

# 2019 YEAR IN REVIEW



*António Guterres,  
Secretary General of  
the United Nations*



**SOUSA MENDES FOUNDATION**

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Raphael Albinati

## TEXTS BY

Mariana Abrantes, Joan Arney Halperin, Monique Rubens Krohn, Olivia Mattis, Leah Rozenfeld Sills. Edited by Olivia Mattis.

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## OUR MISSION

Founded in 2010, the Sousa Mendes Foundation is dedicated to honoring the memory of the Holocaust rescuer Aristides de Sousa Mendes and to educating the world about his good work. It has a two-fold mission: raising funds for the restoration of the Casa do Passal and the creation within its walls of a museum and memorial site; and sponsoring US-based projects that perpetuate his legacy.



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dr. Olivia Mattis

“My intention was to save them all,” said Aristides de Sousa Mendes at his defense against the charges of insubordination and disobedience leveled by the Portuguese regime of 1940. A man of faith and compassion, Sousa Mendes witnessed the suffering of thousands of refugees (Jews and others) fleeing the Nazi onslaught, and he knew he had the power to act.

With his diplomat's pen, he was able to save lives by granting visas to Portugal. For this individual decision, made against his government's orders, he paid a heavy price, losing his position and dying a poor and forgotten man. Today, we remember his action, and in remembering we perform an act of historical justice.

I am grateful to our supporters and volunteers in helping to...

- ➔ **SPREAD THIS IMPORTANT AND TIMELY HISTORY** through public events such as exhibitions, film screenings, and conferences, and
- ➔ **DOCUMENT AND PRESERVE IT** through video interviews with survivors and the development of an archive of historical artifacts, a research library, and an interactive online database open to all.

Highlights of the past year include programs at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the National Archives of Luxembourg, West Point Military Academy, the Center for Jewish History, Roosevelt House, the International Council of B'nai B'rith, and more.

Nowadays, with the rise of the far right in the United States and around the world, Holocaust education is at the front lines. Sousa Mendes's humanistic values – including resistance, moral courage, respect for refugees and human rights – must be sustained, defended and taught with vigor. This is the work we must do together.

*Olivia*



**Edith Kubicek**, born in Prague as Edita Stadlerová, was a child of six when she received a life-saving visa from Aristides de Sousa Mendes. On September 27, 2019 we interviewed her and gathered her testimonial. For more on her story, please **click here**.

Photo: Anton Evangelista

# SOUSA MENDES COLLECTION OPEN FOR RESEARCH

The Sousa Mendes Foundation receives researchers working on subjects related to the Sousa Mendes story at its headquarters in Huntington, NY. The collection includes original wartime passports and other historical artifacts, original photographs, and original newspapers dating from the period of the mass exodus of refugees through France in May and June of 1940; more than 1200 publications from 1940 to the present including refugee memoirs and other eyewitness accounts; audiovisual materials including interviews with Sousa Mendes visa recipients and members of the Sousa Mendes family; and a comprehensive archive on the action, punishment and posthumous recognition of Sousa Mendes, with particular emphasis on the remembrance activities that have occurred in the United States. The archive is open by appointment.



**Chanan Tigay**, award-winning author of *The Lost Book of Moses*, is working on a new historical thriller, *Last Exit from Europe*, telling the story of Aristides de Sousa Mendes and the refugees he saved.

*“Last Exit from Europe* is an account of the greatest rescue operation carried out by a single person during the Holocaust. It tells the extraordinary true story of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, an unlikely hero who risked his hide to save thousands of refugees even at excruciating personal cost. It is a story of moral courage and extraordinary loss. And it is a story I could not begin to tell without access to the extraordinary archive so carefully and thoroughly assembled by Olivia Mattis and the Sousa Mendes Foundation. From primary documents like letters, passports and telegrams; to secondary sources contemporaneous with the Sousa Mendes story (magazines, photographs, reports); to more recent journalism and scholarship about Sousa Mendes and World War II, the Foundation has proved an invaluable resource in helping me bring to life this extraordinary man and the times in which he lived.”



