

2026 Elie Wiesel Competition

Second Place, Junior Poetry

Brooklyn Dimitri, 7th Grade

The Williams School, Amy Lindgren

History Written on the Skin

There was beauty in our life; there was potential
Until one day it faded
Banging on our doors and officers roaring in
All of us were taken
We were scared and we lacked hope
And we were in the dark
Suddenly the light fades and we remain quiet
The memory still lingers of the riot
Our voice feels tight and we feel small
We still wonder why all the blood?
Why are we being ripped away from our home?
What have we done so wrong?
Then we arrive, the light comes back
Little did we know what lay behind the gates
A camp appeared from the dark and then we know what awaits
First, we were grabbed by the officers and yanked off the cattle car
Our feet dragging against the hard rocks as we move closer towards the camp
Then we were forced to change into new clothes which were itchy and damp
Fear and worry filled our minds as we were tattooed numbers
Then I knew my history was now written on my pale at the time skin
They snatched my belongings and took them for themselves
They took me by force from the home I've always known

My family is gone; now I'm all alone

No food to eat, no chance to sleep

The torture began right here

Then I soon realized the only way I would survive is if I buried all emotions deep inside

Where nobody could find them, where nobody could use them against me

I was a nobody, no name, no identity

Just a person but even then, I knew that wasn't how you treated one

Each day it was work and work

Witnessing deaths; pain, sorrow, and hope I had just kept fading

Nothing to hold onto

I felt like I was drowning in a sea of infinite length

Then I remember my familiar faces

I remember who I am

I hold onto that, but I still don't let anyone know

Each day I work and each day is another day I will survive

Until it ends and once it does

I will make it out alive because hope is the last thing I have

My faith and my memories

I will strive and I will survive

Through all the torture and all the deaths, I've seen

Which has created more motivation to live

In all the sorrow and all the darkness, I have some matches to make a light

That is the hope that will allow me to make it out alive.