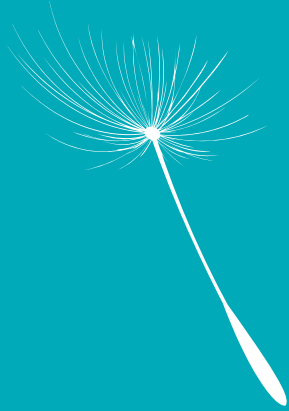
Ms. Jessica MyLymuk  
Rodgers Center for Holocaust Education  
Chapman University  
One University Drive, Orange, CA 92866

All entries become the property of the Sala and Aron Samuelli Holocaust Memorial Library at Chapman University. Artists are encouraged to retain a color copy of their work since the original may not be returned. The Sala and Aron Samuelli Holocaust Memorial Library shall own all the rights to the entries, including copyrights, and may display and publish the entries, in whole, or in part.

We encourage educators to consult [Chapman.edu/holocaust-arts-contest](https://chapman.edu/holocaust-arts-contest) for rubrics and other information.

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## SCHOOL PARTICIPATION AND PRIZES

Prizes will be distributed at the awards ceremony. Students must be in attendance (either in person or virtually) to be eligible for first and second place prizes. Exceptions must be approved in advance.

Three student representatives from each school, their teacher and/or principal (depending on seat availability) are invited to the awards ceremony:

**Friday, March 13, 2026, 11 a.m. in Chapman Auditorium, Memorial Hall,  
Chapman University, One University Drive, Orange, CA 92866**

The highlights of the event will include:

- The announcement of the winning art, film, prose, and poetry entries (one middle school and one high school);
- The presentation of the first-place art, film, prose, and poetry entries;
- A reception to honor our guests;
- The opportunity to meet and talk with Holocaust survivors, many of whose video testimonies are posted on The 1939 Society and USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education’s websites.



## SPONSORED BY

Chapman University  
The 1939 Society  
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## WITH SUPPORT FROM

USC Shoah Foundation –  
The Institute for Visual History  
and Education  
The Jerry and Sally Schwartz  
Endowment for Holocaust  
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The Liner Family Foundation



*Straining for Songs of Hope*, Dawne Tsui, 2025.

## IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Catholic Schools,  
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Echoes & Reflections  
Facing History and Ourselves  
Holocaust Museum Los Angeles  
Orange County Department  
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South Carolina Council  
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## IN COLLABORATION WITH

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## INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

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