

# AAMM Annual Student Visual Arts and Literacy Contest

## את אחי אנוכי מבקש Righteous Amongst Us

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## **Learning from the legacies of people who made extraordinary sacrifices**

The history of Jewish rescue activists are filled with altruistic efforts to save lives.

In Parshas Devarim (1:14), Moshe Rabbeinu chastises Klal Yisroel, “ממי נאה ללמוד ממך או מתלמידך” - From whom is it preferable to learn, from the teacher or from his disciple? Rashi explains that Moshe's rebuke was that Klal Yisroel had the opportunity to learn Torah from one who had personally sacrificed for it, and yet they chose his disciples who hadn't made that same sacrifice. When learning from one who made sacrifices for a specific cause, we not only gain knowledge but they also inspire us by their passion and devotion.

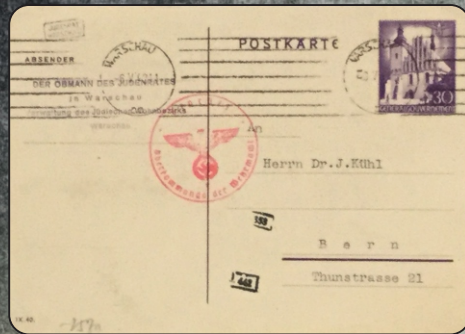
### **The contest**

This contest portrays the lives and challenges of eight Jewish activists during the Holocaust. You have for your consideration, eight original artifacts and photos that describe their activities and lives. Their actions are not only representative of the heroic efforts of these Holocaust rescue activists but also convey the altruistic sacrifices that they made. As the Holocaust unfolded, committed individuals from Switzerland, Austria, Morocco, Slovakia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, pursued options that could only be understood as heroic. They devised ransom plans, secured forged and illegal exit visas and passports for trapped Jews and met with Nazi officials to facilitate Jewish rescue. Their unwavering commitment to never give up despite insurmountable challenges is nothing less than awe-inspiring.

**These ordinary artifacts bear testimony to extraordinary deeds and provide us with a model when facing challenges in our own lives and circumstances.**

## Grades 6-8

### Yechiel (Julius) Kuhl's swastika marked postcard



Dr. Julius Kuhl was involved in the clandestine production of false Latin American passports by the Polish Legation in Bern, Switzerland. Dr. Kuhl is credited with the survival of hundreds of Jews in German Occupied Poland and the Netherlands during the Holocaust. In 1941, he supervised the illegal production of Latin American passports for Jews in occupied Poland. With these falsified documents, Polish and Dutch Jews could claim they were citizens of non-European countries and escape death. The Polish Legation for which he worked produced 4000 passports during this difficult and tragic period.

The swastika stamped postcard is from the Warsaw Ghetto. This individual, who was writing to Dr. Kuhl and pleading for help, was indicative of Dr. Kuhl's everyday communications with Jews desperate for aid. Though Dr. Kuhl placed himself in great legal jeopardy, he would never turn down the plea of a person pleading for rescue.



### Renee Reichmann's typewriter



Mrs. Renee Reichmann was the matriarch of a prominent religious family in Vienna. The Reichmann family escaped war torn Europe for the international city of Tangier in 1940. While residing in Spanish occupied Morocco, Mrs. Reichmann, with the help of her daughter Eva, pressured officials from the Franco regime of Spain to issue visas for Jews in Nazi controlled Hungary. This effort rescued several thousand lives. In addition, Renee and Eva Reichmann worked with the Spanish Red Cross to send thousands of food parcels to Auschwitz, and other concentration camps.

Mrs. Reichmann's typewriter, which she used for her activities, is a confirmation of her tireless work and devotion to help Europe's beleaguered Jews. Each key played a role in her efforts to save lives. One can only imagine the hope that accompanied the letters typed on Renee Reichmann's machine.



