

Press Release

JHSFC Article for New Jewish Voice

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Commemorating Kristallnacht - Disobedience: The Sousa Mendes Story

By Elissa Kaplan

It was June 1940. Paris was already occupied by the Germans. Throngs of refugees raced from Paris south to Bordeaux with the hope of escaping to a neutral country, like Portugal. However, Portugal's Prime Minister Salazar ordered his diplomats not to give visas to "undesirables" (Jews). In spite of a direct order not to and with the understanding that his career would be ruined, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Consul of Bordeaux, decided to issue visas to anyone who asked. In the end, Sousa Mendes granted visas to 30,000 people, many of whom were Jewish. The Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County invites the community to commemorate Kristallnacht and view the film that documents his heroism, *Disobedience: The Sousa Mendes Story* on Sunday, November 12, 2017 at The State Cinema in Stamford. The program starts at 3:00 PM, and is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served.

According to Holocaust scholar, Yehuda Bauer, the work of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, was "perhaps the largest rescue action by a single individual during the Holocaust." Sousa Mendes has been recognized by many countries. In 1966, Israel declared Aristides de Sousa Mendes to be a "Righteous Among the Nations." In 1986, The United States Congress issued a proclamation to honor the heroism of Sousa Mendes. Eventually, President Mario Soares apologized to the Sousa Mendes family and posthumously promoted Sousa Mendes to the rank of Ambassador.

The French film, including Polish and Yiddish dialogue, is shown with English subtitles. Directed by Joel Santoni and starring Bernard Lecoq in the role of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, *Disobedience*, won Audience Choice Award for "Best Narrative Feature" at both the Los Angeles Jewish Film Festival and the San Diego Jewish Film Festival in 2014. The film will be followed by a question and answer session with a representative from the Sousa Mendes Foundation and Eileen Berets, a visa recipient saved by Sousa Mendes. This program is a partnership between the Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County and the Jewish Arts & Film Festival of Fairfield County.

Questions about the programs? Please RSVP to guarantee seating.

Contact The Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County, *Bridging Yesterday and Tomorrow*

- Telephone: 203-321-1373 ext.150
- Email: info@jhsfc-ct.org
- Website: <http://jhsfc-ct.org>
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The Jewish Historical Society of Fairfield County is a beneficiary agency of United Jewish Federation of Greater Stamford, New Canaan and Darien.