

1st Place Senior Poetry
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i.

the directors at DC lesbian pride march said in an official statement that
flags displaying the Magen David were forbidden
from being flown at the event as they promoted
imperialism and violent ideals. i weep for the ghosts wearing
black triangle stars, their apparitions pass
through my room on floating rags and
ice shivering breath. the policy was changed after backlash
but words cannot be unspoken, the air vibrates its soundwave
remembrance; even the safe spaces are unwelcoming.

ii.

my 13-year-old self runs her chipped nails over the swastikas carved into the gymnasium,
thinking, waiting. who laughed in an escaping shout
at the sight of small violence? i ask my teacher why the carvings exist at all and she tells me
in a quiet tone that they are not new, not a product of classmate boredom, but that
they have been traced into the linoleum since before
my birth. hatred is like that; a state of permanence beyond
a quiet transfer student, beyond ancient cave drawings in the middle school gym floor. hatred
lives in the air like noise, it shakes open the earth. it closes open doors.

iii.

a child, hair braided into a crown around her head, photographed in pink flowers. a green field. a
portrait, she's smiling, no careful fear on her face. she is from one of 12 Jewish families
that survived the genocide in Prague. the poppies there are so vibrant, even in photographs.
when does she realize what happened? is there a moment of clarity where the filter comes off of

the camera and she can see the motion capture, big-budget production, her temporary safety?
even in her slow and confusing dreams her ancestors keep crying, her classmates' eyes open as
witnesses to the terror, but she is in a field of flowers. there is nothing wrong in her childhood
pictures.

iv.

maybe she was my age when the seal broke and
reality flooded in like a monsoon. "what could she have done to save everybody else? how many
hands would she have had to extend?" and i keep asking myself the same
questions. a mexican family gets reunited at the airport on CNN and the father has not seen his
son in many years (that's many birthdays, baseball games, sleepless nights).
we celebrate their return, call it tonight's "heartwarming story." i can't find joy in the corners of
their agony. that little boy is a survivor; find his picture, wrapped in flowers, playing with
friends. how many phone calls do i have to make? should i write another letter to my senator?
how many teenagers have to shout into megaphones while the millionaires nod, say "we need to
do something" and defer to the children? it's schrodinger's cat, his caged child, cry for help. we
are all too uneducated to ever understand the nuance of the rapture, yet we are the hope for the
future. we need to grow up.

v.

i hold my palm in front of my face and ask to be looked in the eyes;
i shall not speak a name in evil. i will not break my knees for what sits in luxury for me.
a holocaust survivor tells my english teacher she scoffs at *never again*, it is happening
again. it's too late, so can somebody tell me what to do about it?
current immigration laws barring latinos from entering the u.s. were established during
world war two in an effort of rejecting jewish refugees. there are so many
ghosts i have to weep for. it's getting hard to keep track of them all,
where their shadows overlap and enjoin.

vi.

i reject *we tried our best*, i reject *it was for our protection*,
i reject *they are malicious/thieves/lazy/impure*. at the end of this train tunnel of
thought, daylight shines blinding like truth. the noble america. the hard working senators.
the melting pot. in history we learn that our country was righteous like a lion, built from the
ground up by brave colonizers, unjustly attacked by the savage natives, and liberated the camps
in one of the many wars it won. we are better than the rest of the world so please, look away
from the border camps. turn a blind eye, turn the other cheek,
turn your thoughts from the death toll in the middle east. i look for differences.
i stare too closely at the reflection. the holocaust and american greed look so similar, so
connected to each other. like siamese twins; like a mirror.

vii.

the poppies in portraits of a young girl. flowers line through concrete in the east block, same as
they're painted in messy yellow sunflower streaks in the rafters of auschwitz. i was told there
was no hope. no future i was told that flowers didn't grow-
another lie i am learning to reject.