**Carolina Henriques Pereira**, Ph.D. candidate, Center for the History of Society and Culture, University of Coimbra, Portugal, and author of *Refugiados da segunda Guerra mundial nas Caldas da Rainha (1940-1946)*, is writing a Ph.D. dissertation titled *“Escaping from the War and the Holocaust through Portugal: Refugees in the Areas of “Fixed Residence” in the Central Region (1940-1946).”*

“I visited the Sousa Mendes Foundation Archive from September 22-28, 2019, and it was a great experience. I had contact with a lot of important documents and artifacts, mainly belonging to refugees and their families, essential to my research. But I found more than documents. I found a very organized archive and a very motivated team, whose only purpose is to preserve the memory of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, Portuguese consul of Bordeaux in 1940, responsible for saving thousands of refugees (Jews and non-Jews) from German occupation and the Holocaust. I would like to thank the Sousa Mendes Foundation for the opportunity to have contact with these materials, in particular Dr. Olivia Mattis, for her patience and kindness.”

# ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES HONORED AT THE UNITED NATIONS



United Nations Headquarters, New York City



Secretary-General António Guterres pays tribute to Aristides de Sousa Mendes  
Photo: Cristina Cerone

On January 28, 2019, Sousa Mendes visa recipients joined **Louis-Philippe Mendes**, grandson of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, and representatives of the Sousa Mendes Foundation at the United Nations on the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day for a tribute to Sousa Mendes and other diplomat rescuers. This was on the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz. **Secretary-General António Guterres** gave the keynote speech. The master of ceremonies was **Stéphane Dujarric de la Rivière**, whose maternal family, named Muhlstein, received visas from Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Visa recipients in attendance were **Ruth Charchat**, **Sylvie Heyman**, **Marcel Lerner**, **Sylvain Lerner**, **Anka Muhlstein**, and **Stefan Rozenfeld**.



Louis-Philippe Mendes at the United Nations with the portrait of his grandfather  
Photo: Cristina Cerone

FIRST ROW L-R: Under-Secretary-General Alison Smale; Ambassador Francisco António Duarte Lopes of Portugal; Secretary General António Guterres; Portuguese Consul General Maria de Fatima Velez de Andrade Mendes; Dr. Olivia Mattis, President, Sousa Mendes Foundation; SECOND ROW L-R: Joan Aray Halperin, Leah Rozenfeld Sills, Sousa Mendes visa recipient Anka Muhlstein, Sousa Mendes visa recipient Stefan Rozenfeld, Sousa Mendes visa recipient Ruth Charchat, Mariana Abrantes, Monique Rubens Krohn, Louis-Philippe Mendes; THIRD ROW L-R: Isabelle Coelho-Marques, Felipe Proppér de Callejón, Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, Sousa Mendes visa recipient Sylvain Lerner, Deborah de Winter; FOURTH ROW L-R: Adélio Simoes, Sousa Mendes visa recipient Marcel Lerner, Sousa Mendes visa recipient Sylvie Heyman, Ella Andriesse. Photo credit: UN Photo/Manuel Elias



## GUIDED TOUR BY DR. MORDECAI PALDIEL

On January 28 and again on February 19, Sousa Mendes Foundation Board member **Dr. Mordecai Paldiel**, the leading world authority on the Righteous Diplomats, offered a guided tour of the exhibition ***Beyond Duty: Diplomats Recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations*** on behalf of the Foundation. The exhibition, organized by Yad Vashem, was on view at the United Nations from January 27-February 25, 2019. Dr. Paldiel discussed Sugihara, Wallenberg, Sousa Mendes, Foley and other rescuers. This tour was co-organized with the Portuguese Mission to the United Nations.



Dr. Mordecai Paldiel



## SOUSA MENDES ON CAPITOL HILL

On February 20, 2019, **Congressman Jim Costa (D-CA)**, co-chair of the Congressional Portuguese Caucus, spoke about Aristides de Sousa Mendes on the floor of the US Congress. “Sadly, genocide and antisemitism continue to exist in the twenty-first century,” he said to his colleagues. “We must learn from our history, so that the atrocities of the past are never repeated in the future,” he added. To view Congressman Costa’s remarks, please [click here](#).



*Congressman Jim Costa*



*Judge Joan B. Lefkowitz, Judge Lawrence Ecker, Leah Rozenfeld Sills, Millie Jasper (HHREC)*

## HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

On May 2, 2019, **Leah Rozenfeld Sills** presented her family’s story to members of the Justice Brandeis Law Society, the Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center (HHREC), community leaders and the general public. The event was located at the Westchester County Courthouse in White Plains, NY. For this Yom HaShoah event, Leah wove in images from her father’s life in Poland and told the story of Aristides de Sousa Mendes.

