



IHL ESSAY & ART COMPETITION

CULTURAL PROPERTY PROTECTION

VOLUME 2 · APRIL 2022



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International
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VOLUME 2: CULTURAL PROPERTY PROTECTION

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW,
YOUTH ACTION CAMPAIGN
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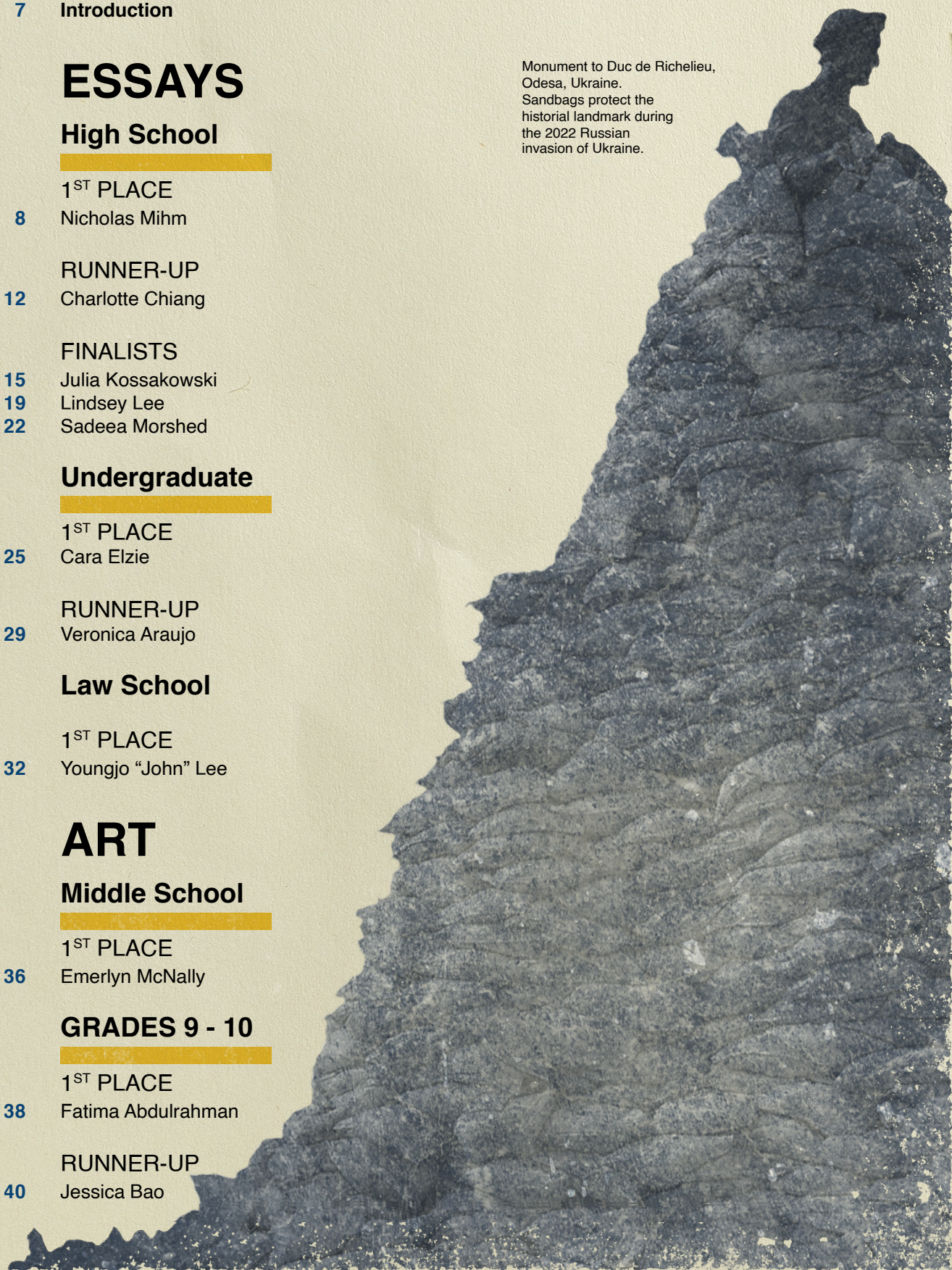
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FORWARD



On behalf of the American Red Cross, it is my honor and privilege to recognize the very best entries in the 2021-2022 International Humanitarian Law Essay and Art Competition. Each year, the Red Cross challenges applicants to craft thoughtful and compelling submissions based upon important issues in the field of International Humanitarian Law. Although the Competition has traditionally focused on essays, we are thrilled to expand it to welcome art entries this year. With armed conflict raging in Ukraine, the importance of IHL and the protections it offers to innocents, cultural property, and more has once again taken center stage in the global discourse. Each and every applicant to this year's Competition should be applauded for tackling such a globally impactful area of the law.

This year, applicants were asked to reflect upon the theme of "Protection of Cultural Property," a topic that has a profound impact on peoples of all cultures and backgrounds. When armed conflict erupts, cultural property is all too often caught in the crosshairs, endangering the very fabric a peoples' cultural identity. This year, we are proud to partner with the U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention of the destruction and theft of cultural property around the world. We received more than 100 entries from applicants who stepped up and answered the call to make their voices heard on this critical issue.

The Competition Committee was thoroughly impressed with the creativity, passion, and talent displayed by all the essay and art applicants. Many of this year's applicants are American Red Cross volunteers, including a number who serve as youth advocates in the Red Cross IHL Youth Action Campaign. Although the Committee reviewed dozens of wonderful essays and inspiring original works of art, a select few rose above the rest and earned the distinction of being featured in this special magazine. I have no doubt that each of these essays and works of art will inspire and impress each of you in the same way they did for the Competition Committee. I want to personally congratulate each and every student recognized in this magazine on their success—you each have incredibly bright futures ahead of you and I hope that you will continue to channel your passion and immense talents into humanitarian causes worldwide.

Thomas L. Harper

Senior Legal Advisor, International Humanitarian Law
International Services, U.S. Programs



PRESERVING CULTURAL PROPERTY: AN INTRODUCTION



When civilians' lives and facilities are threatened during armed conflict, their culture is, too. Cultural Property is defined as, "any movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people." (UNESCO). Movable cultural property is an object that an individual or group can transfer from one location to another, with examples including historical artifacts, artwork, books, manuscripts, and more. On the other hand, immovable cultural property is an object that cannot be transferred from one location to another, including land monuments, archeological sites, historical areas, and the natural world.

Between these distinctions, it is important to note that not every object meets the standard of being of "great cultural importance," and can be distinguished as such through its classification as a UNESCO World Heritage site. This growing list contains 1,121 sites thus far, with prominent additions including "wonders of the world" such as the Taj Mahal and Machu Pichu. Although in some cases it may be difficult to identify an object of great cultural importance, UNESCO's World Heritage sites help us determine lawful targets during armed conflict.

Specifically, the 1954 Hague Convention of Cultural Property ensures the protection of these sites during armed conflict. The International Committee of the Blue Shield further enforces this mandate, as UNESCO World Heritage Sites are marked with the Blue Shield symbol to indicate their standing as a cultural property of great importance. Just as those involved in armed conflict learn to distinguish combatants and noncombatants through uniforms and the Red Cross symbol, cultural property marked with the Blue Shield icon are identified as unlawful targets during armed conflict.

Despite these legal standards, key cultural property has still been targeted in some cases—during the Yugoslav Wars, the Croatian city of Dubrovnik, considered a UNESCO World Heritage site for its "Old City" buildings, was destroyed by fire. Instigators of the fire were prosecuted for war crimes via the International Criminal Tribunal, and we continue to advocate for the protection of cultural property today to prevent future such incidents. Humanitarian organizations like the ICRC and IFRC act as the main proponents behind this cause, recognizing the importance of cultural property to our collective historical identity and humanity. After all, one of the greatest losses of armed conflict is exactly what makes up each and every one of us—culture.

Arthi Venkatakrishnan,
American Red Cross IHL
Youth Action Campaign Intern



Altar in the church of
Segusino, Italy.
World War I destruction.



ESSAY

1ST PLACE

HIGH SCHOOL

BY **NICHOLAS
MIHM**

The legal definition of cultural property, as abridged from article 1 of the 1954 Hague Convention, is defined as: “movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people, such as monuments of architecture, art or history, whether religious or secular; archaeological sites; groups of buildings which, as a whole, are of historical or artistic interest...” These minor things are what set us apart, but unite us together. To give meaning to the definition of “cultural property,” it would be irresponsible not to mention that war is the main devastator of cultural property, specifically collateral damage. In contemporary times the examples are unfortunately numerous. The minaret of the Great Mosque of Aleppo has been ravaged, the Temple of Bel at Palmyra has been obliterated, and many other treasured buildings and artifacts have already been or are at risk of destruction. As a result, this exposes us to an epiphany, a revelation, and many questions to study and meditate on: How do we protect cultural property during a conflict? How should we use our power to raise the question about this issue? How do we recognize that cultural property and heritage are interconnected? What are and what should the punishments/consequences of inflicting harm on cultural property, and what are the long-lasting effects of cultural property damage?



Establishing early interventions

If the ultimate goal of war is to win, then why should anyone wish to destroy someone's cultural heritage intentionally? As stated in his famous military strategy book "The Art of War," Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu outlines how destroying cultural property during war begets a reason to introduce the next war and makes the conquered people more difficult to control. On the other hand, doing the exact opposite - protecting and respecting cultural property - increases combat potential (which is often referred to as a "force multiplier") and augments tolerance and respect of the new governing body. In other words, protecting cultural property starts with intelligent strategy and reducing common threats such as an absence of planning, insufficient awareness, etc. Furthermore, forming coalitions, organizations, and close alliances can lessen the need to develop enemies. Still, it can also spur a government to expand its eagerness to respect the diversity of clashing governments. This does not mean that conflicts will be prevented. Still, the two opposing sides will hold a mutual agreement and abide by it to honor cultural property, such as the 1954 Hague Convention that followed the aftermath of World War II or the Blue Shield International organization.

The permanent effects

The impacts of cultural property destruction can have the same effect as an individual losing their sense of identity. For instance, the Bosnian War which lasted between 1992 and 1995 had especially targeted Muslims. The individuals who practiced Islam but who fled to other nations and survived rarely returned even after the war was gone because significant mosques like Aladza Džamija had been lost. The substantial loss of culture resulted in a loss of diversity in the future generations.

Cultural Properties binding kinship with Cultural Heritage

Over the years, scholars have debated welcoming the term "cultural heritage" instead of cultural property. The two terms go hand in hand, but contrary to many beliefs, they are different. Cultural heritage stems from cultural property because it directly states that it is a part of the indigenous people's culture. Customs, such as the food we eat, the dress we wear, the music genre we are most fond of, and how we talk, are all reflections of tangible (or intangible) objects. Cultural property serves as a way to reminiscence and pass on our culture to future generations and remind ourselves of our lineage.

Looking at a picture is one facet of memoria; firsthand experiencing a landmark or building with ancestral, religious, or some kind of meaning is breathtaking. Walking through Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, or praying in the Great Mosque of Aleppo evokes overwhelming feelings that are impossible to describe.

Millennials and Gen Z take advantage of the many resources available to voice their concerns and advocate by using outlets such as social media. And it isn't only the younger generation that is fond of social media; it is ubiquitous and garners the attention of all age groups. But what role does social media play in relation to protecting cultural property? Social media highlights issues that most people are unfamiliar

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with within their homeland. Still, it somehow crafts it as a legitimate, heartfelt event that needs attention—for instance, the destruction of the Temple of Bel at Palmyra by ISIS in Syria in 2015. The temple had fused Roman, Greek, Iranian, and Islamic cultures and was a prime example of Greco-Roman ruins that had been gingerly cared for. It had been a landmark for luring selfies and candid photographs, and it engrossed the camera rolls of photographers, all of which had a great chance of being uploaded to social media. Today, the demolition of the temple and the pictures taken on social media before and after the destruction are riveting and terrifying.

