

Survivor bears witness against league of Holocaust deniers

SHELDON ALBERTS
CanWest News Service
WASHINGTON

In the six decades since Philip Weiss was liberated from a Nazi concentration camp in Mauthausen, Austria, the 82-year-old Holocaust survivor has often been torn between the urge to tell his story and a feeling that "numbing silence" was the better response to the horrors he witnessed.

Weiss chose to speak out, forcefully, because he could not allow his history to be

denied by the likes of Ernst Zundel, Jim Keegstra and, more recently on the world stage, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

"I was there. My mother lost 36 members of her family," Weiss said Tuesday. "I saw the Nazis murdering children and sick people, young and old. I am a witness to that. What makes me speak out?



Weiss

That makes me speak out. You can't let people denigrate that."

With often harrowing detail, Weiss recounted his suffering and survival during the Holocaust before an audience of 250 Canadian students, who were in Washington on Tuesday as part of the Asper Foundation Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program.

Still emotionally drained from visiting the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Canadian teens heard Weiss tell of being imprisoned in five concentration camps before American

troops freed him in May 1945.

He described seeing thousands of people "transported in cattle wagons to the slaughterhouse" and "murdered with assembly-line efficiency" simply because they were Jews.

The responsibility of today's youth is to sound the alarm when they see intolerance and hatred, whether in their own communities or around the world, he said.

"That is what you are being asked today to help us with. We (survivors) won't be here for much longer. You cannot, and

you must not, be silent observers," he told the students during a speech at the Canadian embassy.

During a question-and-answer period, several students cited the ethnic genocide in Darfur as evidence hatred still breeds mass killing today.

"We always say the Holocaust should never happen again. But many things comparable to it are happening," said Adam Sadinsky, 15, a Grade 9 student at Yitzhak Rabin High School in Ottawa. "It is our obligation to stop this, to stop the injustice of human rights violations."

Tiny Italian village has two of every three citizens running for office

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ROME

There are only 63 people in the medieval village of Bergolo eligible to vote in Italy's local elections on Sunday. But they will not be stuck for choice at the ballot box: 40 candidates are running for office.

The village, which nestles in the rolling hills of Piedmont, has the dubious distinction of having more aspiring politicians per person than anywhere else in Italy. The candidates, who range in age from 26 to 71, are running for mayor and for nine seats on the village's council.

Opinion is divided over why so many people in the village are thirsting for power. "It could be interpreted as a sign of a healthy democracy, but for me it is an indication that we have not been able to overcome our divisions," said Marco Saredi, 55, the outgoing mayor.

"It might seem like a joke, but it was like this the last time as well."

Romano Vola, 64, who served as Bergolo's mayor for 30 years, suggested that the villagers were using the local elections to advance their own interests. Almost everyone, he said, had his own vision of how Bergolo should be run.

"There is always a bit of tension between neighbours, like in any town. There are disputes because someone might want to build a balcony, another might want to change his garden."

Before a change in the electoral law in the 1990s, candidates had to gather at least 20 signatures to run, but now they merely have to declare

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