

# 2017 Make the Case for Caring First Place Essay

Sarah Baum wrote our first place essay for 2017. Sarah is a 16-year-old 11th grader from Marlboro High School in New Jersey.

## One And the Same

My best friend has a tattoo on her left wrist: לוציג. In Hebrew, it means “survivor.” She’ll tell anybody who will listen it’s in honor of her late Grandma Anne, a Holocaust survivor. For her birthday, I bought her a pin from the Holocaust Memorial Museum. The button reads: Never Forget.



That part of her history is not only inked into her skin, but also etched into her heart. She will never forget the way her grandmother sucked the cartilage out of chicken legs when they had dinner, like her own mother had taught her to at Auschwitz. She will never forget the way her great-grandfather, Anne’s “Papa,” was murdered by a Nazi youth who wanted to shoot 21 Jews for his 21st birthday, plucking out Papa out like a prized fowl. She will never forget the way Grandma Anne died decades later, how in her final moments, she swore she could hear her baby sister crying, that the Nazis are coming and they have to hide.

Some things, you never forget.

Everyone carries a story just like this. I have friends whose bloodlines escaped the North Korean regime by night, fled Cuba by rickety boat, ran from gunfire in Afghanistan. Even my own Russian-Jewish lineage is laced with stories of poverty and persecution. Every family in America is a patchwork quilt of overcoming adversity.

However, this inevitable truth staunchly contrasts with the culture of apathy in society today. Have we, as a country, lost touch with the hardships of our past? Have we, as Americans, forgotten that all of us come from the same roots of struggle that currently prevails through Mali? Have we, as a people, become so apathetic that we can look into the eyes of the desolate and tell them that their plights mean nothing? Shouldn’t we care because it’s the human thing to do?

-more-

Any child suffering is every child suffering. But by empowering and educating youth in developing countries like Mali, society can foster world peace and stability. Poverty and civil unrest is what lead to much of the foreign extremism Americans fear today. But in places where youth are tended to and shown compassion, radicalism cannot gain traction. With education, society can plant the seeds of progress, and cut the roots of oppression and violence at the source.

The children of Mali are no different than the little boys and girls that are Americans' parents, grandparents and great grandparents today. One day, this moment will be reduced to a paragraph in a textbook. Like many young people, they will sit in class, read about the atrocities of the past, and say, "If I were alive during that time, I would have done something."

That time is *now*. You can enact change. You can choose compassion. You can choose to save the world. Looking back, will you have been the one to succumb to the apathy of the masses? Or will you be the one to change the world for the better?

*Learn more about the Make the Case for Caring Essay Contest at [www.malirisingfdn.org/essay](http://www.malirisingfdn.org/essay).*