Additionally, social media does the obvious: it spreads awareness. According to a recent study, 80% of Americans believe that social media is a handy tool in increasing awareness related to political/social issues. Narrowing out the bias and prejudices, social media spreads light on the people's perspectives who suffered. One person will be horrified at the history of a landmark destroyed by violence and will find it relieving to repost and reshare, and the domino effect continues.

The consequences

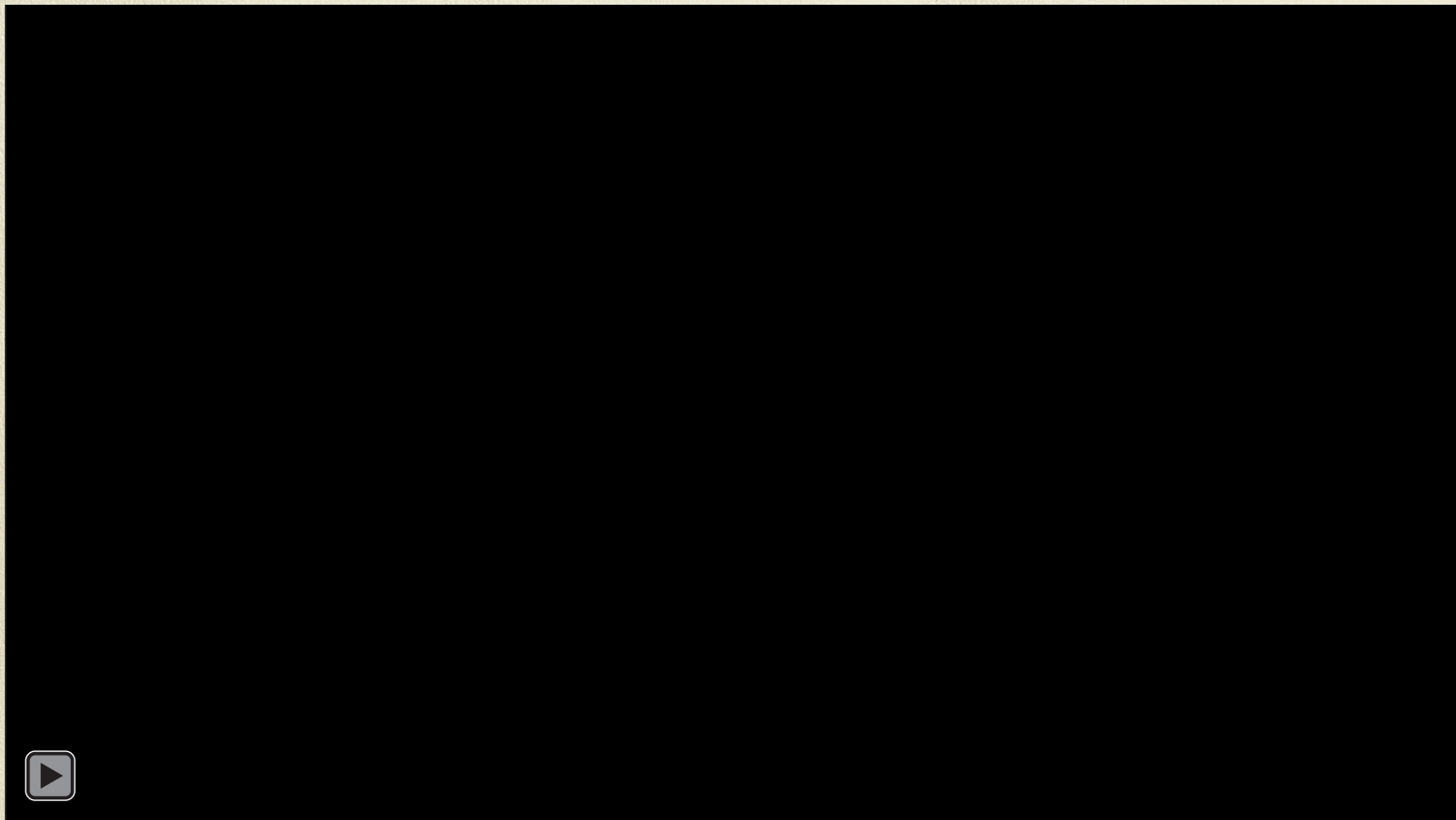
The ruthless, grave military operations that sometimes destroy historical landmarks and buildings will pay a firm consequence. What constitutes a “war crime” has been debated and is mainly considered experimental, but new restrictions have been enforced in recent years. For example, take the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (abbreviated to ICC) finding Ahmad al-Mahdi guilty in 2016 of deliberately initiating a series of attacks on religious buildings in Timbuktu, Mali. This was a monumental case in the ICC as it was the first time anyone had been put on trial for damage to cultural property. After pleading guilty, he was convicted of the crime, and it was ruled that he would serve nine years of imprisonment and pay a hefty fee of 2.7 million euros (equivalent to over 3 million USD). Despite these recent changes, much of the cultural property today is damaged with no apparent ramifications, encouraging more groups to conduct plans to destroy more cultural property.

Protecting cultural property is integral to maintaining international peace and respecting others. The cultural property makes us realize our differences are what solidifies us and makes us human. But most importantly, we all have a prominent role to play: spreading awareness about the significance of preserving cultural property.

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WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM NICHOLAS.





Ancient ruins of
Palmyra, Syria

ESSAY RUNNER-UP HIGH SCHOOL

BY CHARLOTTE
CHIANG

While much of our headlines today highlight the war tragedies with fatalities or the money lost, the topic of cultural property is often buried in rumbles, figuratively and literally speaking. This neglect for cultural property is nothing new, with examples of the destruction of the Carthage in 146 BCE to the destruction of mosques of Uyghur minorities in 2009. With each war that callously disregards the pieces of culture they are erasing, the more and more of humanity is lost.

As shown in history, cultural properties contain symbolic values holding deep understandings of knowledge, language, teachings, and lifestyles. That is what makes their presence so susceptible to attack, especially those wanting to cause destructive impact on targeted groups. These attacks can include bombing religious sites, destroying artifacts, and tearing apart communities. As stated by the International Criminal Court, these crimes are “committed against cultural heritage constitute, first and foremost, an attack on a particular group’s identity and practices, but in addition, an attack on an essential interest of the entire international community.” The hopelessness and devastation of the immediate surrounding communities, as well as the rest of the world was recognized in 1954 with the creation of the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. This treaty was the first of its kind, creating an international

understanding and protection of all kinds of cultural heritage. Many measures were set such as adopting peace time safeguarding measures, removing property when needed, and refraining from acts of hatred onto these pieces. Following this, The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols were also put in place by International Humanitarian Law, seeking to lessen the damage of armed conflict. The focus was on protecting the people, anywhere from civilians, health care workers, wounded or sick soldiers, and more. These treaties have prevented destruction, war crimes, and lost lives to a significant degree. While this is a major achievement and absolutely noteworthy, such atrocities still persist. As a recent example, Palmyra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1980, was marked as endangered after nearly being destroyed by ISIS jihadists. The Greco-Roman ruins, once deemed for its beautiful combination of Persian, Roman, Greek, and Islamic culture, were now on the brink of disappearance. The destruction of Palmyra is just one of many, serving as an excruciating mark that more work needs to be done.

Our very own country has not been exempt from this type of destruction. In 2020, the United States President tweeted that the United States would threaten and target Iranian cultural sites if the country had refused his orders. His words were that the attacks would be "very fast and very hard". These comments from global leaders show our indifference to cultural history, by treating it as a means of wastage. Though these comments were almost unanimously criticized for ignoring international law and more, there were many others supporting and even feeling empowered after this statement. These disrespectful comments towards ancient art is as Art-net News puts it, "an idea that is not just against international law and cultural civility but it is politically counterproductive."

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BY URGING MORE STATES TO TAKE
AN ACTIVE PART IN TREATIES
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AND APPRECIATION FOR CULTURE.

It is our obligation to protect and restore the identity latched along cultural property. As the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) suggests, one of the first steps towards

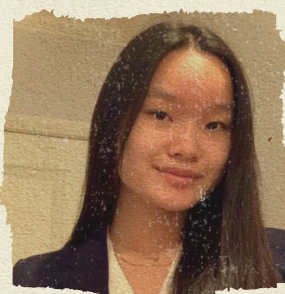
protecting cultural property is prevention. Here, ICRC, along with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, works on guiding states to further ratify relevant treaties, international instruments, and more. By urging more states to take an active part in treaties protecting cultural property, it allows for the recognition and appreciation for culture. These states and their respective organizations will then be able to systematize their actions on a common goal of preserving cultural property.

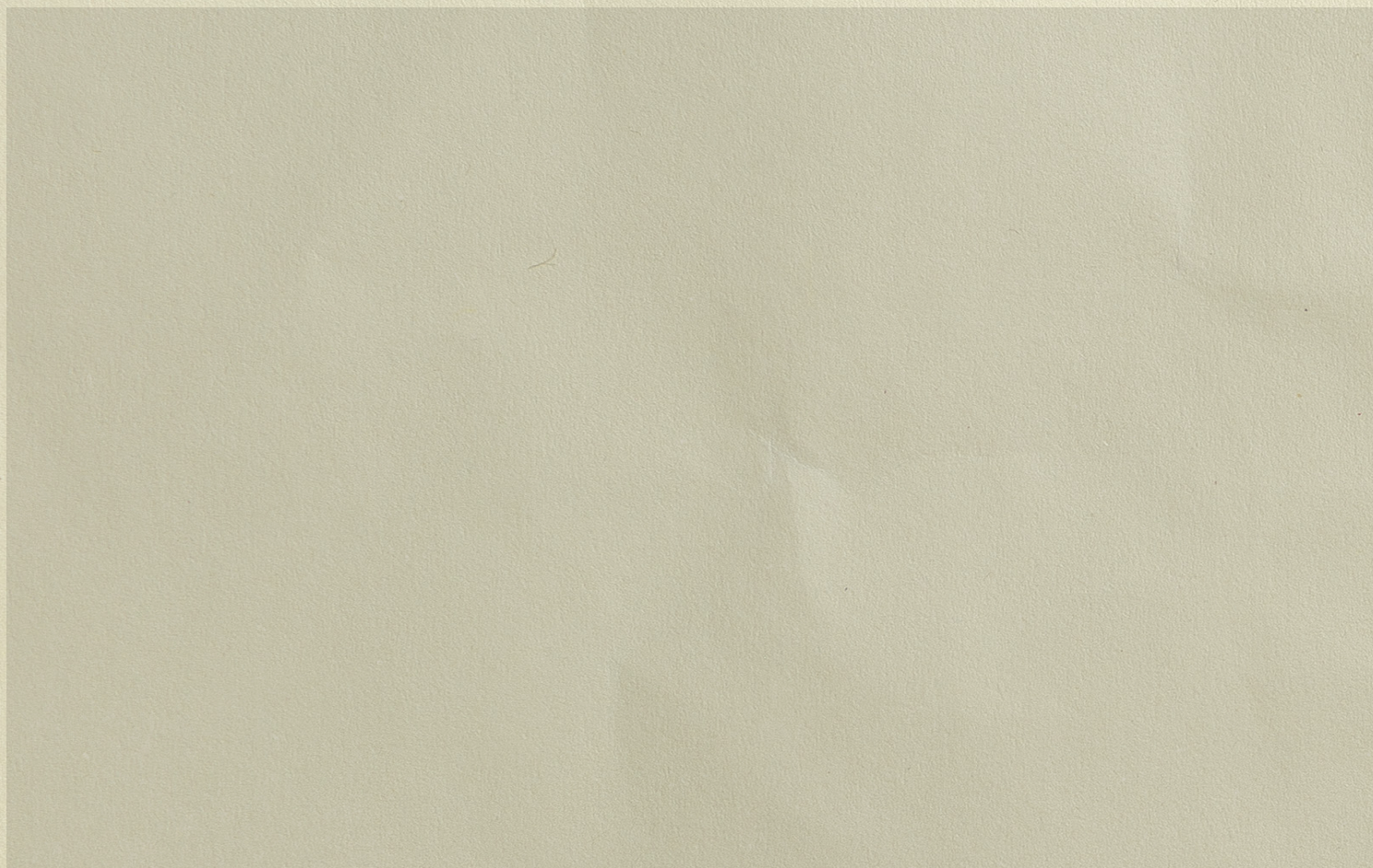
Another way of protecting cultural property is through our social media. By utilizing the power of social media and the younger generation, the topic of cultural property can be brought to light. Social media is already a place where intangible heritage is nurtured, in the example of Youtube where traditional dances, clothing, food, and more are being shared with the world. The scope of social media is indefinite, and its effects perpetual.

