

# USC Shoah Foundation

The Institute for Visual History and Education

Contact: Josh Grossberg 213-740-6065

josh.grossberg@usc.edu

Rob Kuznia 213-740-0965

rkuznia@usc.edu

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Chicago high school students win USC Shoah Foundation's 2017 IWitness Video Challenge**

Los Angeles, June 13, 2017 – A group of students from Chicago who inspired their fellow students to embrace each other's unique identity has won the 2017 IWitness Video Challenge sponsored by USC Shoah Foundation.

As the first-place winners of this year's short-video contest – which invites students to make a positive contribution to their communities – Alana Chandler, Yu Jing Chen, and Natalia Wang of Walter Payton College Preparatory High School in the Chicago Public School District will split the \$5,000 in scholarship money for their project, *Who are You?: Embracing Identity in Our Community*.

Initiated by USC Shoah Foundation – which collects and uses testimonies of genocide survivors and witnesses for education and research – the IWitness Video Challenge asks students to submit short videos to show how they were inspired by testimony to make positive choices and create value in their community. The contest is open to middle and high school students across the United States and Canada (except Quebec).

Using the testimony of Armenian Genocide survivor Haig Baronian, who was forced to shed his own Armenian identity as a child, the winners had their fellow students illustrate their own identity.

The drawings didn't focus on any one thing; they featured collages of flags, maps, musical instruments, yoga mats, trees, and even paw prints – things that illustrated that the students saw themselves as complex people with various ways to define themselves.

"We want the audience to learn more about themselves, to reflect on who they are and their identities, after watching our video," Yu Jing said. "We want them to realize

that they are not alone and that they should always fight for an accepting environment.”

This year’s contest – the fourth annual – offers prizes for scholarships and additional money for educators and schools. In all, \$10,000 in prizes was awarded courtesy of the Institute’s partner Ford Motor Co., which is sponsoring the event as part of its commitment to innovative educational outreach.

Also helping to make this year’s challenge the most successful to date was the Institute’s partnership with Discovery Education, the leading provider of digital content and professional development for K-12 classrooms, which administered the challenge and helped maximize reach and impact through its deep partnerships with school systems, administrators and educators worldwide.

In addition to splitting a \$5,000 college scholarship, the winning students have secured a \$2,500 grant for their school to be used for the betterment of the community. Their teacher, Matt Silvia, will receive a \$1,000 grant awarded in the form of a check, to be used to promote tolerance and empathy at the school.

A \$1,000 scholarship went to second-place winner Acadia Grantham of the School of Biotechnology, Health and Public Administration at Olympic High in Charlotte, N.C., whose project, *Silence*, tackled the topic of bullying and the consequences of not speaking up. And a \$500 scholarship went to Shayna Kantor of the Berkshire Country Day School in Stockbridge, Mass., for her project, *Are You Listening?*, which dealt with efforts to connect with the deaf community after watching testimony from a deaf Holocaust survivor.

The contest is based on one of the more than 150 activities found in IWitness, USC Shoah Foundation’s free educational website ([iwitness.usc.edu](http://iwitness.usc.edu)), which brings the human stories from the Institute’s Visual History Archive – the world’s largest repository of testimony from survivors and witnesses to the Holocaust and other genocides – to teachers and their students via engaging multimedia-learning activities.

The IWitness Video Challenge first presents students with selected testimonies from survivors who demonstrate what is possible when we make the courageous choice to act. Then, the Challenge takes students through the steps necessary to identify a problem, determine how to contribute to solving that problem, and how to create a video that captures their efforts and impact on helping to solve a problem in their community. Students will then be instructed on how to use the built-in video editor in IWitness to construct, edit and submit their one- to four-minute video project. No prior video editing knowledge is needed to participate.

#### **About USC Shoah Foundation**

USC Shoah Foundation — The Institute for Visual History and Education is

dedicated to making audio-visual interviews with survivors and other witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides, a compelling voice for education and action. The Institute's current collection of more than 54,000 eyewitness testimonies contained within its Visual History Archive® preserves history as told by the people who lived it, and lived through it. Housed at the University of Southern California, within the Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, the Institute works with partners around the world to advance scholarship and research, to provide resources and online tools for educators, and to disseminate the testimonies for educational purposes.

### **About Discovery Education**

Discovery Education is the global leader in standards-based digital content for K-12, transforming teaching and learning with award-winning digital textbooks, multimedia content, professional development, and the largest professional learning community of its kind. Serving 4.5 million educators and over 50 million students, Discovery Education's services are in half of U.S. classrooms, 50 percent of all primary schools in the UK, and more than 50 countries. Discovery Education partners with districts, states, and like-minded organizations to captivate students, empower teachers, and transform classrooms with customized solutions that increase academic achievement. Discovery Education is powered by Discovery Communications (NASDAQ: DISCA, DISCB, DISCK), the number one nonfiction media company in the world. Explore the future of education at [www.discoveryeducation.com](http://www.discoveryeducation.com).