## SOUSA MENDES AT WEST POINT

On May 8, 2019, Sousa Mendes Foundation Vice-President **Leah Rozenfeld Sills** and her father, visa recipient **Stefan Rozenfeld**, spoke at the United States Military Academy at West Point about Sousa Mendes and his action. The event was called **Rescue: The Sousa Mendes Story** and was co-presented by the West Point Department of History, the Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies at West Point and the Sousa Mendes Foundation at the invitation of **Prof. David Frey**. “Sometimes disobedience is vital for the greater good,” Rozenfeld told the cadets in a lesson they surely will not forget.



*Stefan Rozenfeld and Leah Rozenfeld Sills  
Photo: Cristina Cerone*

## INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF B’NAI B’RITH

On June 23, 2019, **Mariana Abrantes de Sousa**, Treasurer of the Sousa Mendes Foundation, spoke about Aristides de Sousa Mendes and the work of the Sousa Mendes Foundation during the **International Council of B’nai B’rith Meeting**. She took the opportunity to thank one of the B’nai B’rith delegates present, **Robert B. Spitzer**, who has provided invaluable legal assistance to the Sousa Mendes Foundation since its founding in 2010. Mariana’s talk was followed by testimonials by **Monica Barzilay** and **Jeannette V. Fischer**, whose families received visas from Aristides de Sousa Mendes, as well as by **António Moncada de Sousa Mendes**, grandson of the hero. The audience included around forty B’nai B’rith International leaders from ten countries, plus some local dignitaries including **Raphael Gamzou**, Ambassador of Israel to Portugal. Everyone knew the context only too well – how the invading armies rapidly circumvented the Maginot Line and forced millions of people to flee their homes in Europe in May 1940. But few of those present knew of the extraordinary story of the Portuguese diplomat. For more on the event, please [click here](#).



*L-R: B’nai B’rith CEO Daniel Mariaschin, Mariana Abrantes de Sousa, Robert B. Spitzer, Esq.*

# LUXEMBOURG EXHIBITION

The Sousa Mendes Foundation partnered with the National Archives of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg to present a large and comprehensive exhibition on Aristides de Sousa Mendes and the families he saved. The exhibition, titled ***Aristides de Sousa Mendes: A Portuguese Consul Between Human Conscience and Raison d'Etat***, opened on November 28, 2019 and continues until February 22, 2020. The exhibition was conceived by **Ambassador Georges Santer** of Luxembourg. It was curated by **Corinne Schroeder**, with research assistance from **Sanja Simic** and **Charles Lux**.

The Sousa Mendes Foundation contributed numerous objects and documents to the exhibition from our own collection and from the following individual lenders, whom we would like to thank: **Deborah de Winter, Joan Arnay Halperin, Jeannette V. Fischer, Karen Hammonds, Michel Hersen, Marilyn Jacques, Monique Rubens Krohn, Stefan and Linda Rozenfeld, Gaia Starr, and Daniel Subotnik.**

The exhibition is primarily installed along both sides of a long hallway. Here, visitors can learn about Sousa Mendes, his early life, his diplomatic postings, the events of 1940, and his decision to defy his government in order to save the lives of persecuted refugees. Some of these refugees were the ruling houses of Europe, including that of Luxembourg, and on view is one of the trunks used by the Grand Ducal family during their exodus. Midway down the hallway, the space opens up to a room lined from floor to ceiling with pages from the Sousa Mendes Visa Registry Book – the ledger in which the names of the visa recipients were recorded as the visas were being granted in 1940. The effect is that of entering into the book, surrounded by the names of the fleeing refugees. It is in this room that the Sousa Mendes Foundation's objects are on view, telling the story of refugee families from Belgium, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Poland escaping the Nazi advance. A 48-page full-color catalogue accompanies the exhibition and is available in English, French or Portuguese for 8€ plus postage. For more information, please [click here](#).



*Grand Ducal Family of Luxembourg*

One of the families saved by Aristides de Sousa Mendes is the Grand Ducal Family of Luxembourg, headed at the time by **Grand Duchess Charlotte**. She wrote of Sousa Mendes,

“HIS MERITS, IN A TIME OF TRAGEDY AND PANIC, WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED BY THE LUXEMBOURG REFUGEES, MANY OF THEM OF JEWISH FAITH, BY THE MEMBERS OF THE LUXEMBOURG GOVERNMENT AND BY MY OWN FAMILY, WHO WERE SAVED BY HIS INITIATIVE FROM CERTAIN PERSECUTION AND THUS ENABLED TO REACH THE FREE COUNTRIES.”