Renee Reichmann  
and  
Daughter Eva

### Elimelech (Mike) Tress' Briefcase



Mike Tress assumed the leadership of the Zeirei Agudath Israel in the United States in 1937. He was a master of the intricacies of American immigration policy and applied this critical knowledge for Jews fleeing Europe. His worn leather briefcase, overflowing with refugees affidavits and orphan files, is a testament of his many trips between New York and Washington DC throughout the war. When necessary, he even traveled on Shabbos, as pikuach nefesh (saving lives) overrides this prohibition.

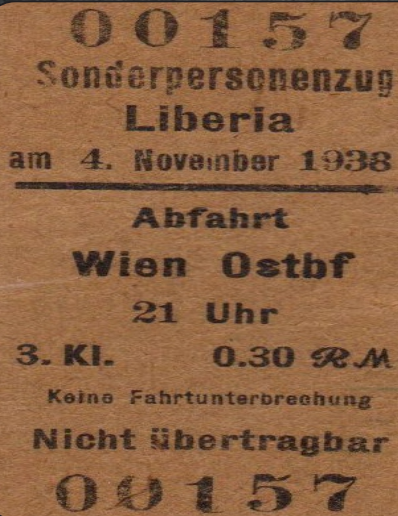
The briefcase also followed him into the immediate post Holocaust era, containing files of rescued Jewish children from Christian homes and institutions in Belgium and Hungary. His never-ending commitment and sense of mission is what kept him going even when faced with a myriad of challenges. He knew that the files in his briefcase were not mere documents, but rather, human lives.





## Grades 11-12

## Yaakov Shlomo (Julius) Steinfeld's train ticket to Liberia



After the 1938 Anschluss (the political union of Germany and Austria), all Jewish organizations were officially dismantled by the Nazis. In the midst of this crisis, Julius Steinfeld became the de facto organizer of the religious Viennese Jewish community. He procured visas and travel arrangements to nearly 30 countries, including Eretz Yisroel, the United States and England, in order to aid the destitute Jews of Austria. He personally negotiated with Adolf Eichmann to facilitate Jewish emigration. Mr. Steinfeld did not hesitate even when Eichmann aimed his gun and threatened to shoot him in his office.



Julius Steinfeld managed to obtain 1,000 forged Liberian visas from his contacts at the Liberian consul. That accomplishment produced the single largest transport of Jewish refugees to Eretz Yisroel from Vienna, on November 4, 1938, one week before Kristallnacht. This travel document to Liberia is likely the only surviving train ticket from that voyage.

## Yaakov Rosenheim's desk and ledger book

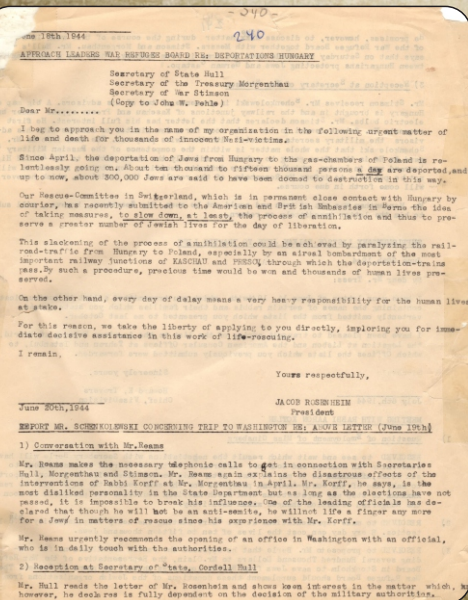


Moreinu Yaakov Rosenheim was one of Orthodox Jewry's most prominent lay figures. He was involved in a myriad of initiatives and projects that were responsible for rescuing thousands of Jews during the Holocaust. Moreinu Rosenheim helped found the Chief Rabbis Religious Emergency Council of England in 1938, as well as supported the Kindertransports through his work with Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld. With the establishment of the American War Refugee Board in January 1944, Rosenheim was successful in naming Yaakov Griffel as an official representative of the Board in Istanbul. This single act enabled the use of free US cables via Turkey for sending critical ransom funds to European religious activists.



