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### **Danbury assistant principal, students advocate for Darfur refugees**

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BRIDGEPORT -- About four years ago, Danbury High School Assistant Principal Tim Salem saw a news report about an incident in the **Darfur** region of Sudan in Africa, in which members of the Janjaweed militia threw a live baby into a fire pit in front of its mother, whom they had just raped. With tears in his eyes, he looked over at his own sleeping infant.

"I thought, 'My God, what if that happened to my child?'," he told a group of 22 Holocaust educators from around the country who gathered in the Jewish Community Center on Sunday.

That led him to advocate for the people of **Darfur**, through filmmaking.

The killings and rapes have happened many times over since 2003, he said, evidenced in the two short films of photos he helped put together with several Danbury High School students.

And now, starvation and disease are killing those left alive in refugee camps, he added.

He showed the two films to the teachers Sunday afternoon, and a question-and-answer session followed.

The first film placed photos of from the Holocaust of the Jews in World War II next to photos from **Darfur**.

The latest film, "Child of Hope: **Darfur** Dreams of Peace," displayed more photos, depicting men with eyes gouged out and emaciated,

malnourished children.

The Janjaweed, or "Devils on Horseback," are accused of being mercenaries for the Sudanese government.

About 400,000 people have been killed there since February 2003, according to Salem's Web site, [www.dhsthepromise.com](http://www.dhsthepromise.com). Millions more have been displaced, the site claimed.

The problem is that many people outside of the conflict haven't forged a personal connection with the refugees.

"You really need to personalize the issue" to raise awareness, Salem said.

Also shown were hundreds of pictures drawn by refugee children while Dr. Jerry Ehrlich, a New Jersey pediatrician with Doctors without Borders, treated them in their camps. Ehrlich supplied the paper and the crayons.

The children mostly drew burning villages, men on horseback and men shooting guns. Ehrlich smuggled the pictures out of **Darfur**.

Salem estimated there was one doctor to 35,000 refugees.

"It's really gone beyond the Janjaweed," he said. "Ninety-five percent of **Darfur** is burned to the ground."

Three Danbury High School students, Lena Negron, Tracy Walsh and Kim Ashayeri, all 17-year-old seniors, helped on the latest film.

Walsh said she was a busy student when she started on the **Darfur** project.

"I was shocked" afterward, she said. "My life seemed so miniscule compared to what they had to deal with," she said.

It made her pay more attention, even with a busy schedule.

"Sometimes you have to make time" to look at events in other countries, such as in Sudan.

"We have so much power and we haven't done anything," Negron added.

The gathering is held annually by the American Friends of the Ghetto Fighters Museum, usually in New Jersey. But Sacred Heart University's Center for Christian Jewish Understanding invited the group to the JCC this year.

The educators invited Salem his students and Ehrlich to speak.

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