

# Funding for Education Programs to Counter the Rising Tide of Racism & Antisemitism in Canada

Submitted by:



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Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies (FSWC) is a non-profit human rights organization committed to countering racism and antisemitism and to promoting the principles of tolerance, social justice and Canadian democratic values through advocacy and education.

FSWC is recommending the following:

1. **Recommendation 1:** The government provide funding in the amount of \$375,000 to build the existing *Compassion to Action* program, over a five year period.
2. **Recommendation 2:** The government provide funding in the amount of \$500,000 to build on the existing *Tour for Humanity* program.

### **About *Compassion to Action***

*Compassion to Action* has been specifically designed as a professional education vehicle for Canadian leaders with a sphere of influence, primarily to learn about the Holocaust. Exploring the reasons for this single greatest genocide in human history, contemplating how it could have been prevented, and discussing how the lessons learned apply to today's complex world, can help professionals examine critical issues in their daily tasks. Our belief is that by providing historical context to the disease of hatred and intolerance (like antisemitism) and inspiring leaders to create change, they will return to their homes and communities ready to share their knowledge and work to counter all forms of hate.

The *Compassion to Action* program has engaged more than 150 police chiefs, school board directors of education, superintendents and trustees, mayors, provincial and federal parliamentarians, philanthropists and thought leaders from across the country in this innovative and impactful programming. The results upon their return to their home communities have been overwhelming. Chiefs of Police have returned to infuse equity and inclusivity education, including the history of the Holocaust, into training not only for their new recruits and hate crime departments, but making it essential for their school liaison officers who are working directly with youth. This attention to the history of hatred in the form of antisemitism, works to build a better understanding within communities and create a more knowledgeable, and safer community. School board officials have returned from the *Compassion to Action* journey to implement full Holocaust and genocide education training programs as a board-wide initiative, including joining FSWC's January 27<sup>th</sup> initiative (recognizing International Holocaust Remembrance Day) which supplies members with resources to recognize International Holocaust Remembrance Day with students, along with special training sessions for their educators who are working directly with students. All of this support enables educators to create a safe environment for their classes while providing leadership opportunities for their students at the same time - improving the health and well-being of youth across the country.

We visit sites such as the ancient Jewish town of Krakow; the hallowed grounds of the infamous Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp; the Wannsee Conference House that houses original documents for the final solution; Nazi sites in Nuremberg including Court 600 where the trials of Nazi war criminals were held; Christian, Jewish and Muslim sites in Jerusalem along with the modern Israel in Tel Aviv. Experts from a variety of professional fields are brought in to share their knowledge and engage participants in meaningful discussion that not only evaluates the historical significance of this history, but also inspires these leaders to take this knowledge and pass on to future generations.

The request for \$375,000 will help us to financially sustain the *Compassion to Action* program over the next 5 years, allowing 150 leaders from across Canada to be subsidized to take part in the program.

**About Tour for Humanity ([www.tourforhumanity.com](http://www.tourforhumanity.com)):**

The innovative, award-winning *Tour for Humanity* (T4H) project is an integral component of the FSWC Education Department. T4H is a 30-seat, wheelchair accessible, mobile human rights education center designed to bring FSWC's programming directly to students and educators across Ontario.

Specific programming developed for T4H aligns with current Ministry of Education curriculum expectations as they relate to Grades 6 - 12. The exemplary program has been recognized by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation with an Award of Excellence.

The *Tour for Humanity* has visited over 500 schools across Ontario, reaching more than 100,000 students, resulting in numerous examples of students who find their potential unlocked, setting goals for themselves that direct them to a path where they thrive and prosper. We have countless stories of students who begin to recognize and take pride in their identity. Several months ago, a student, following a presentation on the *Tour for Humanity*, approached one of FSWC's educators and stated that her cultural roots were First Nations and Jewish but she hadn't been able to identify with either identity very well. She stated that following the presentation, she felt like she was ready to take the next step and open up dialogue at home that would help her on her personal identity journey. She felt more confident and that her future depended on learning about her roots.