By gaining awareness of the situation, and having the integrity to preserve cultural property, we have the power to protect our future, to protect humanity.

Charlotte Chiang
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[Bibliography](#)





WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM CHARLOTTE.



Fasanenstrasse Synagogue, Berlin.
Burned on Kristallnacht.



ESSAY
FINALIST
HIGH SCHOOL

BY JULIA
KOSSAKOWSKI

Culture is an encyclopedia of past experiences. It is the origin story of mankind and human identity. Culture defines an individual's perception of the world and serves as the foundational principle of society. It is the continuation of human dignity, values, and attitudes influenced by powerful external factors such as lifestyle. It leads to diversity amongst people worldwide and therefore is solely responsible for the divisions and connections that have developed in humanity with the progression of time. By realizing that culture is an extension of people and all that truly makes one human, we become able to recognize that it's preservation and the preservation of all property that represents it is a humanitarian concern comparable to education, shelter, or poverty. With the widespread prevalence of conflict worldwide such as in places like the Middle East and China, cultural property and consequently human identity is at a threat as the current preservation laws in existence show no success. The shortcomings present in the protection of cultural property under International Humanitarian Law are detrimental and risk cultural genocide and the ultimate destruction of humanity through the perpetuation of conflict in areas internationally.

The destruction of cultural property in conflict is an ongoing phenomenon that has been occurring for many centuries, with evidence from as early as approximately 300 BCE

when Alexander the Great conquered the Persian capital, Persepolis and in drunken fury burned the city to the ground (Mark). His actions permanently erased aspects including art, literature, and architecture of a whole culture from existence and are unfortunately non-unique, recurring occurrences in history. Humans are creatures of habit and such destructive tendencies have been modelled by many following Alexander. His mistakes have been repeated and exacerbated on a multitudinous array of occasions including the crusades, the slaughter of indigenous peoples during imperialism, the looting of European artwork amidst the Napoleonic wars, and Kristallnacht during WWII to name a few. Humans have dramatically altered history to satiate selfish, calamitous desires in order to assert the dominance of one group of people over another and promote one culture as superior. Entire societies have been exploited and devastated in this cyclical, never-ceasing obliteration of culture.

Some efforts have been made to bring change, but little success has been observed. Cultural Property preservation was formally inaugurated into international military conduct after the American Civil War starting with the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions and is evidence of customary international law (USCBS). Despite the many, widely accepted provisions outlined by Articles 23, 28, 47, and 56 of these conventions which prohibit the pillage and damage of "religious, charitable, and educational institutions, and those of arts and science," countries internationally saw immense devastation of cultural property following the two World Wars (Gerstenblith 339). Therefore, following this, the first and most comprehensive international treaty solely pertaining to the protection of cultural property during times of warfare, but also accord was adopted at the 1954 Hague Convention, but was ratified with a delay by the US and never saw UK ratification. One may presume that a convention dedicated to addressing matters pertaining strictly to the preservation of cultural property would bring tremendous change, but likely due to this bifurcation in ratification, opposite impacts occurred. Complete failure to ratify by the United Kingdom and a delay to do so by the US have meant that cultural property preservation has been regarded as lesser than in military training and doctrine (Gerstenblith 347). In addition, any institution of International Humanitarian Laws such as those created about cultural property protection under numerous conventions have no effect. IHL poses one major issue: the extent to which policies are binding upon actors in reinforcement and prosecution of war crimes (Gerstenblith 352). Despite being well intentioned, International Humanitarian Law creates no deterrence and provides no incentive for actors as imposing unilaterally, solidifying policies upon differing countries with their own, different laws is merely impossible to reinforce. Flaws of IHL, especially in pretanance to cultural property preservation are

taking their toll on culture in the present in areas including the Middle East, China, and the US.

The Middle East has endured devastating quantities of cultural destruction after civil wars, spiked by the "Arab Spring" erupted and gave way to the rise of terrorist groups (Gerstenblith 354). The Mosul and the Nineveh Province in Northern Iraq recently faced an unprecedented amount of destruction in a premeditated, systemic manner orchestrated by the Da'esh (ISIS) terrorist group, which relaesed a "hit list" of 40 targetted sites. By May of 2016, 41 historic buildings in Mosul as well 114 other pieces of Islamic period heritage were identified as ruined and with them entire aspects of a culture permanently obstructed (Mühl et al 8). In addition, Syr-

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ia faces a similar threat. The presently war torn nation is home to six World Heritage Sites as classified by UNESCO, which are under threat and featured on the List of World Heritage in Danger. ISIS militants have been videoed rampaging through historical sites and museums, destroying artifacts with tools such as jackhammers, turning once glorious, historical epicenters like the city of Palmyra, infamous for its Roman-era ruins, into rubble (Harkin). While motivations for the cultural destruction caused by the Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria are generally explained by iconoclasm, or more specifically aniconism, or opposition of idolatry, attributing such to solely religious based intentions is simply too tone death and monocausal. Such destructive measures are taken with the intent of promoting the power of one group, ISIS, while ensuring the obliteration of another group's, Syria and Iraq's, identity through the sustainable destruction of culture (Doppelhofer 2). The devastating scenes in places like Syria and Iraq risk the complete eradication and omission of people and cultures from human history. Each chip at a monument or artifact translates into a significant dent on the collective human soul.

The Uyghur people face similar threats in China. After systematic cultural destruction and mass murder, members of parliament in London unanimously declared the situation in the Xinjiang region as cultural genocide in April 2021 (Pryor). It is estimated that every 1 out of 3 mosques have been destroyed in Xinjiang since 2017, equating to approximately 16,000 mosques across the entire region while organizations including UNESCO and ICOMOS turn a blind eye. More than 30% of Uyghur cultural sites have been defaced or demolished for the rectification of Chinese practices and culture (ASPI). The Uyghur people of China are facing the complete and deliberate attempted annihilation of their culture and identity while the world passively watches from the sidelines. There's is one of the most tragic catastrophes occurring in the modern world-to date; however little has been done to ease the situation. While an entire people and their culture are in the process of being wiped from trace, flaws of IHL have only been exacerbated as they continue to be disregarded by actors like China.

Cultural property destruction is a crime against humanity. Interpreting cultural property as a basic human right provides insight on the role cultural heritage plays in human life on a regional, national, and international scale. Human dimensionality and diversity must continue to be revered as it is critical in the continued spread of knowledge, worldly perspective, creativity, and innovation, serving as a commemoration of the past and a pathway to the future. A more fundamental, assertive approach must be taken in moving beyond current shortcomings of current laws and resulting cultural destruction to ensure those of tomorrow can appreciate the present and the past. Preserving culture is key in preserving humanity.

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[Bibliography](#)





WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM JULIA.



Roman amphitheater
Palmyra, Syria

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ESSAY
FINALIST
HIGH SCHOOL

BY LINDSEY
LEE

Devastation. There is no denial that the destructive nature of war causes mass suffering amongst its victims. The primary need to survive may be the first priority during war, but what is needed after? Food, shelter, economic recovery, and fear of renewed conflict are major concerns that must be addressed in order to reintroduce peace into the community (Hoeffler). However, the psychological and emotional healing that people need is often overshadowed by such physiological needs. This is the true importance of cultural property and its remnants; it reminds people of the times of peace and serves as their refuge and return to previous lifestyles, serving as a symbol of their identity.

Determining what is to be considered cultural property is a much larger issue to tackle, however, and is clouded in controversy. How can a culturally significant object be determined? This is a critical issue when significance is determined by subjective meaning and attachment. The controversy is especially applicable to religious institutions; churches, mosques, or other religious property, which is arguably very prominent in the lives of many individuals, are not all considered to be cultural property with the exception of few famed religious architecture such as Saint Basil's Cathedral. However, culturally significant objects that are not considered to be protected as cultural property will most likely be protected as

a civilian object ("Practice Relating to Rule 38. Attacks against Cultural Property"). Although there still exists difficulties in the discernment of military property over civilian property during warfare, International Humanitarian Law—IHL—enforces the protection of other culturally and socially important properties in regards to the civilians. If conflict erupts and attackers take advantage of the ambiguity of cultural property in order to seize victory, the IHL rules the behavior unethical and the state is taken under investigation for their violations. The domestic courts of the state with alleged violations, as well as international courts, are obligated to prosecute for war crimes to carry out duty and maintain order of IHL.

Preserving culture during times of conflict is not only about conserving history or art, but rather protecting a second home for the people where they may return for recovery of the

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IF RELIGION IS A HAVEN FOR
INDIVIDUALS AFTER WAR,
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN CULTURAL
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CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT
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IS DESTROYED?”

mind. In a way, protecting cultural property “helps to preserve the dignity of victims of conflict and the communities and societies they are a part of over the long term” (“Protection of Cultural Property - Questions & Answers”). War has profound psychological impacts on both combatants and non-combatants. According to WHO, the traumatic events of war may lead to serious mental health issues or develop behavior that may hinder their ability to function in everyday life such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, and back and stomach aches (World Health Organization). One remedy to such conditions and post-war disparity is culture. It was found that the more exposure an individual had to war, the more likely they were to turn towards religion; War made people 12% more likely to turn to religion in Sierra Leone, 14% more likely in Uganda, and 41% more likely Tajikistan (Cole). Religion is often turned to as a way of providing comfort to the people. After a period of intense emotional turmoil, religion gives a common belief for the people to hold, which can significantly improve mental health and reduce suicide rates and drug use (Greenstein).

If religion is a haven for individuals after war, what happens when cultural property, such as specific culturally significant religious property, is destroyed? The effect would be disastrous. It hurts the people, their dignity, their sense of pride and belonging, and takes away their recovery. If war is about fighting for a just cause for the people, it shouldn't be hurting the people. This is the true significance behind IHL principles on the protection of cultural property.

