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## Finley: ‘Never Forget’ is a promise that takes work

Nolan Finley    May 21, 2018

Vowing to “Never Forget” is the easy part; working to actually keep memories alive requires an intentional strategy carried by one generation to the next.

That’s why I was pleased to serve as a judge for the Holocaust Memorial Center’s Kappy Family Anne Frank Writing and Art Competition.



Photo: David Guralnick, *Detroit News*

The contest’s aim is to maintain awareness of the atrocities of the Holocaust, and to put a human face on the genocide carried out by Nazi Germany.

With all of the movies and books written about the Holocaust, you’d think such refresher exercises wouldn’t be necessary.

That’s a dangerous assumption. A recent poll commissioned by a Jewish group finds that factual familiarity with the Holocaust is dimming. Nearly one-third of Americans don’t accept that 6 million Jews were exterminated by the Nazis; they peg the number at 2 million or fewer. Half can’t name any of

the notorious concentration camps where the murders were carried out. Most don’t know that the worst of those camps were located in Poland.

And although Americans overwhelmingly believe the Holocaust should be taught in schools, the number that require reading “The Diary of Anne Frank” is dwindling.

Still, I was impressed by the depth of the prose and poetry submitted to the Kappy family competition.

When today’s high school students explored the contest theme, “Where there’s hope, there’s life” from the viewpoint of someone their own age, it moved from just another historical event to a very human and personal experience.

They got that the victims, like Frank, were modern people, very much like themselves. And so were their murderers. The Holocaust did not unfold in some ancient, barbaric place, but in a cultured, sophisticated society not much different from the one they live in today.

That sort of understanding is necessary to understanding that such horrors can happen again, and it can happen here, if we forget.