

*Your Story*  
Grace Aitken, Grade 8  
St. Anne School, Laguna Niguel  
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Survivor Testimony: Selene Bruk

The day before they came, you ran, played, laughed and loved  
Just a normal Polish girl with hopes and dreams, your whole life ahead of you, Selene  
For that little girl who grew up too fast, and for a simple life that was lost, you tell your story

The Nazis came, and two thousand Jewish men were taken and showed into a large temple  
It was set afire, the men burned alive and much of the city burned, too  
For those whose bodies turned into ash on that first horrific day, you tell your story

You hid in a closet with forty others, and a baby started to cry  
Someone put a towel over his face to stifle the screams, and his body went limp, dead  
For that precious baby, and for the children, whose cries never left you, you tell your story

They found you, put you in a cattle car  
As the train rattled through Poland, children laughed at you, and called you names  
For the children who didn't understand your suffering, you tell your story

After long days freezing on the cattle car, you entered a whole new kind of hell, Birkenau  
Your clothes were stripped from you, your head shaved  
For the nights you saw the smoke smothering the starless sky, you tell your story

Your aunt was ill, her eyes hollow, her face sunken, lips dry. She begged for water  
But you had no water to give her  
For your beautiful aunt, who you couldn't save, you tell your story

Soon after, the Long March began. Seven days and seven nights you endured, rarely stopping  
You marched to the Ravensbrück, then to another camp, Neustadt  
For all those who were lost in that long and terrible journey, you tell your story

For so long you repressed the memories of pain and torture, until you returned to Poland  
And as you stood under your grandparents' old apple trees, they all came crashing back  
For that woman lying in the grass, crushed by her own memories, you tell your story

You tell your story because you realized that your memories couldn't die with you  
Selene, you share with us so that the hate-filled horrors of the Holocaust will never be forgotten  
So people like me can relive your darkest hours, carry your story with us  
And tell it forward, to those with a heart to listen.