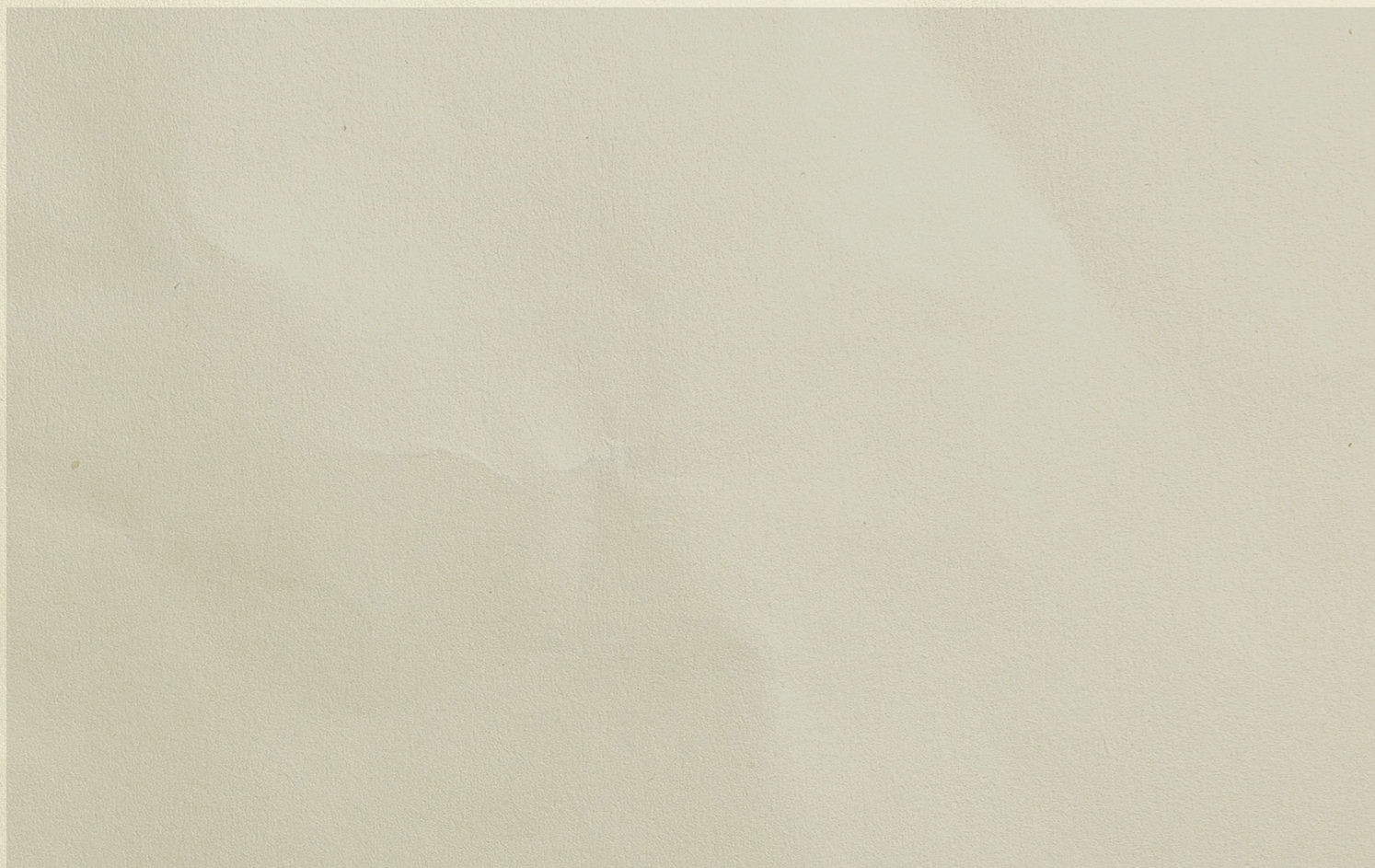
In addition to comforting the hearts of the people, cultural property is the embodiment of the values of the people. When cultural property is attacked and destroyed, the war shifts in its objective and turns against the safety of its people. Deliberate attacking, accompanied by the inability to determine and distinguish between military and non-military property—cultural and civilian—, is a human rights issue (“Destruction of Cultural Heritage is an Attack on People and Their Fundamental Rights”). Cultural property holds of great public value and sentiment and is therefore, an object of public morale. Such an attack on a symbol of the peoples' heritage and traditions would be devastating; it is a power move to force the people into greater submission. Van Bokkem discusses how Daesh—ISIS—had violated IHL by destroying a Roman amphitheater in Palmyra, Syria. By destroying evidence of civilization and historical objects that embody the culture of the people and their values, for the sole reason that they do not identify with them, aggressors in war are partaking in a form of “cultural cleansing” (Van Bokkem). When such acts are understandably malicious in nature, destroying cultural property can be alluded to an indirect persecution of the people and the culture they are associated with.

Therefore, to avoid such consequences, IHL regulations are absolutely essential to preserve cultural heritage sites and promote the regeneration of the community and deter efforts to strip culture from the people. What would be left of the people after war if all remnants of their cultural identity is obliterated? Although the buildings can be reconstructed, the broken shards of culture cannot be repaired as easily. To protect and conserve cultural property that stands today should be the priority to uphold during war as a way of defending civilians—beyond their lives. When culture has become such a critical part of the identities of the people, it is crucial to avoid damaging these significant sites of cultural heritage.

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[Bibliography](#)



WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM LINDSEY.





Rome, Italy, 4 January 1944. Nazi soldiers showing a picture taken from the National Museum of Naples Picture Gallery (today at the Museo di Capodimonte) before the city liberation.

Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-729-0001-23
Meister CC-BY-SA 3.0

ESSAY FINALIST HIGH SCHOOL

BY SADEEA
MORSHED

According to Google, history is the study of past events, usually connected to human affairs. This general definition is imperative to remember because the foundation of civilization as a whole is rooted in the people that make it up and the way they function in society. Individual lives are so intertwined in each other that the influence transcends time and space, which is why history is notable for being studied— to better understand the world we live in today and how our past shaped it. The premier indicator of people’s way of life from other times, religions, or countries is cultural property and it has an immeasurable significance to the heritage of human civilization. Temples, churches, mosques, libraries, art, and so many more types of artifacts have been preserved to display the legacy of other periods in time and the culture of that area, so people in the present continue to value that connection as it is a reminder of their roots. To destroy such property is to hypocritically dishonor one’s own right to their heritage, even if it’s due to war because human culture is not only exclusive to where it originated, but it ultimately impacts individuals around the world. As a result of armed conflict damaging cultural property, international humanitarian law has taken several measures to prevent precious relics from being lost to war, but it will never truly be enough until we as humans realize the fundamental importance of history being protected in modern times.

Before educating others about the value of cultural property today and working to prevent its destruction, one must understand how these bits of history have been victims of armed conflict in the past. To begin, this issue is not something new and has been present ever since the earliest of human civilization. For example, during the First Jewish-Roman War in 70 CE, Jerusalem's Second Temple was demolished by the Roman Army, thus eradicating any mention of religious diversity or practice in that time (Bokkem). This intentional sabotage likely served the purpose of eliminating Jewish values and gave the Romans the power to control the narrative of which cultural aspects were prevalent and which were not. This disrespect to human property carried itself on, and one of the most prominent displays of war jeopardizing heritage was the Nazi's pillage of European art in World War II. Inspired by Adolf Hitler's intentions to build an art gallery, the Nazis reportedly looted "more than five million cultural objects" ("Fate of Cultural Property") from the Allies, particularly Europe, as a display of their influence and power (Myerowitz). This specific event in history sparked the majority of the movements to prevent harm to cultural property, but it should be noted that the effects of this pillage were never entirely restored. Europe's future in theater and the arts was seriously threatened and this serves as an example of why many artifacts are lost to war: the narcissism of enemies that don't realize the pertinence of cultural relics everywhere, regardless of where they came from.

Although the destruction of cultural property in history has only highlighted the ignorance to preserving our heritage, all hope has not been lost. Due to organizations and influential figures finally noticing the atrocities being committed to the little pieces of history the world has left, various legal measures have been taken to decrease the frequency of war overlapping with wrecking invaluable artifacts. Referring back to the Nazi's theft of European art in World War II, the Allies had tried to mitigate that instance of armed conflict by forming the MFAA, or Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives section from 1943 to 1951 ("Fate of Cultural Property"). This was a group of motivated men and women, where in they sought to retrieve lost relics from the war and transport them back to their original places and they had even accomplished recovering approximately half of the lost property. This may have been one of the first actions taken against the involvement of artifacts in war, but it certainly was not the last. The 1954 Hague Convention authorizes states to protect the historical property within their borders from war ("Protection of Cultural Property") and distinguishes any attack on cultural sites a war crime ("Hague Convention"), which is arguably the most important contribution to defending pieces of our heritage from the violence of armed conflict. Strengthening the merit of this legislation is a recent statement of the International Criminal Court, explaining that making cultural property a military tar-

get is not only a threat to that specific culture, but to the entire world (Ochab).

The destruction of cultural property has thus been a serious problem throughout history, and understanding the causes of it and how it was dealt with in the past can offer

“
HUMANS MUST RELENTLESSLY
PERSEVERE AGAINST THE
SILENCING OF THEIR VOICES,
AND BY THE LAWS AND
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ARTIFACTS, THEY HAVE.

some insight into how we can continue working towards really preserving the past that has formed our present. Amid armed conflict, the loss and theft of significant relics led to underrepresentation of religions or ways of life, and this was evidently done by higher powers to establish control of how a specific time period was portrayed. Humans must relentlessly persevere against the silencing of their voices, and by the laws and movements to protect artifacts, they have. It is crucial that people realize losing pieces of their culture means losing their fundamental heritage. If one truly peers into the vast and diverse communities of individuals since the beginning of time, they may find that the nature of mankind is defined by those who came before and after, and keeping that heritage alive is quintessential to the peace and survival of the world.

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[Bibliography](#)





WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM SADEEA.





Grand Canyon, AZ

Photo by Casper Tybjerg
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ESSAY

IST PLACE

UNDERGRADUATE

BY CARA
ELZIE

When cultural property is lost, this loss is felt by all. Items of great cultural significance act as a portal. A portal to a different time or place. Sometimes, it can seem like a portal to a different world. The loss of cultural property is not just a loss for those of us alive today, but for future generations as well. These items, once lost, can never be replaced. These tangible portals once gone are gone forever.

What is cultural property? Cultural property is not a random designation, and not every object in a country is considered cultural property. According to UNESCO, which has universal acceptance, to meet the requirements of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (Implementation) Act, the object in question must “be of great cultural, historical and scientific importance that belongs to the statutorily-protected cultural heritage of a country” (Ministry of Education, 2015). Cultural property can be split into two categories: moveable property, like artwork and manuscripts, and immovable property, like land monuments and natural wonders.

Cultural property is a part of humanity. Humanity is not just the sum total of every physical human on Earth. Humanity is shaped by heritage and culture. Each of us is influenced by the environment we experience as we live. When we lose access to cultural property, we lose access to a part of

Cultural Landscape and Archaeological
Remains of the Bamiyan Valley (Afghanistan).
A buddha statue once stood in the void.



what made us who we are. As Dr. Ochab explained in a 2021 Forbes article that touched on the destruction of churches in Iraq, “while these buildings can be rebuilt, these communities have lost the heritage that these buildings preserved, [and] passed down through generations” (Ochab, 2021).

Despite many arguments to the contrary, the loss of cultural property is not simply a loss of objects and buildings. It is not adequate to explain it as a loss of property—it is the loss of history itself. One of the most famous examples of cultural property being destroyed was the destruction of Buddhas in Bamiyan. This occurred in 2001, shortly after the Taliban ordered the destruction of all non-Islamic statues and sanctuaries in Afghanistan (Ahmad et al., 2022). When this announcement was made, various countries, including the United States, attempted to buy the statues from the Taliban in an attempt to preserve them (Ahmad et al., 2022). The countries making these offers understood that the enrichment these objects provided was felt worldwide, not just in Afghanistan.

The issue of protecting cultural property is sometimes dismissed as being trivial in comparison to the loss of human life. However, this sets up a false choice. It is not just possible—but necessary to protect both human life and cultural property to preserve humanity. As one article explains, “cultural proper-

ty protection in conflict is often neglected or brushed aside as people argue that the lives of individuals in war zones are far more important than old buildings, pots, and books. However, it is not a question of prioritizing. We must not dismiss cultural-property protection in conflicts as secondary to humanitarian tragedy, but as part of the effort to save humanity” (The fate of cultural property in wartime: Why it matters and what should be done).

Similarly, the benefits of cultural property are also felt by all. Cultural property enhances a community’s connection to their culture. When members of a community have a strong sense of cultural identity, their general well being is improved. There is evidence that engaging in culturally meaningful activities improves psychological health and gives individuals a sense of social significance (Kim et al., 2015). This positive change has been evidenced in childrens’ health as well (Connectedness - culture).

