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250 Canadian teens learn truth of genocide at Holocaust museum

BY SHELDON ALBERTS

WASHINGTON

After months spent studying the genocide of Jews during the Second World War, Eliza Kraus had grown familiar with all the painful details of the Holocaust. But when she visited the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on Monday, and stepped inside a cattle car used to transport Jews to Nazi concentration camps, the Calgary teenager was left speechless.

"Walking through the boxcar, I didn't even know what to say because I knew hundreds of people were crammed into that little space with no food, no water and they were in there for days," says Kraus, a Grade 9 student.

Kraus is among 250 teenagers in Washington this week completing a human-rights program that helps ed-

ucate Canadian students about the history of the Holocaust and the dangers of racial intolerance and hatred.

This year alone, the Asper Foundation Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program has brought more than 1,100 students to the capital.

Monday, Louise Lawrence-Israels held the students riveted with details of more than two years' hiding in Holland from the Nazis with her parents and older brother.

Only six months old when her family was confined to a tiny rowhouse apartment, some of Lawrence-Israels' memories come in the form of stories passed on from her father and verified by a family friend who also shared the space. Others are the hazy first-hand recollections of childhood. Of answering to a fake name, Maria. Of never being allowed to yell, or ar-

gue, or look out the tiny dormer window of the apartment for fear of being seen and identified as a Jew.

After the war, she told the students she grew up with a visceral hatred and fear of Germans. She only realized how damaging that feeling was when it became manifest in her own children.

"I realized it then — hatred begets hatred. That's how the Holocaust started."

"The entire point of coming here is to remember, this did happen, and to make sure it doesn't happen again," said Alex Lee, 14, a fellow Calgary French and International School student. "What's happening in places like Darfur, with civilians being murdered and raped — it's a lot like what happened during the Holocaust."

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