*A visitor views a testimonial of visa recipient Jean-Claude van Itallie, near objects from visa recipient families Frankfort, Heymans, and Stadler.*



*L-R: Mariana Abrantes, Jeannette V. Fischer, and Ambassador Georges Santer.*



*Sousa Mendes exhibition in Luxembourg.*



# FILM SCREENINGS

The Sousa Mendes Foundation is the North-American distributor of the film ***Disobedience: The Sousa Mendes Story***. Since 2012 we have been showing this film in communities across the United States and Canada. If you would like to book a film screening near you, please contact our film distribution representative, **Robert Jacobvitz**, at [robert@sousamendesfoundation.org](mailto:robert@sousamendesfoundation.org).



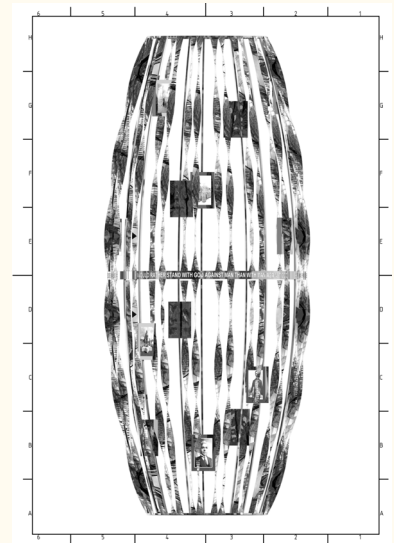
Robert Jacobvitz

## A HERO COMES TO LIGHT

Aristides de Sousa Mendes' late grandson, **Sebastian Mendes**, dreamt of creating a sculpture to memorialize his grandfather's heroic actions. He envisaged that it would be the interpretation of a chandelier, as he remembered that refugees visiting his father when he was a child told stories of looking up to the skies and getting solace on the death marches by imagining that the stars were the lights of their chandeliers at home.

In 2019, Sebastian's friend and colleague, internationally known public artist, **Werner Klotz**, approached the Sousa Mendes Foundation to help make Sebastian's ideas a reality. With the Foundation's support, Werner designed a sculpture that contextualizes the chaotic situation of Bordeaux in June of 1940 and pays homage to Sebastian's grandfather's moral courage. Inside the sculpture will be twelve video screens with content about Sousa Mendes and the refugees as well as sound installations.

This project is being spearheaded by Sousa Mendes Foundation Board members **Monique Rubens Krohn** and **Leah Rozenfeld Sills**. To date, museums and Holocaust centers in Atlanta, Kansas City and Berlin have expressed interest in the exhibit. Soon we will launch a GoFundMe campaign on the Foundation's website to raise the \$100,000 necessary to fabricate the sculpture and pay for any associated storage, insurance and shipping costs. It is the Foundation's aim eventually to find a permanent home in Portugal for the sculpture – preferably in the Sousa Mendes home, Casa do Passal.



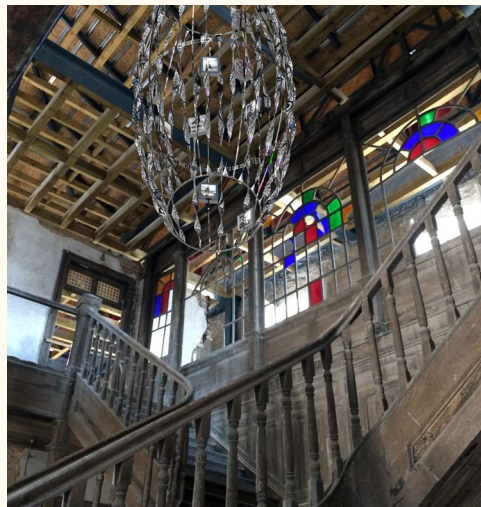
Drawing of Sousa Mendes video sculpture

According to the artist  
Werner Klotz:

“ THE SCULPTURE  
LEADS VIEWERS  
TO THINK ABOUT TODAY'S  
REFUGEES AND TO  
CONSIDER WHAT ACTIONS  
THEY THEMSELVES  
CAN TAKE. HOLDING  
EVERYTHING TOGETHER  
BOTH PHYSICALLY AND  
METAPHORICALLY IN  
THE SCULPTURE IS THE  
METAL CENTERPIECE  
THAT REPRESENTS  
SOUSA MENDES' MORAL  
FOUNDATION AND  
COURAGE.”