The loss of cultural practices has been linked to reduced social cohesion and mental health issues (Climate change and the loss of Cultural Heritage). This is especially devastating for indigenous people who are often hit hardest, and more frequently, by the loss of cultural property. This loss can lead to further displacement in their home countries. This became such an issue that in 2007 a specific UN declaration,

the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, was created specifically to affirm the rights of Indigenous groups' right to express their cultural traditions (Watkins et al., 2017). At its most extreme, the systematic removal and destruction of cultural property can lead to whole people groups being decimated and erased from history. This is unacceptable not only for moral and ethical reasons, but also because "the heritage of one civilization is the heritage of the entire world" (The fate of cultural property in war time: Why it matters and what should be done).

While preserving cultural property is important in its own right, this issue should also be taken seriously in the context of greater international conflicts. Destruction, or the attempted destruction, of cultural property is considered a risk factor for impending atrocity crimes and genocide (Ochab, 2021). The UN Framework for Analysis of Atrocity Crimes lists destruction of cultural property as risk factor number seven and risk factor number nine for atrocity crimes and genocide, respectively (Ochab, 2021).

Preserving cultural property can have far-reaching ramifications for both the present and the future. When we lose cultural property, we lose the cultural connection those objects provided and the connection to those who have gone before us. Interacting with historical artifacts allows us to gain an appreciation for, and understanding of, history. These objects act as a living memory that connects us to the past. This connection with the past allows us to make sense of the present, which in turn, gives us the knowledge and understanding needed to move into the future. Without cultural property, we endanger the quality of humanity's future.

International humanitarian law only applies to international conflict, however, preserving cultural property is import-

Buddha statues, being destroyed for religious reasons. In the United States, we see political divides that have resulted in historical statues being destroyed (Bikales, 2020). Natural disasters can also result in the loss of irreplaceable cultural objects (Heritage at risk:natural disasters-earthquakes).

Protecting cultural property creates a more diverse and interconnected world than we could ever hope to achieve without these cultural objects. The heritage of all mankind must be protected to ensure that the future of all mankind will be respected. Imagine a world without the Pyramids of Giza or without the Grand Canyon; a world without the Mona Lisa and the Declaration of Independence. When we lose cultural property, we lose a piece of humanity.

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[Bibliography](#)



“
WITHOUT CULTURAL
PROPERTY, WE ENDANGER
THE QUALITY OF
HUMANITY'S FUTURE.”

ant not only in the midst of wars and unrest, but also in peace time. Although this issue is most widespread during times of war, cultural property is always under attack. Today, we see cultural property under attack in countries all over the world. In the Middle East, we see items, like the aforementioned



WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM CARA.





Ancient ruins of
Palmyra, Syria

ESSAY

RUNNER-UP

UNDERGRADUATE

BY VERONICA
ARAUJO

An architectural composition on concrete is, in its most refined expression, a representation of cultural identity, art, religion, history, and heritage, a piece of national artistry recognized with universal value by the Hague convention of 1977. Distinctive monuments and nature preservation sites retain honor to the mastermind behind its creation and play an essential role in national identity. When heritage sights are protected during times of war, humanity is protected, and a violation of the rules of protection is an infringement on security.

Within the context of International Humanitarian Law, the denotation of civilian objects is not separate from cultural property. Military guidelines do not restrict attacks on cultural property; instead, they stress the safeguard of civilian lives, cultural sights, and properties as a "Customary Law." Designated sights by UNESCO or a state are under protection and security law during an armed conflict. The Statute of the International Court states an armed attack on civilian objects with cultural importance to be a war crime unless lawfully used as a military object or within the case of "imperative military necessity." Attacks that make for punishable offenses can confront criminal prosecution by the State, the United Nations, and other organizations.

For decades, UNESCO enabled standard-setting in-

struments to its member states in search of resolutions until the Hague Convention of 1954 became the first international agreement to embrace the sole convergence of protecting cultural property in an armed conflict, which merged a number of treaties of the same scope.

“Conventions and other legal instruments are necessary, but they are not enough to tackle increasingly complex situations on the ground. Just as culture is on the front line of conflicts, it should be on the front line of peace. To succeed, we need to broaden and rethink traditional approaches to protecting heritage.” Writes Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO (Protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict).

As the 1977 protocols were a complement to the convention, its augmentation was contributed by the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects, as well as the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention. As conflicts and subsequent treaties emerged, the convention consolidated a second protocol, which created new mechanisms for reinforcing the protection of cultural property on the grounds of a battlefield, preserving heritage and humanity.

“All this should be viewed not as an additional burden on armed forces but as a means to achieve and consolidate long-term security objectives, particularly social cohesion and reconciliation. This is not just a cultural issue, and it has also become a security issue,” states Bokova.

Nations that abide by the vow of culture preservation during a war subsequently take lawful measures in rebuilding

in architecture destroys culture, and the extermination of culture brings an end to diversity. Military manuals examine the interrelation between culture, security, and humanitarianism, which are inseparable- a guideline that links culture to security.

More than 100 states have ratified the convention, which gives state politics the authority to safeguard their cultural structures and building during armed attacks. Nevertheless, numerous architectural and historical structures have faced destruction during wars, as observed during the ISIS bombs in Syria, which destroyed the sight of Palmyra in 2015, or the Taliban's attack on The Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan Bamiyan valley in 2001.

Military guidelines on maintaining the security of cultural properties imply minimizing accidental damage and exceptional care of these properties. The same principles are also observed in the Lieber Code, the Brussels Declaration, the Oxford Manual, and the Report of the Commission on Responsibility which identifies an armed attack on monumental structures as a violation of the law and custom of war. The 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent in 1999 advocated these guidelines to secure cultural properties during armed conflicts.

“We need to connect the dots between the cultural, security and humanitarian aspects, while fully respecting the mandate and prerogatives of each actor. Military forces must pay particular attention and be capable of ensuring the protection of heritage in difficult circumstances. In cooperation with UNESCO, member states should include military directives guidelines and instructions on the protection of cultural property,” states Bokova (Protection of Cultural Property).

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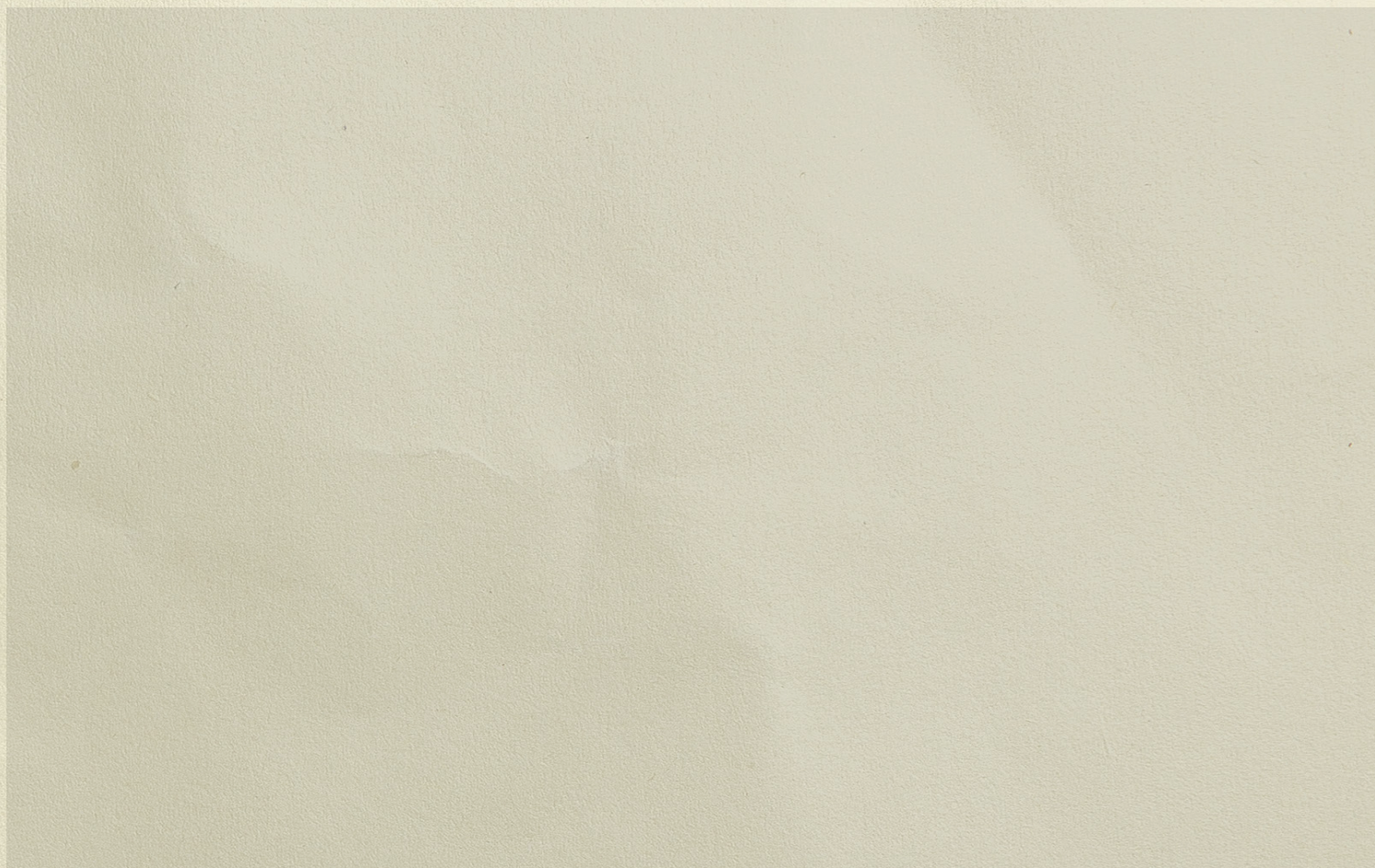
THE DESTRUCTION OF
HERITAGE IN ARCHITECTURE
DESTROYS CULTURE, AND THE
EXTERMINATION OF CULTURE
BRINGS AN END TO DIVERSITY.

monuments after violent attacks or train military personnel to adapt peacekeeping operations that protect the property of historical and cultural significance. The destruction of heritage

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[Bibliography](#)





WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM VERONICA.



