

June 1, 2009

# MUSIC DELIVERS STRONG MESSAGE



Scott Benarde, who wrote a book on Jews and rock 'n' roll, speaks to students at Palm Beach Central High School. Scott Pflaum, Sun-Sentinel photo

## Students study songs that tackle horror of Holocaust

By Lois K. Solomon  
STAFF WRITER

**WELLINGTON** — The Holocaust may seem like an unlikely theme for rock, heavy metal or hip-hop music. But about 300 high school students were captivated recently by the lyrics of Remedy, the rapper from Staten Island, singing *Never Again*, about the destruction of his family.

*Never again shall we march like sheep to the slaughter. Never again shall we sit and take orders*

*Stripped of our culture: Robbed of our name (never again):*

*Raped of our freedom and thrown into the flames (never again):*

*Forced from our families, taken from our home.*

*Moved from our God then burned of our bones.*

*Never again, never again.*

The students at Palm Beach Central High School learned that Remedy is not the only contemporary musician tackling the Holocaust and its aftermath. Scott Benarde, the Boynton Beach author of *Stars of David: Rock 'n' Roll's Jewish Stories*, told them about two dozen other artists, as far back as Woody Guthrie and Bob Dylan all the way to the contemporary rock band *Say Anything*. These groups and acts have been deeply moved by the deaths of 6 million European Jews and wrote songs describing their anguish.

Benarde's talk was sponsored by LEAH, the Boca Raton-based League for Educational Awareness of the Holocaust. The former newspaper pop music critic has spoken at four schools over the past year and will give a similar presentation to Palm Beach County's teachers in June.

Benarde, 55, said he discovered the thread of musicians' Holocaust anger as he researched his book, which was published in 2003. He said he continues to compile Holocaust-related lyrics in rock music and was thrilled when Palm Beach Central senior Nathan Scott suggested he examine the music of the heavy metal band *System of a Down*.

"Heavy metal may not sound like an appropriate way to show the evils of the Holocaust," said Scott, who takes Palm Beach Central's Holocaust elective class. "But the songs have real emotion, deep vocals, a tyrant sound. Everybody here listens to the music and can relate to it."

The Palm Beach County School District wants to tap into students' attachment to music as an alternative technique of Holocaust teaching, said Eileen Shapiro, the district's Holocaust curriculum planner.

"You need to approach each generation differently," Shapiro said. "When they hear rock 'n' roll, they listen."

Benarde cited several musicians who are children of Holocaust survivors, including pop singer Billy Joel, Gene Simmons of Kiss, Geddy Lee of Rush and Da-



During his talk, Benarde showed a slide of Jewish rapper Remedy, above. Benarde cited an assortment of musicians who are children of Holocaust survivors.

vid Dredman of *Disturbed*.

"I would be thrilled if just one of these songs sticks with the kids," Benarde said after the presentation. "If the bands consider this an issue to be dealt with, maybe the kids will, too."

Lois Solomon can be reached at lsolomon@Sun-Sentinel.com or 561-243-6536.