The artist Werner Klotz at work



Artist rendering of video sculpture in  
the Casa do Passal.



# JOURNEY ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM



*Visa recipient Henri Dyner with Carlota and Matilda de Sousa Mendes, great-great-granddaughters of the hero.*

*Photo: Maria Isabel Camacho-Santos*

The Sousa Mendes Foundation organized another successful **Journey on the Road to Freedom** tour through France, Spain and Portugal in the footsteps of Aristides de Sousa Mendes and the refugees of 1940. In 2019 we had a record number of Holocaust educators joining us. The Journey continues to be newsworthy. The tour began in Bordeaux, France, and followed the path to freedom, ending in Lisbon, Portugal. We had crews from French and Portuguese television with us, along with a team from the German news magazine **Der Spiegel**. Tour co-leaders were **Mariana Abrantes, Robert Jacobvitz** and **Olivia Mattis**.

Please contact us if you are interested in joining us on a future trip. **We would love to have you!**



*The Journey group in Bordeaux at the Sousa Mendes bust, Esplanade Charles de Gaulle. Photo: Maurice Weiss/Der Spiegel*



*Journey group at the Sousa Mendes home, Casa do Passal  
Photo: Maurice Weiss/Der Spiegel*



*The Journey group in Figueira da Foz, Portugal.  
Photo: Maurice Weiss/Der Spiegel*

Rave reviews from prior participants: "A wonderful experience!" "Enlightening, inspiring, often emotional." "One of the best trips I have ever taken." "Super!" "It went beyond my expectations." "Much more than I expected. It was a once in a lifetime experience." "Inspirational and wonderful!"



# SOUSA MENDES AND ELEANOR ROOSEVELT THE STORY OF THE SS QUANZA



Filmmaker Laura Seltzer-Duny at the  
Roosevelt House screening  
Photo: Matthew Capowski

The Sousa Mendes Foundation co-sponsored two New York screenings of the documentary film, ***Nobody Wants Us*** (2019), telling the gripping true story of a boatload of Jewish refugees who were saved by both **Aristides de Sousa Mendes** and **Eleanor Roosevelt**. The first screening was held on Sunday, August 11, 2019 at the Center for Jewish History, in partnership with the **American Sephardi Federation**. The second screening was held on Tuesday, December 10, International Human Rights Day, at Hunter College, in partnership with **Roosevelt House** and the **Jewish Studies Center**. Both screenings were sold out.

Following the first screening, **Michael Dobbs** of the US Holocaust Museum moderated a panel discussion that included **Blanche Weisen Cook**, Eleanor Roosevelt biographer; **Annette Lachmann**, a passenger on the Quanza in 1940; **Kathleen Rand**, whose father Wolf Rand was the passenger who successfully filed suit against the shipping company, forcing the vessel to remain in port until the conflict was resolved; and **Stephen Morewitz**, the leading world expert on the Quanza story, whose grandparents Norfolk, Virginia law firm of Morewitz & Morewitz was hired by Wolf Rand and successfully litigated the case.

*Post-film panel at the Center for Jewish History. FIRST ROW L-R: Laura Seltzer-Duny, Blanche Wiesen-Cook, Michael Dobbs, Annette Lachmann, Kathleen Rand. SECOND ROW L-R: Jason Guberman, Executive Director of the American Sephardi Federation, and Olivia Mattis.*

*Photo: Chrystie Sherman*



**Please contact us at (877) 797-9759 if you would like to screen this film in your community.**



*Passengers trapped aboard the S.S. Quanza.*

According to Michael Dobbs, the Quanza incident is a timely reminder that individuals make a difference. Without visas supplied by the Portuguese diplomat Aristides de Sousa Mendes, many of the Jewish passengers on board the Quanza might well have been stranded in Nazi-occupied Europe. Without the legal brilliance of a maritime lawyer named Jacob Morewitz, the ship would have been obliged to sail back to Europe. Without the intervention of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, the passengers would not have been permitted to land. It took three people from entirely different backgrounds, to save dozens of lives that might otherwise have been lost.



# EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES

2019 marks the creation of our Educational Initiatives Committee, chaired by **Joan Arnay Halperin**, with five Holocaust educators from the United States and Canada: **Stuart Freedman**, **Myra Bard Michaelson**, **Heidi Omlor**, **Joanne Tuck**, and **Ellen Widawsky**. The committee's goal is to find new ways to bring the story of Aristides de Sousa Mendes into the classroom.

