

Tour For Humanity teaches importance of fighting hate to Windsor-Essex Catholic board students

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Stopping intolerance

Sean Previl

Grade 11 student Jacob Stasso takes notes during a Tour for Humanity video presentation as his classmates watch the video in the mobile education centre parked at Assumption College Catholic High School in Windsor May 9.

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By [Sean Previl](#)

Windsor-Essex Catholic school board students are learning more about the consequences of hate and intolerance and why they should speak out against both on a tour bus traveling the region.

The [Tour For Humanity](#), a mobile human rights education centre, is driving to [six elementary and four secondary schools](#) in the board to present their message.

Part of the [Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies](#), T4H was built about two-and-a-half years ago and has been traveling around Ontario to speak with schools, police and other organizations.

Education associate Danny Berman said the tour helps educate people on topics of social justice, tolerance, equality and fighting against racism, anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination.

The presentation begins first by giving details about the Holocaust, the main focus, before moving on to talk about Japanese internment camps, Canadian residential schools and the current battle with cyberbullying. It then moves onto the different positive figures including Martin Luther King Jr. and Malala Yousafzai.

“We inspire to make a change by showing them videos of positive figures that have made a change in society,” said Berman.

“It’s interesting for them to learn about the past and these issues, what happened in Canada so they can become familiar, maybe hate crimes too, and then challenge these issues.”

Students from Hanna Grabka’s Grade 11 class were just some of the students who attended the first tour stop at Assumption College Catholic High School.

Jacob Stasso, 16, said the presentation brought up the still present issues facing people today.

“The presentation revealed the many negative attributes about humanity and how they exist today even if it’s not seen very often, even in Canada,” said Stasso.

But he added the best part of the tour was what can be done to fight these issues.

“I also liked how the video showed how even we as normal people can stop these things, such as racism or hate towards religion and also stop discriminative movements.”

Stasso’s thoughts on standing up were also felt by his classmates, as several asked and answered questions during the presentation. Many said the video either made them want to become more involved in preventing discrimination or reinforced their own existing feelings.

“I learned a lot of new things like the extent to which we’re experiencing discriminatory acts against each other in Canada here, now, and it made me really want to stand up for people who are being discriminated more,” said Sharon Smith, 16.

“I’ve seen a lot of situations lately and right now I have a situation going on and I actually did something about it and reported it to a teacher,” said 16-year-old Michelle Hua.

“I’ve always thought if someone is being persecuted for an unjustifiable reason, you have to stand up for them, they’re not doing anything wrong,” said Joel Bernal, 16.

WECDSB communications coordinator Stephen Fields said the idea to bring T4H to the board started last fall when he and three administrators went on a [From Compassion to Action](#) mission, an initiative by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre. They went to Austria, Poland and Israel to tour the German concentration camp of Auschwitz, visit the offices of Wiesenthal, a Holocaust survivor and Nazi hunter, and also tour Jerusalem.

Fields said they were able to learn more about human rights through the mission and decided to bring the tour to their board because it fit with their message.

“The message is something that is really consistent that we try to get across to our students as a faith-based system,” said Fields.

“Those messages of courage to speak up against hatred and intolerance when you look at what’s happening in the world these days with the amount for extremism out there. You see how politically divided nations are. That message of unity and love and peace and understanding has never been more crucial or more relevant.”

The Tour for Humanity will visit Holy Cross Catholic Elementary School in LaSalle May 10. It will then travel to five more elementary schools in Amherstburg, Kingsville and Windsor, as well as two more secondary schools in Windsor and one in Leamington between May 11 - 20.