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Tour for Humanity brings anti-hatred campaign to Henry Hudson students

Educational initiative started by Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies

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By Ali Raza



Tour for Humanity education associate Daniella Lurion makes a presentation to Henry Hudson Senior Public School students aboard the Simon Wiesenthal Center's mobile classroom. Staff Photo/Ali Raza

An anti-hatred campaign has left Scarborough students pondering the question: 'what can you do?'

Students of Henry Hudson Senior Public School received a presentation on hatred, racism and anti-semitism from Tour for Humanity on Monday, Jan. 19. That open ended question followed a lecture outlining the history of persecution, hatred and racism that haunts Canada and the world.

Tour for Humanity is an educational initiative started by Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies. The tour has travelled across southern Ontario on its bus that functions as a mobile classroom to raise awareness.

On Monday, Jan. 19, it stopped at Henry Hudson, where groups of 30 students at a time over the course of regular school hours listened attentively to what Daniella Lurion, education associate, said.

"If we all did one small thing to make a difference every day we can be heroes in our own communities and really change the world," she said.

The workshop consists of a three-part presentation. The first, called the Global Experience discusses the Holocaust, other genocides including the Armenian Genocide, Khmer Rouge and Rwanda, and real-life heroes such as Martin Luther King Jr., Helen Keller, Simon Wiesenthal and Gandhi.

The second part places the Canadian Experience as a focal point. Students learn about Canada's history and racism with presentations on the history of Aboriginal residential schools and the treatment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. And more recently, the effects of cyber-bullying.

But it's not all dark and gloomy, as the presentation ends by shining a light on positive changes that students can bring to the future. These messages, coupled with anti-bullying advice, are meant to engage students by reminding them that it's possible – and even critical – to learn from history.

"It's to help inspire kids," Lurion said "And to teach them that yes, our past isn't perfect, but we can work together to make the future better."

Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies is an educational organization that's been active for more than a decade. It offers workshops and courses for students focusing on the history of racism and anti-semitism, cyber-bullying and creating change.

The need for anti-racism awareness is still present. The centre reports that in 2013, 51 per cent of hate crimes in Canada were racially motivated while 30 per cent were religiously motivated.

Also, 57 per cent of those accused of hate crimes are between the ages of 12 and 24 years old.

For more information on the Tour for Humanity or Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, visit www.tourforhumanity.com and www.fswa.ca.