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## **Not on our Watch**

by Paula Voell, from the *Buffalo News*, May 27, 2008

Now, Beiter and others want to channel that youthful energy by offering the inaugural Summer Institute for Human Rights and Genocide Studies, one of the few in the United States that they know of for teens.

Enlarging upon the theme “From the Holocaust to Darfur: American Responses to Genocide” will be speakers Leigh- Anne Hendrick of the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum; Joe Diamond, Auschwitz survivor; Sudanese refugees; and M. Greg Peterson of the Robert H. Jackson Center. Participants will also be exposed to poetry and literature, and view movies that include “Schindler’s List,” “Nuremberg” and “Hotel Rwanda.”

Open to incoming freshman through seniors throughout Western New York, the Institute will be held from 9 a. m. to 4 p. m. July 28 to Aug. 1 at Hamburg’s Frontier High School, at a cost of \$40. There is an application deadline of May 30.

“We have to blaze a trail, and the Summer Institute is meant to keep that trail going,” said Beiter. “The message is ‘this is how the world has responded,’ but now today we can respond in a far more effective way.”

And, educators point out, the younger generation has an effective means to respond right at their fingertips, using keyboards, cell phones, text messaging and whatever technology comes next.

As an example Beiter brings up the protests in Myanmar. “Think of the Burmese monks with their cell phones,” said Beiter. “I think there was a softer landing because of the possibility of them transmitting images ... just imagine if we’d had cell phones in the Warsaw ghetto.”

Other teachers involved in the Institute are Lori Raybold of Hamburg High School, Stephanie Brown of St. Mary’s High School and Matthew Meader of Hamburg High School.

“We’ve seen a groundswell of interest by high school kids, and even middle schoolers,” said Meader, an English teacher, who often uses literature as a springboard for discussions of current issues. “I think it would be an error not to talk about what’s going on in our world,” he said, “and my students produce better work when they are emotionally connected.”

“I try not to push anything or anybody, but I feel drawn to this crisis, this very human story,” said Meader, referring to Darfur. “When we read Gerda Klein’s memoir, we get a

glimpse into one person's tragedy during the Holocaust. Now we are starting to hear the same kind of stories out of Africa.

“And how can we talk about the Klein book without recognizing the genocide that's going on now,” he said. “Some of what the Jewish population endured is paralleled today in Africa. As educators, we'd be leaving out an important part of the story if we didn't bring it up.”

Institute sponsors include the Jamestown Teaching American History Grant, Buffalo for Africa, the Holocaust Resource Center of Buffalo, the Southtowns Teachers Center, the Robert H. Jackson Center and the International Institute of Buffalo.

Meador said they'd like the institute to take place annually. “Hopefully, we won't have to focus on Darfur next year,” he said.