Deoksugung Palace
Seoul, South Korea



ESSAY

IST PLACE

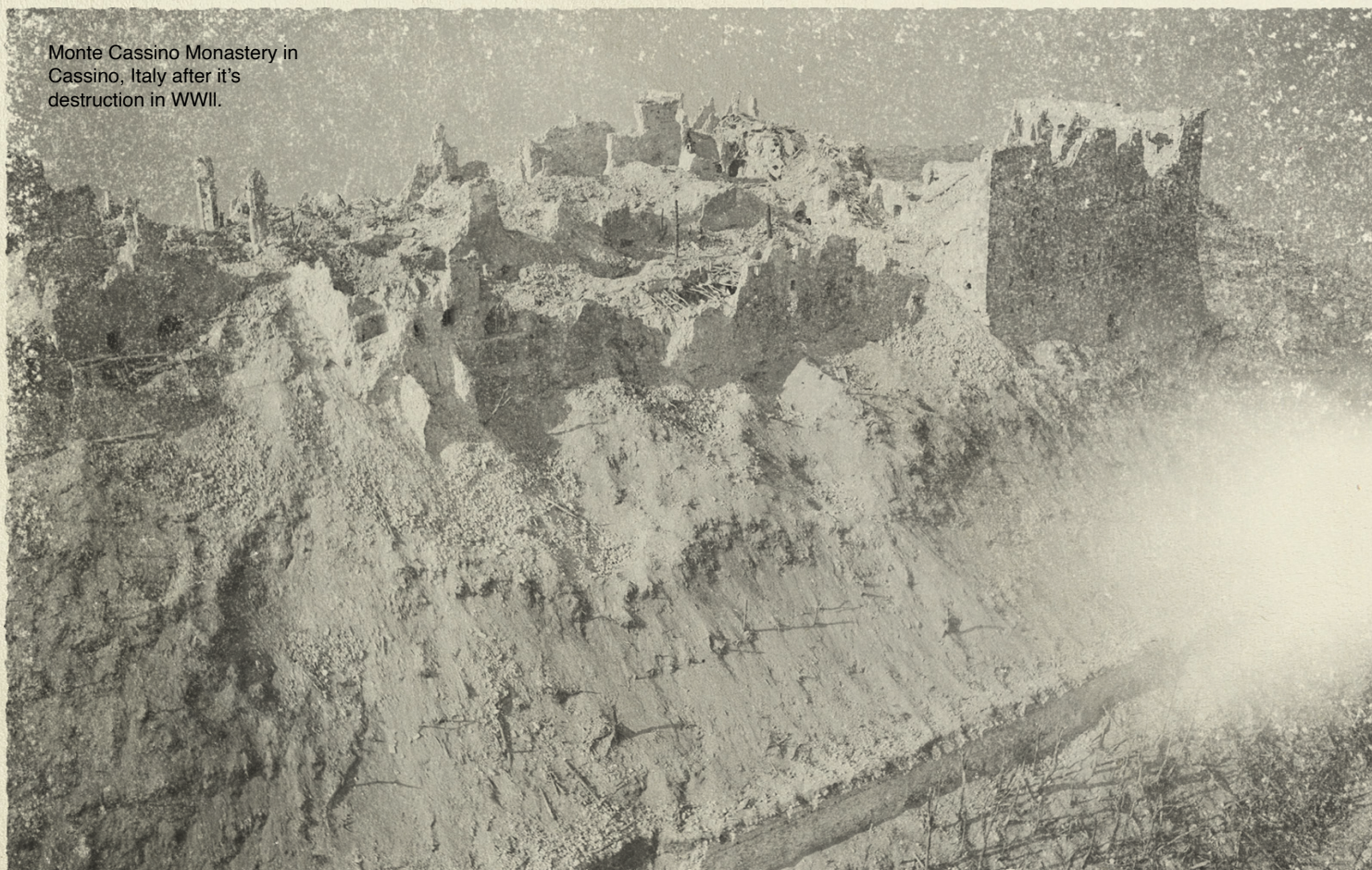
LAW SCHOOL

BY YOUNGJO “JOHN”
LEE

In 2021, the world saw the global success of Korean culture. It includes K-pop groups like BTS or Blackpink, the Netflix K-drama “Squid Game” and the Oscar-winning Korean film “Parasite” (Landsberg). One interesting thing about Korean cultural content is its making the most of Korean royal palaces. Many scenes of a K-pop show (Renshaw), K-dramas (“Palaces”), and Korean films (“Films”) have used Korean royal palaces or similar settings as their backgrounds. It reminds me of my favorite quote related to preserving cultural heritage. One of the most influential Jamaicans of the 20th century, Marcus Garvey, reportedly stated, “A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture; is like a tree without roots” (Autodidact 17). The five royal palaces in Seoul contain Korean history and culture of past centuries (Norton). This essay is a story about American unsung heroes who saved one of the five royal palaces during the Korean war by making a tough decision.

In early 1950s, South Korea in the face of communist military expansion was totally different from the current situation in South Korea of 2021 or 2022 (Dill 1). No one could not tell for sure that freedom rather than communism would flourish in South Korea. At that time, there was no globally popular K-pop group, K-drama, or Korean film. When youngsters from many countries went to Korea as part of the United Nations forces in early 1950s, Korea was not a well-known country. If

Monte Cassino Monastery in
Cassino, Italy after it's
destruction in WWII.



a "tough, determined, well trained and equipped" communist North Korean army had succeeded in defeating the United Nations forces (Dill 1), South Korea and the world in 2021 would have been a very different one.

James Hamilton Dill kept a diary throughout his experience in Korea during the war (Dill 5). He described a part of his impression of Korea at that time in the following words: "a remote and intensely beautiful mountain tract and the pastoral people who lived there untouched by the war when we entered and destroyed when we left, an Arcadian paradise lost" (Dill 5). His diary started on September 12, 1950, "aboard a troop transport in the invasion convoy steaming from Yokohama toward Inchon" (Dill 5-6). The diary ended on November 30, 1951, "aboard another ship sailing out of Pusan harbor on the first leg of" his return to America (Dill 6). A part of Mr. Dill's diary can inspire soldiers to respect and protect cultural heritage of a foreign country even during a war.

On September 15, 1950, "U.S. Marines force made a surprise amphibious landing at the strategic port of Inchon" near Seoul ("Inch'on"). It was "to recapture Seoul, the South Korean capital that had fallen to the Communists in June" ("Inch'on"). On September 25, 1950, Mr. Dill was "at the headquarters of the 1st Marine Regiment inside Seoul as liaison officer from the 31st Field Artillery" (Dill 393). U.S. Marines were driving out communist North Korean army from Seoul-

with difficulties (Dill 393). The Marines were working hard to fight their way street to street (Dill 393). They also had to beat back a continuous series of North Korean counter-attacks in many parts of Seoul, the South Korean capital (Dill 393). Mr. Dill recorded in his diary that his 155-mm howitzers were the only artillery available to support the U.S. Marines facing North Korean forces' resistance for long periods (Dill 393).

Mr. Dill as liaison officer from the 31st Field Artillery was standing by his radio with "the Marine captain serving as artillery officer at Colonel Puller's forward command post" (Dill 393). At that moment, they received a significant report from a forward observer (Dill 393). According to the report, "North Korean troops were visible massing in the grounds and gardens around the ancient Royal Palace of the Kings of Korea" (Dill 393). The forward observer requested a fire mission (Dill 393). Considering difficulties and potential casualties related to urban combat operations, soldiers in an endless life-and-death situation must have found it tempting to use the artillery to destroy enemies massing around a single location. Also, some family members of the soldiers could have also wanted their loved ones to end the war soon and come back safely without caring about foreign cultural heritage.

Even in the 21st century, a national leader could post a Twitter warning to hit another country's cultural sites "very fast and very hard" to prevent the country's potential attack

(Beltrán-García). Even in the 21st century, military forces in different parts of the world destroy important cultural sites if they do not recognize the value of the sites (Beltrán-García). There have been international conventions to protect cultural heritage during a conflict (Swart). Those include the 1907 Hague Convention, the 1977 Additional Protocol 1 to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the 1954 Hague Convention on Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (Swart). However, there has been a lack of enforcing the international laws or prosecuting violations of the international laws (Swart).

Given above-mentioned factors related to preserving foreign cultural heritage during a war, Mr. Dill and the Marine captain made a tough and remarkable decision in 1950 (Dill 393). They decided to save the Korean royal palace despite the request for a fire mission (Dill 393). After receiving the for-

Allies “assumed that the Germans were using Monte Cassino as a fortified position and observation post” (“Destruction”). However, “a number of terrified towns people” and monks “were the only ones trapped in the Abbey during the bombing” (“Destruction”). The bombardment harmed no German force but “an estimated 115 refugees taking shelter perished during the attack” (“Destruction”).

After the serious discussion, Mr. Dill and the Marine captain “decided to take a chance and wait to see if it would be possible to spare” the Korean royal palace (Dill 393). “The captain called his forward observer” and told him to “wait” (Dill 393). The “observer reported not ten minutes later that the Communist troops were leaving the Palace area and moving down the main street of Seoul” (Dill 393). “The observer was told to call in a fire mission on the advancing columns” of the North Korean troops “as soon as they cleared the Palace” (Dill 393). The fire of Mr. Dill’s “battalion completely disrupted the advancing force,” and the North Korean counter-attack failed (Dill 394). Mr. Dill and the Marine captain “spontaneously shook hands in relief that” they had spared the palace (Dill 394).

Part of Mr. Dill’s diary was translated into Korean and was published in an anthology of Korean War veterans’ essays in 1996 (Chung). After learning about this story, South Korean government presented Mr. Dill with a plaque of appreciation for his saving Deoksugung Palace (Chung). The plaque was delivered to Mr. Dill in 1996, two years before he passed away (Chung). Thanks to the decision and discussion of Mr. Dill and the Marine captain, many people from different countries could visit Deoksugung Palace and learn about Korean culture and history. To promote awareness of preserving cultural heritage even during a war, South Korean government, American government, and international organizations should work together to share Mr. Dill’s story. One good way could be creating an interpretive sign in diverse languages around Deoksugung Palace to educate visitors about how Mr. Dill and the Marine captain saved the palace. Another way could be building public parks in both South Korea and America and naming the parks after Mr. Dill and the Marine captain.

“
THEY DECIDED TO SAVE
THE KOREAN ROYAL PALACE
DESPITE THE REQUEST
FOR A FIRE MISSION.”

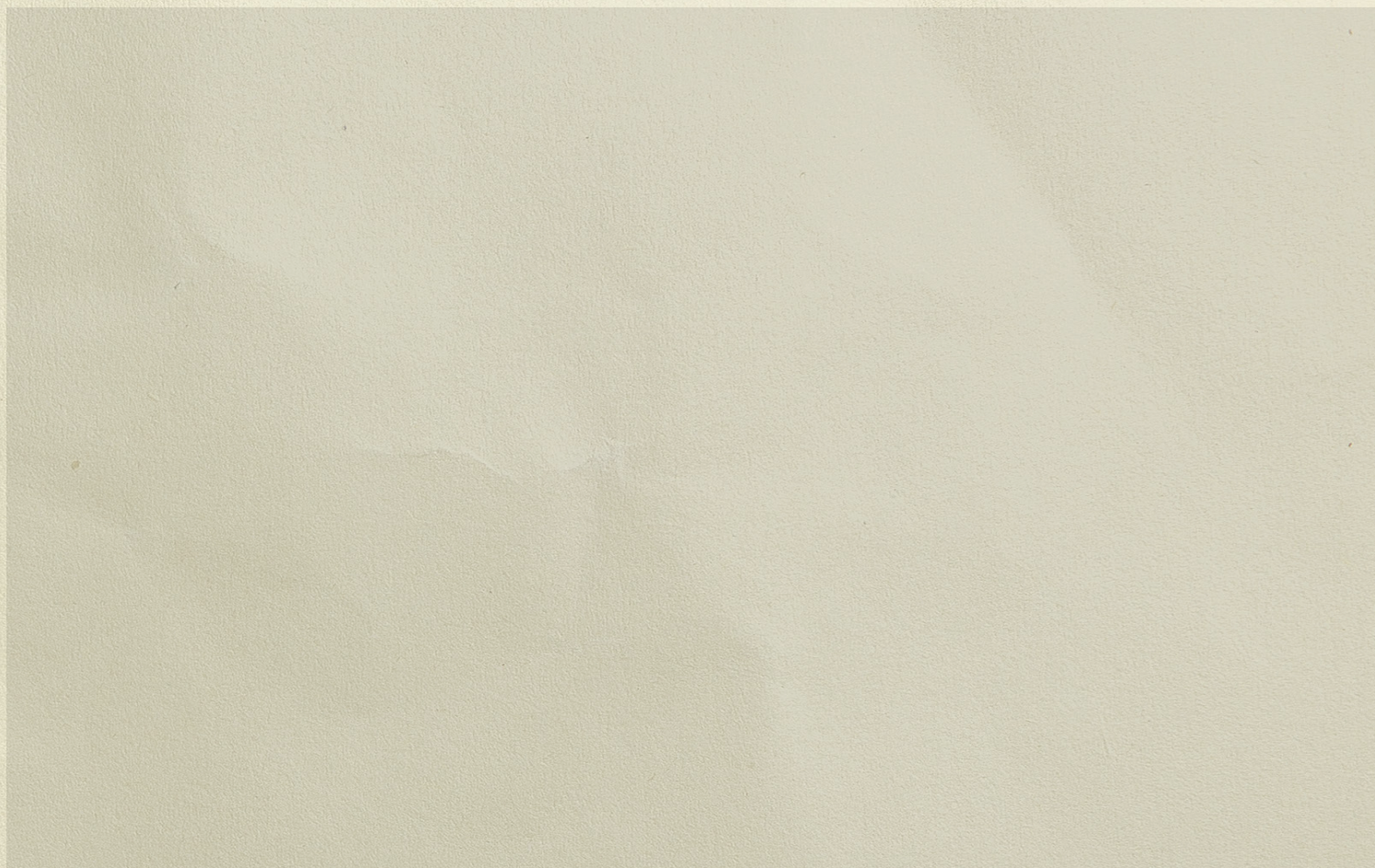
ward observer’s report of the North Korean troops around the palace, Mr. Dill and the Marine captain discussed preserving cultural heritage (Dill 393). They “did not want to shell” “probably the single most important historical and cultural building in all Korea” (Dill 393). They “agreed it would be a terrible shame to wipe out” such a site (Dill 393). Mr. Dill and the Marine captain “even talked about the sad circumstances of the destruction of Monte Cassino in World War II” (Dill 393).

