

Essay A: Describe how your personal goals, challenges, or commitments exemplify or have been inspired by Michael Rothberg's Legacy.

What is life but a journey to attain eternal happiness, to love and be loved, to make a difference in this world, and most importantly to help others live the best life possible? Many people define what it means to live a successful and meaningful life narrowly in terms of the wealth and material pleasures one is able to accrue over a lifetime. However, I feel that there must be some greater purpose to life, a more substantial goal that if achieved is a real determinant of success. Although I never had the pleasure of knowing Michael Rothberg, it is evident to me, judging from all I have read about his personality, his character, and his endeavors, that in his lifetime as a loving son, brother, grandson, cousin, and nephew; a hard-working, intelligent individual; and a truly beneficent human being Michael understood that a greater purpose to life existed.

Michael did so much good throughout his life's journey and touched so many people with his love and compassion. I can only hope that one day I can leave a legacy as rich and important as Michael left. Throughout high school I have put the utmost effort into my studies, and all of my work seems to have paid off, for I will be attending the University of Pennsylvania this fall. As Michael excelled in all his endeavors not just in academics, I also have spent much time and effort working on activities outside of the classroom.

What satisfies my soul and motivates me more than anything is participating in community service projects and helping those who deserve an opportunity to live healthy and prosperous lives. The smiles I have received while delivering holiday food to homebound senior citizens have inspired me; the looks of sheer joy on the faces of the athletes at the Special Olympics swim meet have kindled in me a burning passion to help others live fulfilling and genuinely enjoyable lives. This summer I will be traveling with a friend to Cuzco, Peru where for six weeks I will help homeless children obtain an education that will provide them with opportunities for a better life. My commitment to make this world a better place will never die. One day I would like to go to medical school and study to be a doctor so that I could join such humanitarian organizations as Doctors without Borders and help improve the quality of people's lives around the globe.

Michael was in all ways a mensch, "a person of integrity and honor" in Yiddish, whose legacy remains strong and who will never be forgotten. In order to make his legacy eternal and spread his values, I plan on following in his footsteps by bringing happiness to all of those who I meet, by loving and being loved, and by changing this world for the better.

Essay B: How have acts of terrorism around the world affected your own life and your outlook on the future?

One summer night, while finishing dinner on the outskirts of Jerusalem, the details of a terrorist attack a few miles away breached my seemingly safe world. I was in Israel on a leadership training program and, rather than remaining in our hotel, our Israeli tour guide, undaunted by what, to me, was disturbing news, suggested that we drive that evening to the Western Wall in the Old City.

As we made our way to the heart of Jerusalem, our bus passed the site of the attack. Members of the media still milled around the wreckage, but ordinary people continued to stroll the very same street where, only hours before, terror reigned. Back home, this event certainly would have created national alarm, but in Jerusalem it seemed to be just another unfortunate, but all too regular, happening in the violent history of the region.

I still admire the matter of fact attitude with which the people of Jerusalem dealt with an act of terror in their streets. Israeli citizens have defied their enemies by not allowing terrorism to disrupt the flow of society. While recognizing the inherent danger of living in this political and religious caldron, their trust in the government and fellow Israelis, including the many law abiding Palestinians, has allowed them to quickly return to the normal rhythm of life in spite of frequent disturbances.

We in the U.S. have a more difficult time adjusting to post-September 11th America. Anti-western fundamentalists bent on destroying our way of life must smile at some of the ways Americans have coped with the threat of terrorism on their soil, including the growing political, religious and racial divisiveness. Statistics indicate that hate crimes based on differences such as race, religion, and national origin are on the rise. While Americans have, in many ways, shown their best attributes by standing up to terrorism, it seems that far too many have either forgotten or chosen to disregard the wondrous diversity that has made our country a beacon of tolerance and freedom. Instead, their ill-conceived prejudices perpetuate an intolerance of difference. Even the election of the first African-American president has not stemmed the tide of this bigotry.

As a result of my experience in Israel and my perception of growing intolerance in the U.S., I became involved in two activities during my sophomore year that have helped shape who I am. I joined an interfaith youth group in my local community. I also was selected by the Sharon

High faculty to be part of a team of students (sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League) to lead organized discussions among the student body on identifying and ending prejudice. Both of these activities have a common purpose of building mutual respect through education.

While I am realistic enough not to expect the end of extremism or fundamentalism, my involvement in these two groups has provided me with vehicles to promote interracial and interreligious acceptance. The interfaith group, in particular, has given me the opportunity to learn about the faiths of others, and to embrace the differences among us. The real lesson has been that those differences are dwarfed by our shared needs, wants, hopes, and dreams. We need trust, we want unification, we hope for acceptance, and we dream of friendship and peace. It is these shared values that create our common resolve to defeat enemies who seek to exploit our fears and prejudices.