

STUDIES PROGRAM

## Aspers teaching tolerance

### Students learn about Holocaust, human rights

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CALGARY HERALD  
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**A**lison Partridge knew what she had to do after touring the U.S. Holocaust Memorial dedicated to the millions of Jews murdered by the Nazis.

"If something is wrong I'll speak out," the 14-year-old Winnipeg resident said Sunday. "I'll name it for what it is."

"I feel stronger now," she added. "If it's racism or bigotry, now I will speak out."

Partridge is one of 330 Jewish and non-Jewish students from across Canada taking part in The Asper Foundation's Holocaust and Human Rights Studies Program.

The students complete 18 hours of classroom instruction on the Holocaust and human rights, a four-day trip to Washington D.C. and 16 hours of volunteer work.

At the end they sign a Memorandum for Personal Responsibility with the Asper Foundation, vowing to uphold the principles of human rights.

"I believe that this will be one of the most significant and important educational experiences that these students will have as a young adult," Israel Asper said.

"I hope that they will pass on the message of tolerance and the need to preserve human rights for all peoples," added the media magnate who founded the Winnipeg-based institution in 1983 and the school program in 1989.

The Asper family's CanWest Global owns Global TV and the Southam newspaper chain, including the Ottawa Citizen, the Montreal Gazette, the Edmonton Journal, the Calgary Herald and the Vancouver Sun.

The Aspers also have a 50-per-cent share of the National Post, which they share with Hollinger's Conrad Black.

Simon Love, whose grandparents are survivors of the Holocaust, hopes to pass that message of tolerance and understanding on to his children.

"You have to raise awareness," said the 14-year-old Ottawa native, himself the victim of verbal slurs. "We're not 'dirty Jews.' We're not stuck-up and cheap. We're actual people."

Sitting under a dull drizzle outside the Holocaust Memorial, Seth Shaffer, a 14-year-old from the Joseph Wilensky Collegiate in

Winnipeg, pondered the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust.

"It's pretty powerful," Shaffer said of the exhibition that depicts the Nazis' use of propaganda to spread their poisoned ideology of racism and anti-Semitism through German society. "It portrays something beyond words. It's very moving."

"We have to speak out against racism," said Shaffer, his baseball cap turned backwards. "We see the evidence here if we stay silent."

Shaffer was visibly shaken by his walk through a freight car that was used to transport Jews to the death camps, like Auschwitz, and the video about the use of Jews in human experiments. "That was terrible," he said. "That was lower than anything I ever expected."

Shaffer, whose own family fled Europe for Canada before the Holocaust, said it was important to teach Jew and non-Jew alike about the atrocities to prevent such a thing from happening again.

"We have to speak out against the horrors and atrocities against mankind," Shaffer said.

Exposure and education are the tools through which the children can learn to change society, said Jon Allen, the political minister at the Canadian Embassy.

"They get exposed to the black issue and the Holocaust — two of the most difficult and most relevant human rights issues of our times," Allen said, after welcoming them to Washington.

"To be exposed, discuss it and take back some of the lessons to their families, schools and communities is important," he added. "And then to use it in their lives."

### QUOTABLE

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