

My Personal Experience | **NIKOLAS NADEAU**

I learned from my college's Great Books class that the word "essay," in its verb form, means simply "to try."

Placing third in the Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics contest has re-affirmed my hope that an essay--or any attempt to make meaning through words--has the potential to resonate with people who are far different than myself.

As a writer, I can think of no greater honor than for Mr. Wiesel--a gifted, honest man and defender of human dignity--to have taken the time to read and reflect upon something I had written. Listening to him personally comment on my essay during the Awards Ceremony was icing on an already delicious cake.

I am equally honored to have met and befriended fellow contest winners Heather, Jessica, and Mae. As we sat down to talk about ethics, Mr. Wiesel's memoirs, and our own lives, I felt part of something much larger than myself. Although we came from widely different backgrounds, we quickly discovered that we shared not only a common purpose (ethical living), but also a broader spirit of "tikkun olam," or the "repairing of the world"--a process that begins by asking "Who am I?" and, just as importantly, "Who are WE, together?"

In addition to the above, I enjoyed looking through Mr. Wiesel's personal library (which is spread throughout the Foundation office) and attempting to navigate the NYC subway system.

I will close with the direction Mr. Wiesel gave to those attending the Awards Ceremony: "Think higher, feel deeper."

Nikolas Nadeau