Teachers have reported that students have left the *Tour for Humanity* program and taken a more active role in their social justice clubs in school, including bullying awareness and human rights groups. These students have continued to develop the leadership skills that they learned about on the *Tour for Humanity* through active community engagement. Educators have shared that their own personal lesson plans have been re-shaped based on their learning experiences on the bus, enabling the *Tour for Humanity* messages of respect, critical thinking and leadership to be reinforced in classrooms across Ontario, furthering the reach of the programming.

All T4H workshops are led by experienced FSWC facilitators, and teachers are provided access to educational materials in order to assist in preparing their students for T4H visits. T4H incorporates multimedia to provide students with a rich and interactive learning experience. The T4H mobile classroom is equipped with an LED-screen covered video wall and HD surround sound to further encourage students' interest and involvement. Each T4H session is approximately 45 to 60 minutes in length. The mobile classroom can accommodate one class of 30 students at a time, allowing for six classes or 180 students over the span of a typical school day.

*Programs include:*

- **The Canadian Experience** In this workshop, students learn about a variety of difficult topics in Canadian history including slavery, the Indian Residential Schools System, the voyage of the SS St. Louis and the systemic internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War. Following a review of the past, current issues including cyber bullying and modern-day examples of intolerance are examined and discussed.
- **The Global Experience** This workshop begins with a screening of a three-part documentary series produced by FSWC entitled *The Holocaust, Universal Genocide and Real World Heroes*. The Ten Stages of Genocide are then discussed in relation to the Holocaust and other world genocides, including Rwanda, Cambodia and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine and throughout Eastern Europe under Joseph Stalin's reign. Student discussion is encouraged.
- **Simon's Story - Heroes Among Us** Aimed at junior audiences, the goal of this workshop is to introduce elementary school students to the Holocaust in an age-appropriate manner. Students will learn techniques to deal with injustice and ideas for creating positive change. Stereotypes, racism and prejudice are defined and discussed in an age-appropriate manner.

The request for \$500,000 will help us to financially sustain the *Tour for Humanity* program over the next year and develop new programming, enabling an additional 40,000 students to receive unique lessons in equity and diversity.

The success of the *Tour for Humanity* and *Compassion to Action* programs continues to grow. However, so does the need. With the rising tide of hatred and intolerance, comes the need for programming that can shift these hateful ideologies. While Canada is known for its value of and respect for diversity and multiculturalism, conversations across the country include discussions around racist and intolerant attitudes that exist on a more regular basis. Government statistics in 2017 reported that 19% of Canadians identify as being members of a visible minority group, an increase of 3% since 2006. Also stated in the report, "As Canada's demographics change, the potential may arise for hate-motivated crimes against individuals or groups." It is also important to note that FSWC has seen a significant increase in

the number of calls from schools this year seeking support and training as a result of antisemitic and other forms of hatred within the community.

Recent reports from Statistics Canada also show a rise in identified hate crimes. The most recent report, the 2016 Hate Crime Report, identified the following trends: (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171128/dq171128d-eng.htm>)

- there was a 3% increase in hate crimes from 2015 to 2016
- an increase against the following groups was noted: South Asians and Arabs or West Asians, the Jewish population and people based on their sexual orientation
- crimes targeting Black populations remained the most common type of hate crime related to race or ethnicity at 15% of all hate crimes
- hate crimes against the Jewish population grew from 178 to 221 incidents
- an increased violence was observed in hate crimes – from 487 incidents in 2015 to 563 incidents in 2016

FSWC has the knowledge and experience to be able to directly address these issues. As part of a greater International organization that has built two museums and is in the process of building a third (Museum of Tolerance – Los Angeles; Museum of Tolerance – New York; Museum of Human Dignity – Jerusalem) and two Academy Awards for the Moriah Films Division, along with countless other accolades for our work in tolerance education, we strongly encourage the Canadian government to invest in FSWC's *Tour for Humanity* and *Compassion to Action* programs.

We would be pleased to further discuss our proposal with the Finance Committee in the fall.