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Taking a Stand

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Elie Wiesel, at heart, is a teacher. 

"What do you expect from our generation of students?" Flyer News reporter Stephanie Vermillion asked Wiesel.

"More sensitivity," responded the Holocaust survivor, Nobel Laureate and philosopher. "Read. Read. Read. And listen. You study from the past how to shape the future."

Wiesel, the author of more than 50 books including the famous memoir *Night*, spent time with reporters, exchanged in a candid give-and-take session with University of Dayton and Dayton Early College Academy students and spoke to a sold-out crowd of 2,300 people at the Schuster Center. He closed out the University's 2009-10 Diversity Lecture Series on March 25 in a moving, memorable fashion.

The 81-year-old human rights activist, who continues to teach at Boston University, has no plans to slow down. "How can one stop? We live in such strange times. I feel obligated. ... There are so many injustices in the world. It would be immoral not to take a stand."

Addressing a wide range of issues from genocide to suicide bombers to a two-state solution in the Middle East, Wiesel took moments throughout the day to offer pointed observations on the growing discord in the public square and the rise of extremism around the globe.

"There's a resurgence among the extreme, extreme right that I find offensive and could lead to violence. Some people are even calling our president Hitler," he said quietly, disbelief in his voice. "I don't like this atmosphere. We must learn something from the Holocaust. No more racism. No more hatred. No more injustice. ... With every fiber in my being, I'm against fanaticism. A fanatic is against dialogue because he only hears himself."

Wiesel speaks very softly, but his words speak volumes. "I don't like yelling. I believe in whispers. To quote King Solomon, 'Speak softly, you will be heard.' "

That's why he won't remain silent when human rights are violated. Education — not violence and vengeance — holds the key to alleviating injustice in the world.

"I believe in an open palm, not a fist," he told students. "The only way is peace. There is no substitute. I believe in it, but I'm a
dreamer."

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