Monte Cassino, an Italian Catholic monastery, had been “a symbol of peace and magnificence for hundreds of years” until 1944 (“Destruction”). The cultural site “on a rocky hill above the town of Cassino” was a historic place for some reasons (“Destruction”). “Benedict of Nursia established the very first monastery of his new order on this promontory in 529 AD” (“Destruction”). Also, “In Benedict’s time, the road leading to the monastery was already more than 10 centuries old and was the location of an ancient Roman temple of Apollo” (“Destruction”). The Allies in World War II bombed the sacred site and reduced it to rubble in 1944 (“Destruction”). The

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[Bibliography](#)





WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM YOUNGJO "JOHN" LEE.





EMERLYN MCNALLY
STARRY NIGHT OVER ST. MICHEL
Painting with gold leaf



Mont Saint-Michel
Commune in France

“

MY ARTWORK COMBINES TWO
REAL LIFE ART MEDIUMS,
PAINTING, AND ARCHITECTURE,
INTO ONE PIECE, WHICH ARE
ESSENTIAL FOR HUMANITY TO
PROTECT DURING THE WAR.

Emerlyn McNally
Grade 6
Waterloo, Iowa



This piece is entitled *Starry Night over Mont Saint Michel* and is an acrylic reinterpretation of Vincent Van Gogh's *Starry Night* over a silhouette made of Mont Saint Michel, which uses gold leaf. Art is not only paintings but also includes buildings that are unique and historical. Van Gogh's painting *Starry Night* and the French building of Mont Saint Michel are both protected. I think art should be protected because it often represents a culture and is meaningful to others for many different reasons. Destroying actual original works of art takes away objects of beauty that cannot be replaced by a photo in a book or searching for a picture on the internet. If art is demolished, a piece of history is removed from future generations to enjoy and appreciate. It would hurt our shared human culture. I learned that protected cultural property includes movable, such as paintings and writings, and immovable, such as architecture and large monuments. My artwork combines two real life art mediums, painting, and architecture, into one piece, which are essential for humanity to protect during the war. My grandma and I talked about how even though I see Van Gogh or Mont Saint Michel in my piece, others might see something completely different. That's the power of art; everyone might see it differently. Protecting art such as paintings and famous buildings protects the importance and power of art. And, if a specific culture is represented through art, then protecting art in armed conflict can also preserve the impact culture can have on all of us, even if it's not our culture.



FATIMA ABDULRAHMAN
WHO ARE WE?
 Painting

WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM FATIMA.

“

IF CULTURAL PROPERTY IS
DESTROYED, PEOPLE LOSE
A PART OF THEIR HISTORY
AND WHO THEY ARE.

Fatima Abdulrahman
Grade 10
Connecticut/Rhode Island
Red Cross Volunteer



In this painting, two people are turned away from the camera, facing a frame whose painting has been ripped out. Cultural property is defined as any moveable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of people. This can include works of art, such as the one ripped out of the frame in the painting. Cultural heritage can be found in every part of the world, and thus, the two people are not wearing outfits which represent a specific culture.

Armed conflict can affect civilians physically, mentally, and emotionally. However, when cultural property is destroyed, it can take away part of a group's cultural identity. This can affect multiple generations. If cultural property is destroyed, people lose a part of their history and who they are. This is shown in the text on the painting. As a result, it is vital to ensure the preservation of all cultural property.



JESSICA BAO
A SHADOW OF THE PAST
 Drawing

WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM JESSICA.

“
...I WAS REMINDED OF
THE SONG “POMPEII”
AND THE LYRIC SEEN
ON THE DRAWING.

Jessica Bao
Grade 9
Chatham, NJ
NJ Red Cross Volunteer



To represent the effects of armed conflicts on cultural property, I chose to draw the Genbaku Dome (now the Hiroshima Peace Memorial) before and after the atomic bombs of 1945. Originally named the “Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall,” it was used to display and sell products as well as art shows and other exhibits. In 1945, the atomic bomb detonated right above the dome, and while everyone was killed and most of the contents destroyed, parts of the structure remained. Though the ruins of the building are now part of a larger memorial to commemorate the lost lives, the art and cultural property from the dome will never be recovered, showing the significant and grave consequences of armed conflict on cultural property. During this process, I was reminded of the song “Pompeii” and the lyric seen on the drawing. The lyric addresses the idea of destruction and how to deal with it: whether to begin with “the rubble” or “the sins.” The sins, which can be seen as war, leads to the rubble (the destruction), and the rubble leads to people forgetting the past, causing them to repeat those sins.



ART
FINALIST
GRADES 9-10

SOHANA RAISA
OUR WARFARE
Drawing

WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM SOHANA.

“

THIS BEEHIVE IS MEANT TO
REPRESENT A CULTURE'S
PROPERTY BEING DESTROYED,
WHILST THE BEES REPRESENT
THE PEOPLE OF THAT CULTURE.

Sohana Raisa
Grade 10
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In order to display the theme of “preserving cultural property,” I chose to make a metaphorical piece about bees and the effects of armed conflict. I drew a broken beehive, surrounded mainly by dead bees, though a few are still alive. This beehive is meant to represent a culture’s property being destroyed, whilst the bees represent the people of that culture. The beehive is home to the bees, and is an essential & valuable possession to them. In addition, the beehive is also an important detail of nature, as it ties into large portions of multiple environmental systems, such as the sacred property of one’s culture in relation to the rest of the world. One culture’s loss is not solely their own, but a grievance for the entire world, as everyone is affected. In the destruction of the beehive, many poor lives were lost as well. Surrounding the beehive is an aura of smoke. This smoke can be taken literally, as beekeepers are known to use smoke to disorient bees, but it can also be taken metaphorically, signifying smoke from warfare and armed conflict, that often disorients that of war victims.



ART
HONORABLE
MENTION

GRADES 9-10

RUBI SOTO
THE HERITAGE FOUNTAIN
Drawing

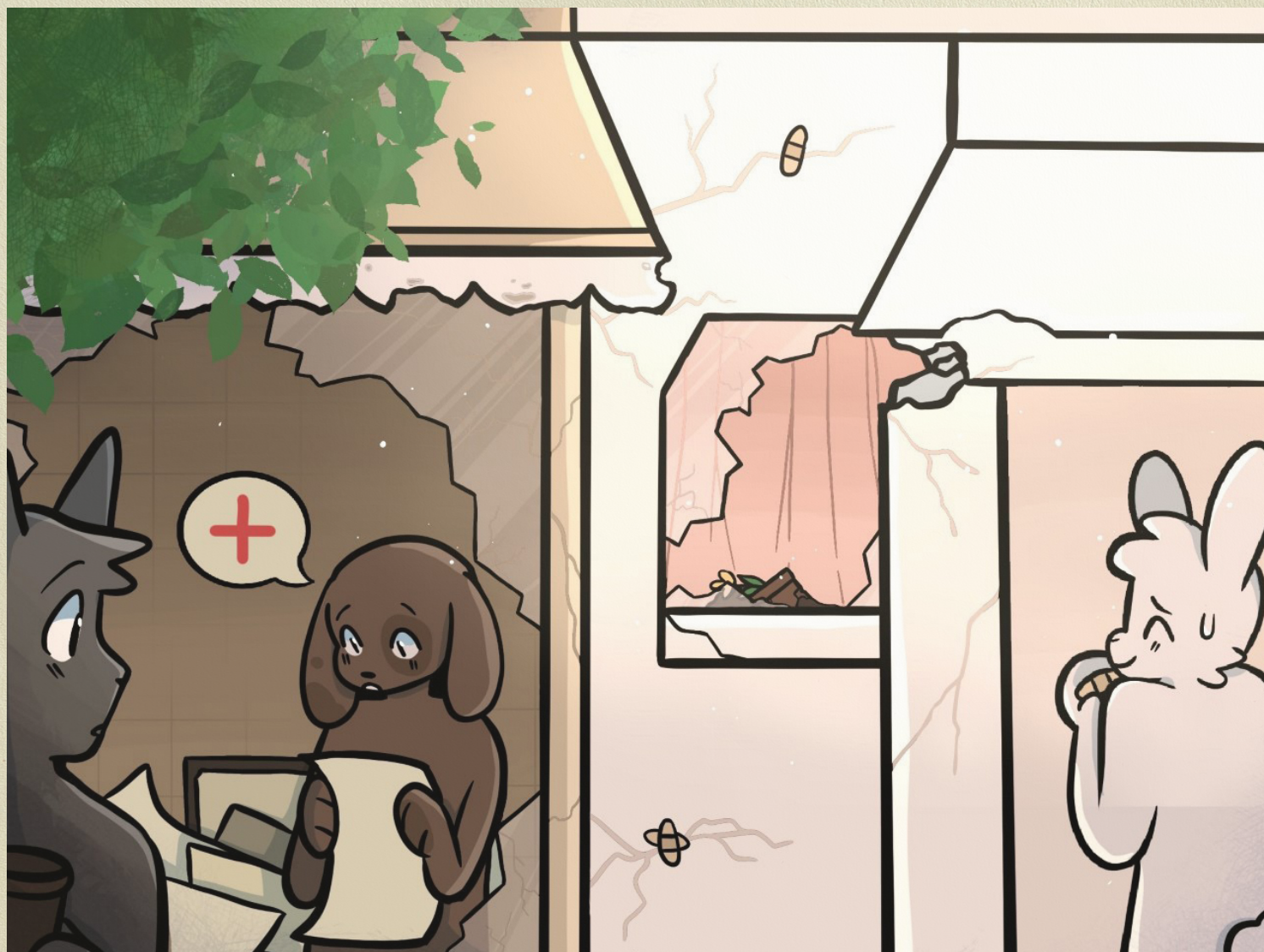
Grade 9
Santa Fe Springs, CA
Los Angeles Red Cross Volunteer



“

THIS PARK IS KNOWN FOR ITS
PRESERVED BUILDINGS AS WELL
AS THE HISTORY, THE LAND,
PROPERTY, AND OF THE PEOPLE
THAT USED TO LIVE THERE.


My entry relates to the theme because it shows the heritage and cultural history of the city of Santa Fe Springs, California. The piece is based on the Heritage Park located in Santa Fe Springs. This park is known for its preserved buildings as well as the history, the land, property, and of the people that used to live there. The fountain, buildings, and trees represent the many things that you can find in the park.



ART
HONORABLE
MENTION

GRADES 9-10

KYLEE HECOX
WORKING TO SAVE CULTURE
Digital Art



WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM KYLEE.

“

...WORKING TOGETHER TO FIX
THE BUILDING THAT
REPRESENTS ALL CULTURAL
PROPERTY WITH “BANDAIDS.”