Yaakov Rosenheim's organizational acumen and stature place him at the very center of rescue efforts to save European Jewry. His desk and daily ledger book bear testimony to his leadership and the crises he dealt with every single day.

## Meier Schenkolewski and the Auschwitz briefings



Meier Schenkolewski was a leading activist for Agudath Israel. Having emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1934, he never forgot his brethren trapped in Europe. On June 19, 1944, he transcribed a meeting he had with US Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Secretary of War Henry Stimson urging them to bomb the railroad lines to Auschwitz. Despite promises from Secretary Hull that he would discuss the matter with the War Refugee Board, there is no record of Hull ever doing so. Furthermore, Secretary Stimson made a disingenuous claim to Schenkolewski that "the whole matter is within the competence of the Russian Military Command." In reality, since April 4, American and other Allied planes were conducting reconnaissance missions in the area around Auschwitz. During the summer and autumn of 1944, US planes repeatedly hit German targets less than five miles from the gas chambers.



Though utterly disappointed and frustrated over his lack of success in halting the trains to the death camps, Meier Schenkolewski's briefing notes express his unwavering commitment to doing all he could against all odds.

## READ

About the many rescue activities of these activists, how they endeavored to help Jews escape death, and the personal artifacts associated with these efforts.

## REFLECT

On the significance of these items. How do each in their own unique symbolic way explain the planning, the hardships, and the escape strategies employed in Jewish rescue.

## RESPOND

### OPTION A: WRITTEN

Write a response to one of the individuals showcased in our brochure, sharing your connections, observations and/or questions

### OPTION B: VISUAL ARTS

Create a work of art that reflects on the commitment of these activists to their task at hand and the item that represents these experiences

#### GUIDELINES

- Each entry must respond to one of the items provided in this brochure
- The contest is open to students in Grades 6-12. You must respond to the artifacts assigned to your grade level.
- **The entry must include one of the following:**
  - A. Written:** Write a response to one of the individuals, sharing your motivation to reach out to them. What are your observations and/or questions
  - B. Visual Arts:** Create an artwork response reflecting on an individual's life and the item that represents their experiences and the item that represents their experiences
- All work must be original student work created for this contest.
- Written submissions must be no longer than 750 words in length.
- **All text entries should be double-spaced, 12 pt. font.**
- Entries must include a cover page with **student's name, grade, school, school address, school phone number, email address (either personal or the teacher's), and the teacher's name.**

#### ATTENTION TEACHERS

All participating teachers will be notified of the contest winners. Please sign up at [www.amudaish.org](http://www.amudaish.org) and send an email, with your full contact information, to [education@amudaish.org](mailto:education@amudaish.org)

**All contest items are currently on display at the Amud Aish Memorial Museum at the amud aish memorial museum. School groups are invited to schedule a visit. Slots are limited. Contact the Education Department to book your visit today!**

#### TO ENTER

- **Email:** (For written entries only) Email a Word doc or PDF with a cover page to [education@amudaish.org](mailto:education@amudaish.org)
- Subject line: **Jewish Rescue Activists During the Holocaust**
- **Mail:** Mail your entry to: Amud Aish Memorial Museum, Attn: Education Department, 5923 Strickland Avenue, Brooklyn NY 11234
- **Deliver:** Schedule a time to drop off your entry by calling 718-759-6200 ext. 1538

#### PRIZES

All students will receive a Certificate of Participation for their work. Winning entries, in both Written and Visual Arts Response categories, will receive valuable Visa Gift Cards as prizes! The grand prize for both Written and Visual Arts responses in each grade level is \$100. Second place winners will receive \$72. Third place winners will receive \$25. Student work will be judged in the following categories: Grades 6-8, Grades 9-10 and Grades 11-12.