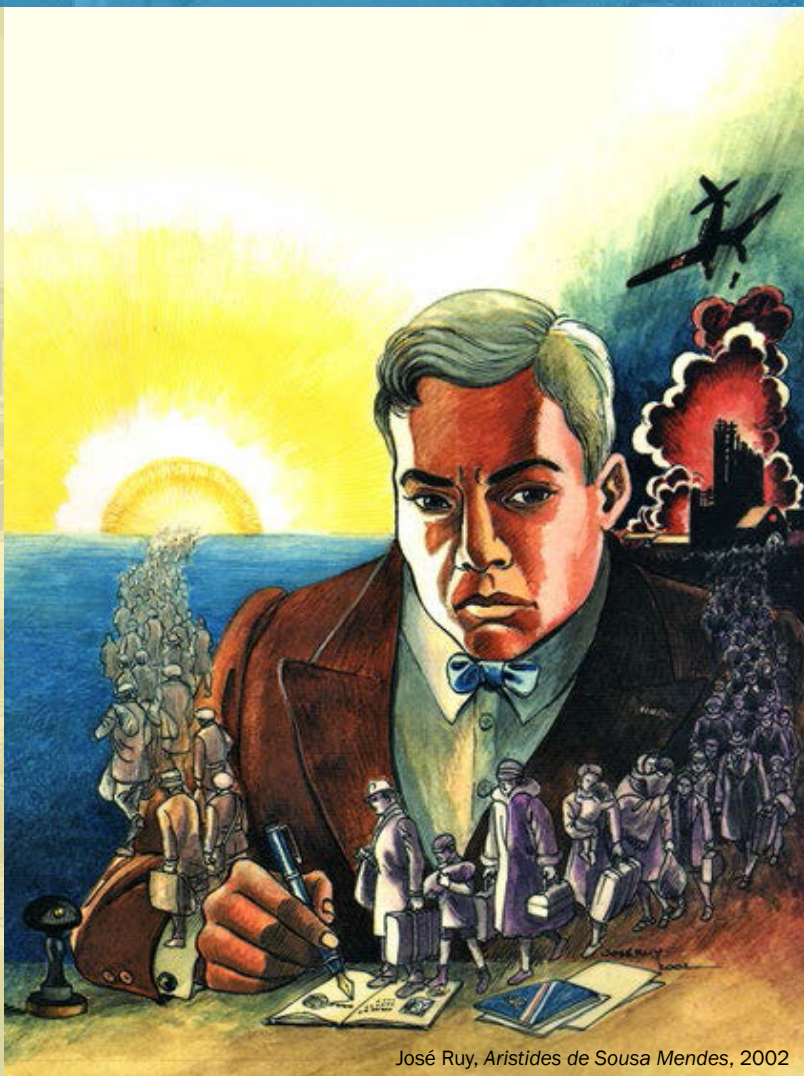


# Sousa Mendes Foundation

## Annual Report 2013



José Ruy, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, 2002

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Casa do Passal with installation by Eric Moed, Cabanas de Viriato, Portugal

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**PH: (206) 426-5951**

**<http://www.sousamendesfoundation.org>**



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Sousa Mendes Foundation was created in September 2010 with no initial budget—an act of love of a team of volunteers driven by the obligation to remember. Since then we've accomplished a great deal. In 2013, as you see in these pages, we held events throughout North America, co-organized a “Journey on the Road to Freedom” from Paris to Lisbon, and received worldwide news coverage as well as a significant grant.

With visibility comes credibility and the potential to achieve large-scale and long-term exposure for the legacy of my grandfather, Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Looking forward, the Foundation has its sights on projects of lasting impact such as educational programs and permanent landmarks.

I hope you enjoy this 2013 Annual Report that shows where we've been and what we've achieved. May it bring you the same pride that drives the Sousa Mendes Foundation's team of dedicated volunteers.



**Louis-Philippe Mendes**  
President, Sousa Mendes Foundation



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## OUR MISSION

Founded in 2010, the Sousa Mendes Foundation is dedicated to honoring the memory of Aristides de Sousa Mendes and to educating the public about refugees and rescue during the Holocaust.

Named "Organization of the Year" in 2012 by *The Portuguese Tribune*, the Sousa Mendes Foundation is engaged in a worldwide search for families who escaped the Holocaust through Portugal.