The artwork is a digital art piece that demonstrates the importance of working together to protect cultural property. The images are more “child-like” to put a lighthearted spin on the topic. The purpose of using cartoon features is to connect to children of all ages. In the picture, the characters are fixing broken property and uncovering cultural property such as historical documents and cultural art. They are also working together to fix the building that represents all cultural property with “bandaids.” The bandaids represent healing.

Kylee Hecox
Grade 9
Sasebo, Japan





ART
HONORABLE
MENTION

GRADES 9-10

ESHAL HUSSAIN
SABR (PATIENCE)
Painting with clay

WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM ESHAL.

“

THIS ALSO MEANS NOT TO
LET GO OF YOUR CULTURE,
EVEN IF YOU ARE FORCED
BY OPPRESSORS.

Eshal Hussain
Grade 10
Chelmsford, MA

Massachusetts Red Cross Volunteer



Preservation for cultural property means keeping one's values and beliefs close. My art displays an individual with their hands in a prayer form. Each hand has a chain cuff, but they seem to be broken into 2 pieces. The art is bordered with a beautiful border consisting of some of the Arabic Holy names of God, and some of them translate to 'The King, The Giver of Peace, The Granter of Security, The Provider, The All-Hearing, The All-Seeing, The Judge, The All-Aware. The point of the piece is to display resistance to oppression. One way of this resistance is to have trust in God, and to be true to who you are. This also means not to let go of your culture, even if you are forced by oppressors. The scarf of the individual is green, and green symbolizes prosperity and balance. This shows that closeness to one's values, culture, religion or beliefs can bring peace and balance to their heart. The overall main idea of the painting is that the individual who is being oppressed is having trust in God. The white blindfold on their eyes show total trust in religion and values, and display positive hopes and energy.



AMELIA WEITKNECHT
LOST PEOPLES
 Painting

WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM AMELIA.

“

WAR AND BIGOTRY HAS
BEEN DESTROYING
CULTURE AND TRADITIONS
FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.

Amelia Weitknecht
Grade 11
Allentown, PA



My painting depicts a Native American woman wearing an African tribal war mask. Native American culture was attacked by European settlers in the 1400s and was continually minimized for several hundred years until Native Americans were almost completely confined to small territories. Many tribes were fully wiped out along with their differing cultures, traditions, and art. The eagle feather depicted in the bottom right hand corner of the painting is a common Native American symbol which was adopted and exploited by European settlers who ignored its sacred symbolisation. Many African cultures have been ostracized repeatedly throughout history symbolized in the mask. In World War II their cultures were attacked and countless pieces of history were lost throughout several African countries. Pieces of art were stolen or destroyed, their stories vanishing along with them. War and bigotry has been destroying culture and traditions for thousands of years. The symbol of Mars is depicted in the top left corner of the painting. Mars is the planet of war, symbolizing the human nature of destruction and hatred, which has torn apart the history and traditions of millions of peoples from every corner of the world along with their art and stories.



ART
Runner-Up
(TIE)
GRADES II-12

AYANA LONESKY
CONSEQUENCES OF DESTRUCTION
Digital Art

WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM AYANA.

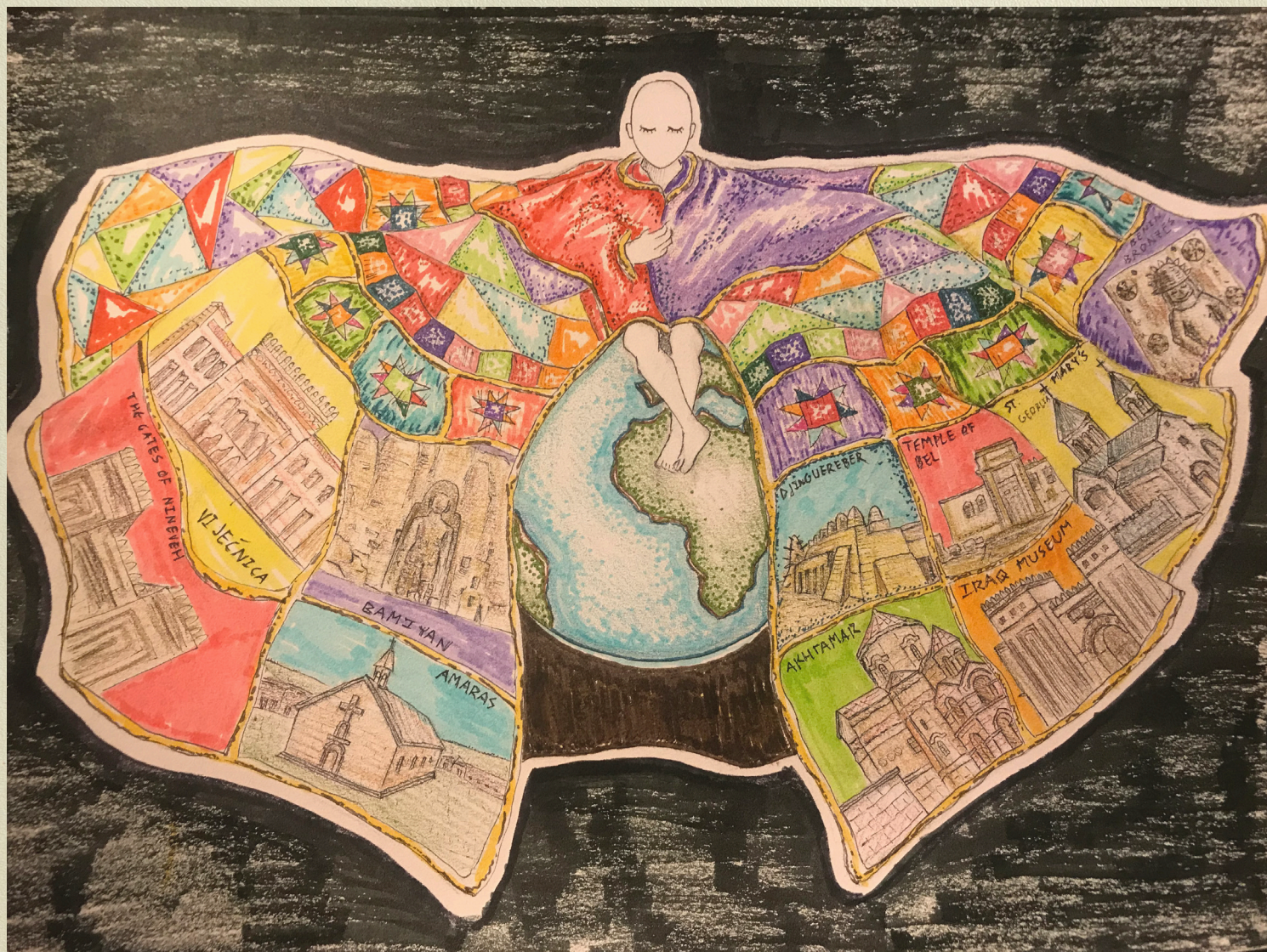
“

...FUTURE GENERATIONS
WILL NOT KNOW THE
COMPLETE TRUTH OF WHAT
HAPPENED IN THE PAST.

Ayana Lonesky
Grade 12
Sasebo, Japan



The subject of cultural property preservation was a difficult one to illustrate. Our school recently had the opportunity to video contact a Holocaust survivor, who spoke about how art was destroyed during the war, erasing a piece of history. I also looked at the IHL website to see what precautions are in place to avoid this. With this in mind, I decided to devise a technique to demonstrate the costs of individuals who destroy cultural property inadvertently during armed conflict, as well as the long-term ramifications. In my illustration, I depicted a piece of art that appeared to be historical and modified it in such a way that it appeared to be melting. I chose to do this to demonstrate the impact of destroying art. I also put fissures to the walls to depict the foundation of our past, of which art is a significant part, as well as the effect of cultural property loss. Instead of using identifiable persons, I opted to use shadows to demonstrate the impact of cultural property destruction on any culture, and I twisted them to emphasize the idea that future generations will not know the complete truth of what happened in the past.



ART
RUNNER-UP
 (TIE)

GRADES II-12

EMILY WANG
FABRIC OF CULTURAL PROPERTY
 Drawing

WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM EMILY.

“

...HOW CAN WE DEFINE
OURSELVES, AND HOW CAN WE
CLOAK OUR EARTH WITH SUCH
COLOR, IF PIECES WERE MISSING
FROM THE QUILT?

Emily Wang
Grade 11

Rancho Cucamonga, CA
Southern California Red Cross Volunteer



Cultural property is an extension of the human soul. They possess links to our past, bring people together, and remind us of our humanity. They are the diverse places and objects that, like pieces of cloth sewn together in a quilt, lend color to the fabric of the human experience. The seriousness of the destruction of such places is therefore revealed—how can we define ourselves, and how can we cloak our Earth with such color, if pieces were missing from the quilt? This entry depicts real examples of cultural property from around the world that are casualties of armed conflict or are under threat from armed conflict. Hundreds more places exist; this is simply the surface. Not only does this piece illustrate the vibrant beauty of cultural property, it also shows the peace and love with which the otherwise colorless human figure holds cultural property close, suggesting it is what enriches ourselves and our globe. Through this message, this piece seeks to encourage the reverence of cultural property in its audience—and consequently prompt efforts to protect cultural property.



SABRINA SPATNY
TRADITION TRIUMPHS OVER ADVERSITY
Digital Art



WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM SABRINA.

“

THE CHINESE WORDS ON THE
PLATE TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH
READ, “CLOSE TO MY HEART,”
BECAUSE WHO WE ARE AS A PEOPLE
WILL ALWAYS LIVE WITHIN US.

Sabrina Spatny
Grade 12
Glendale, CA

Los Angeles Red Cross Volunteer



This art piece depicts a Chinese bride about to be wed. The work illustrates that despite conflict and the destruction of tangible cultural property, the essence of culture itself will always survive. Even though museums, temples, precious artifacts, books, and other physical manifestations of culture may be broken or ruined in the face of war, the traditions we have will always carry on. We may not be able to go back to the places we once visited or worshipped, but we can carry the memories and the customs that the culture has built over centuries, passed down through our ancestors' stories. Specifically, in this picture, a Chinese wedding is about to occur. The bride is dressed in her traditional gown and headdress. This represents traditional ceremonies still being preserved, even though the Chinese plate in the background is broken, representing destroyed tangible cultural property resulting from the conflict. The Chinese words on the plate translated into English read, “close to my heart,” because who we are as a people will always live within us. We as a people will continue to survive and fight for the preservation of our culture despite hardships beyond our control, including armed conflict.



ART
FINALIST

GRADES II-12

NIKKI SHRESTHA
CULTURAL PRESERVES
Digital Art

WATCH A SPECIAL VIDEO MESSAGE FROM NIKKI.

“
JUST AS WE DO WITH
PRESERVING FOOD,
WE SHOULD DO WITH
THESE PROPERTIES...”

Nikki Shrestha
Grade 11

New Providence, NJ
New Jersey Red Cross Volunteer



I decided to tackle the theme of conservation of cultural property in a very literal way. When brainstorming ideas, I had asked my friend what the first thought that came into her head was when I said the word “preservation.” She answered with “jam jars,” and that was the artistic approach I ended up taking. To explain, foods such as pickles and jams are preserved in mason jars. These jars keep food items from spoiling or getting bad, keeping them at their best condition without the danger of external factors. Therefore, I researched popular cultural properties like the Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty and drew them inside preservative jars, quite literally displaying the meaning “Preserving of Cultural Property” in my work. Just as we do with preserving food, we should do with these properties, making sure that they remain as pristine and undamaged as they were when they were first built.

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American
Red Cross

International
Humanitarian Law

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DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD? READY TO MAKE A



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Learn more about our programs:

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Red Cross.org/IL

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