

Winning Poems in 2022 CFCP, Inc., Annual Contest

8. Thoughts on Humanity, Second Place

Ash

As I walk today
in hazy heavy air,
I pass cars, plants, mailboxes
dusted with fine black and gray powder,
and I breathe in
these same particles,
from fires all around our valley.

In camps like Treblinka, Sobibor, Auschwitz,
the ash fell thick, like snow
twenty-four hours a day,
while local citizens denied knowledge of these places,
swept dust from porches and windowsills.

The guards who worked within feet of the chimneys,
inhaled fragments of their victims every day,
took in air filled with microscopic pieces
of men who had read from the Torah every Shabbat,
women who had baked challah and lit candles,
children who had practiced their Hebrew lessons.

With every life-giving inhalation
they breathed in those who no longer breathed,
absorbing them into their lungs, their blood,

close to their heart

Nancy Haskett
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