

2026 Elie Wiesel Competition

Special Commendation, Junior Essay

Daphney Roberts, 7th Grade

Norfolk Academy, Matthew Robertson

Carrying Stories, Honoring Kindness

In a small, quiet fishing village on the tiny Caribbean island of Tobago, my Great Grandma was born in 1926. Demonstrating her love and the lengths she would go to provide better opportunities for her family, a young wife, and mother of six immigrated to America by herself. Her single act of bravery- immigrating to Greenwich, CT to be a housekeeper for a wealthy lawyer- is the reason I am here in America today. It is my hope to preserve her memory here. Her name was Hagar Roberts.

My Great Grandma is the keeper of our family stories. She can remember her own grandparents who lived in the 1800s, all the way to her newest great, great grandchildren. Family stories are important because without them, history can be forgotten. In my family the main memory keeper is my great grandmother Hagar Moore who will turn 100-years-old next month! She became our memory keeper after a hurricane destroyed her entire home in Trinidad and Tobago along with all of her photos and keepsakes. She witnessed the death of two of her little brothers. As one of 13 children in her family, she only received the equivalent of a 4th grade education because she had to drop out of school to help her parents earn money and care for her siblings, nieces and nephews. Her biggest regret was not having the opportunity to get an education.

Hagar was determined to make a better life for her family. In 1969 she immigrated to the United States and worked for over ten years for an attorney named Mr. Ivey. While living in his attic apartment, she saved money to bring her husband and 6 children to America in 1977. Her faith in God, and determination to be self-sufficient gave her the strength to eventually purchase her own house in Greenwich. When a loan officer at a bank encouraged her to go on welfare instead of buying a house for her family, Hagar replied, *"Sir, I did not come to this country to go on welfare, I came here fairly well!"* By the late 1970s and early 1980s, Hagar learned to navigate covert and overt racism with the help of Jewish American neighbors who warmly reached out to her and her children and helped them learn the ropes of life in America. The Tunic Family showed Hagar incredible generosity and were her neighbors for decades. They recommended that her grandchildren attend private school and taught her how to dress her family properly for the winter. A Jewish American jewelry store owner strongly suggested to my grandfather, who was then a young man and new immigrant from Tobago, to get an accounting degree. Today my grandfather is a successfully retired CPA because of that one man's advice! My great grandma's faith in God guided her through times of loneliness and confusion. As a 35-year-old in Tobago, she said God told her in a dream to leave her village, move to America and buy a house for her family so that her children could enjoy better educational and job opportunities. God showed her a vision of the very house in Greenwich. When she eventually purchased it years later, she confirmed, *"The house in America was just like the dream I had, and everything was exactly as I saw."* God gave Hagar and her family a sort

of exodus from poverty in Tobago; to land He promised her in her dream. My great grandmother inspires me to remember the past. I want to preserve her memory because she shows how one person's kindness to others can impact generations.

As my family gathers in Connecticut next month to celebrate her 100th birthday, she will be surrounded by her five surviving children and their spouses, ten grandchildren and their spouses, nine great grandchildren, and two great, great grandchildren. She bellows out praises to God for His faithfulness to her generations, and we honor her as the memory-keeper and way-maker for our family!