The Foundation has a twofold mission: raising funds for the creation of a Sousa Mendes Museum and Site of Conscience and sponsoring projects that teach the importance of moral courage in a civilized world.

.....  
*"I could not have acted otherwise, and I therefore accept all that has befallen me with love."*

- Aristides de Sousa Mendes



## SOUSA MENDES FOUNDATION WINS \$25,000 GRANT FROM CLAIMS CONFERENCE



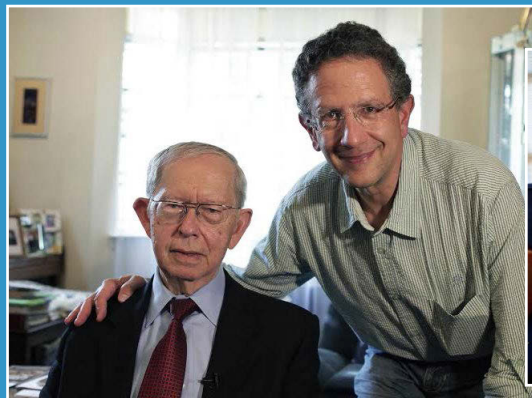
Claims Conference ועידת התביעות  
 The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

On November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013, the Sousa Mendes Foundation was awarded \$25,000 by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) in support of our publishing, research and exhibition programs. This grant will allow us to gather and disseminate new information on refugees and rescue during the Holocaust and to expand the reach of our educational programming. As this is a matching grant, the Foundation must raise another \$25,000 in order to receive the full amount of the award.

Please help us reach our goal of making Aristides de Sousa Mendes a shining example for young people. To contribute, please go to <http://www.sousamendesfoundation.org/how-can-i-help/> Thank you!

## CAPTURING THEIR STORIES

One of the foundation's top priorities is to interview recipients of Sousa Mendes visas and capture their memories and testimonials on film. These recipients are all in their 70's, 80's and 90's, so time is of the essence. Each interview is professionally filmed to create an enduring visual document. We plan to incorporate these stories into our website in order to educate the public, and especially young people, on the many steps involved in the quest for safety and freedom during the Holocaust.

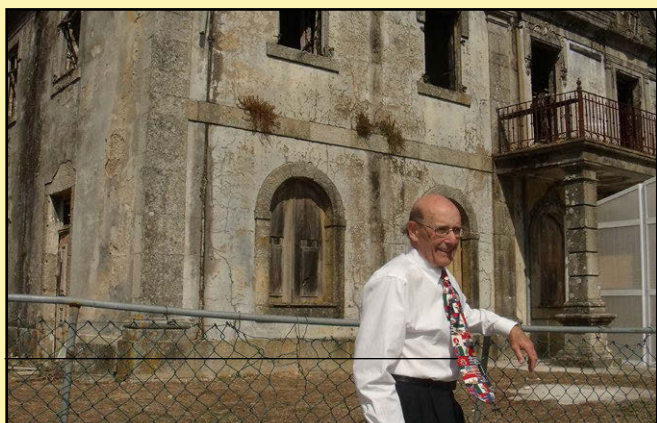


**Top Left:** Visa recipient Jacob Censor with interviewer Dr. Paul Freudman. Photo: Anton Evangelista

**Bottom Left:** Board member and interviewer Harry Oesterreicher with visa recipient Elza Weinman. Photo: Anton Evangelista

**Right:** Visa recipient Ruth Charchat holding a photo of herself and her mother during the exodus. Photo: Heather Walsh

## JOURNEY OF REMEMBRANCE FROM PARIS TO LISBON



Visa recipient Lee Sterling in front of the Sousa Mendes home, the Casa do Passal. Photo: Janet de Winter.

On June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013, a group from all over the world assembled in Paris to begin an unusual two-week trip: a “Journey on the Road to Freedom” in the footsteps of Aristides de Sousa Mendes and the refugees of 1940. The group consisted of members of the Sousa Mendes family, along with representatives of dozens of visa recipient families and two direct visa recipients. Also included were a composer, Neely Bruce, writing an oratorio on the Sousa Mendes story, and a filmmaker, Semyon Pinkhasov, who recorded the trip as part of a documentary film.