On April 1, 2019 Joan unveiled the Sousa Mendes Refugee Suitcase, consisting of a class set (25 copies) of her book, ***My Sister's Eyes: A Family Chronicle of Rescue and Loss During World War II***, and the accompanying curricular unit created by **Jane Robbins Denny**, **Olivia Mattis** and the author with a foreword by **Dr. Michael Berenbaum** at an "Echoes and Reflections" workshop titled ***Teaching the Holocaust, Empowering Students***, hosted by **Donna Rosenblum**, Supervisor of the BOCES Nassau County Library.

If you would like to add your name to those on the front lines of promoting Holocaust education by funding a Sousa Mendes Refugee Suitcase, please contact: [joan@sousamendesfoundation.org](mailto:joan@sousamendesfoundation.org).

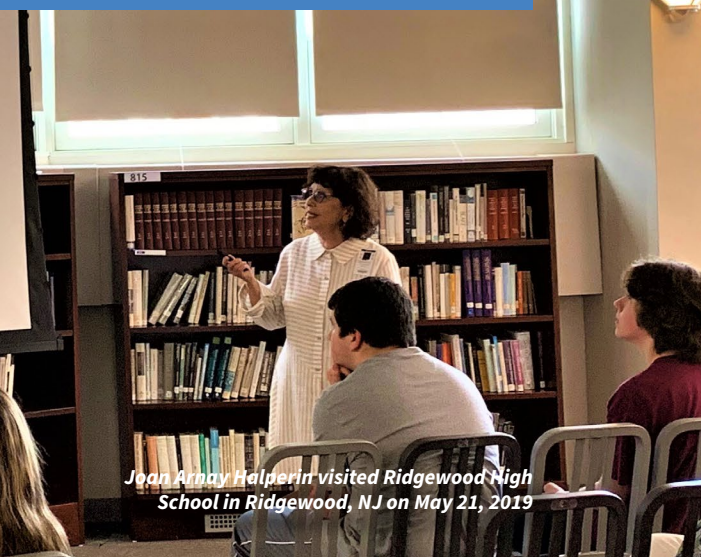
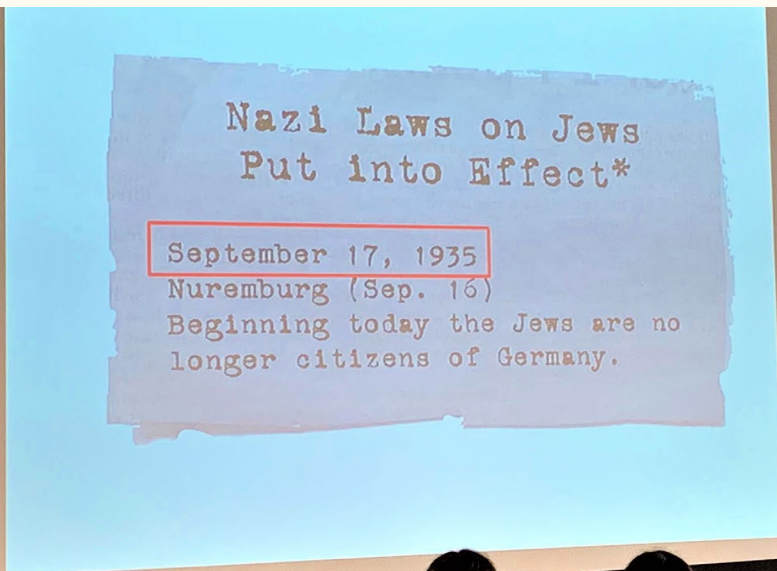


Joan Halperin and Ellen Widawsky with the Sousa Mendes Refugee Suitcase.

## GRATITUDE FROM A STUDENT

“Thank you so much for coming to my high school and sharing your family's story with us. I greatly appreciate your courage in writing a book on such a serious topic. I had no idea that Portugal had played a big role in helping refugees get to safety. It shocked and pleased me that Aristides de Sousa Mendes, a devout Catholic, would put his career and family at risk to save many Jewish people at that time. From your presentation, I will never forget the impact a single upstander can make.”

Emma, Grade 9, Ridgewood High School, Ridgewood, NJ



Joan Arnay Halperin visited Ridgewood High School in Ridgewood, NJ on May 21, 2019

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generous support!*

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To make a donation by check, please make payable to "Sousa Mendes Foundation" and mail to the address listed.

To make a donation by PayPal or credit card, please [click here](#).



**SOUSA MENDES FOUNDATION**

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