The trip was organized in partnership with two French organizations: the Comité Sousa Mendes (*Comité national français en hommage à Aristides de Sousa Mendes*) and the AJPN (*Anonymes, justes et persécutés durant la période nazie*), both based in Bordeaux. The planning committee was chaired by Géraud Mendes and included Manuel Dias, Hellen Kaufmann, Bernard Lhoumeau, Andrée Lotey, Olivia Mattis, and Della Peretti.

After Paris, the group headed south to Bordeaux and Bayonne and visited the Portuguese consulates where the visas were delivered in the Spring of 1940. From there they traveled to the French/Spanish border at Hendaye/Irun and walked across the “bridge to freedom” in the company of the Mayor of Hendaye.

On each day of the journey, participants took turns reading from the list of names of refugees who received visas on that precise date in 1940. Many participants shared personal memories or family stories. After France, the group crossed

Spain by bus, spending the night in Salamanca. The following day they entered Portugal, where they were welcomed in the border town of Vilar Formoso by government officials, the local population and the press. There they planted the first tree in a planned grove devoted to the memory of Sousa Mendes.

Other sites visited include Belmonte, Guarda, Tomar, Cabanas de Viriato, Coimbra, Figueira da Foz and Lisbon. In Cabanas, the group visited Sousa Mendes’s home and burial place and participated in the opening of a temporary installation by the American architect Eric Moed. The trip was extensively covered in the media, culminating in a cover story in *The International Herald Tribune* and on page 4 of *The New York Times*.



“As one of Aristides’ and Angelina’s granddaughters, I found visiting the places they’ve lived, walking down a street they’ve walked on, enjoying the food and music they’ve enjoyed not only helped me get to know them, but also myself.”

.....  
Sheila Abranches-Pierce



L-R: Sousa Mendes grandchildren, Linda Mendes, Sheila Abranches-Pierce, Aristides Sousa Mendes and Géraud Mendes. Photo: Jane Friedman

“The activities of the Sousa Mendes Foundation, and namely the group trip organized to Cabanas de Viriato, Portugal in June, was a benchmark event in terms of raising the awareness of the humanistic decisions taken by the former Portuguese Consul in Bordeaux.”

- **Rui Boavista Marques, Trade and Investment Commissioner, Government of Portugal**



## SOUSA MENDES PLAYGROUND INAUGURATED IN TORONTO

Aristides de Sousa Mendes loved children, so it was with great joy that the Sousa Mendes Foundation took part in a dedication ceremony on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013 in Toronto of a children's playground in Arlington Parkette renamed in his honor.

The event began with live Portuguese music and folk dancing. The dedication was led by City Council member Joe Mihevc and included the participation of Lígia Nóbrega and Carlos Morgadinho,

representing the Associação Cultural 25 de Abril; Julio Vilela, the Consul General of Portugal in Toronto; and Micki Mizrahi, representing the UJA Federation. The Sousa Mendes Foundation was represented by Louis-Philippe Mendes and Dr. Andrée Lotey.

The national anthems of Israel and Portugal were sung, followed by *O Canada*. Several representatives of Toronto's Portuguese clubs and associations participated along with the Ontario Association of Portuguese Veterans. The event was enhanced by the presence of three Sousa Mendes visa recipients: Dr. Mary Seeman; Mrs. Rochelle Simsovic Kashtan and Dr. Benjamin Schlesinger.



L-R: Carlos Morgadinho, Joe Mihevc, Tara Coley, Dr. Julio Vilela, Eric Petersiel, Louis-Philippe Mendes, Dr. Andrée Lotey, Rochelle Kashtan, Ligia Nobrega

After the ceremony, everyone was invited to a screening of *Disobedience: The Sousa Mendes Story* at the Leo Baeck Day School located across the street from the new Sousa Mendes Playground.

## SYMPOSIUM AT THE CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY

On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, a capacity audience filled New York City's Center for Jewish History for a symposium and film screening on the subject of "Portugal and the Jewish Refugee Crisis of World War II." This event was co-organized by Dr. Marion Kaplan, Skirball Professor of History, NYU; Dr. Olivia Mattis, Past President, Sousa Mendes Foundation; and Judith Siegel, Director of Academic and Public Programming, Center for Jewish History. It was co-sponsored by the Center for Jewish History, Sousa Mendes Foundation, Leo Baeck Institute and American Sephardi Federation.

Speakers were Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, Former Director, Department for the Righteous, Yad Vashem; Margarida Ramalho, author of *Lisbon: City During Wartime*; and Marion Kaplan. Topics included the intricacies of Portuguese political neutrality; the

daily lives of Jewish refugees; and the life-saving actions of Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Louis-Philippe Mendes, grandson of Sousa Mendes and the new President of the SMF, joined the Q & A, moderated by Olivia Mattis. Following the talks there was a screening of the documentary film, *Lisbon: Harbour of Hope*. A display in the lobby of one refugee family's story, curated by Dr. Frank Mecklenburg of the Leo Baeck Institute, rounded out the program.

Many of the attendees (pictured below), were themselves former refugees who escaped the Holocaust through Portugal.



Dr. Mordecai Paldiel speaking about Sousa Mendes



Margarida Ramalho speaking about Portugal during World War II



## DISOBEDIENCE: THE SOUSA MENDES STORY



The Sousa Mendes Foundation is proud to represent the French feature film, *Disobedience: The Sousa Mendes Story*, in North America. Starring Bernard Le Coq and directed by Joël Santoni, this film tells the gripping story of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese Consul in Bordeaux, France, who disobeyed his government in order to save human lives.

In the past year, the movie has been shown in New York, New Jersey, California, Arizona, Texas, Washington, Hawaii and in Canada, both Montreal and Toronto, to critical acclaim, winning the award for Best Narrative Feature at the Los Angeles Jewish Film Festival. In addition to festival screenings and special showings at synagogues and community centers, *Disobedience* had a theatrical engagement at a Harkins cinema in the Phoenix area, where it was held over for a second week by popular demand. Speakers, including visa recipients, their descendants and Sousa Mendes family members, gave moving personal testimonials and took questions from the audience.

## UNITED NATIONS REMEMBRANCE HIGHLIGHTS HOLOCAUST RESCUE

On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, the Sousa Mendes Foundation co-sponsored a presentation of Michael King's award-winning documentary film, *The Rescuers*, at United Nations Headquarters in New York on the occasion of the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. After the screening, Sousa Mendes visa recipient Leon Moed spoke with emotion to the capacity audience about his family's escape from Nazi-occupied Belgium through France, Spain and Portugal. The Sousa Mendes story was also featured in an exhibition on view in the U.N. Visitor Centre organized by the



L-R: Maher Nasser, U.N. Department of Public Information; Michael King, Director of *The Rescuers*; Joyce Mandell, Producer, *The Rescuers*; Leon Moed; Dr. Olivia Mattis, SMF; U.N. Undersecretary-General Peter Launskey-Tieffenthal, US Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo

Jewish Foundation for the Righteous. A large group of visa recipient family members braved frigid weather to participate in the event. Later that week, Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, Former Director of Yad Vashem's Department for the Righteous and a founding member of the Sousa Mendes Foundation's Advisory Council, delivered the Keynote Address in the U.N. General Assembly. In the video address by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Sousa Mendes Foundation was prominently thanked. We were honored to participate.

In 2014, *Disobedience* will be screened in Florida and Massachusetts and many cities throughout the US and Canada. Please contact us for information about scheduling a screening in your area!



"An important movie... engaging, well done and inspiring!"

— **Tablet Magazine,**  
**April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

"A tale ... so amazing in its audacity and inspiring in its simplicity, it's a wonder more people haven't heard about it."

— **Bill Goodykoontz,**  
**The Arizona Republic,**  
**May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2013**



## GRAPHIC NOVEL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Sousa Mendes Foundation is delighted to present English and French editions of the comic book, *Aristides de Sousa Mendes, Hero of the Holocaust* by Jose Ruy, an award-winning cartoonist. This magnificently illustrated graphic history was originally published in Portuguese and had already been translated into Hebrew, but French and English speakers did not have access to it. Soon that will change. We are half way there, as both of the translations have been completed thanks to Marie J. Gomes, a member of the SMF

research team who volunteered to translate it into French and Della Peretti, SMF board member, who provided the English translation. In Lisbon, Aristides Sousa Mendes, grandson of the Consul, acted as a multilingual go-between with the author, who had to ink in all of the translated dialogue in languages that he does not speak. To make the work more accessible to North American audiences, Rebecca Quam, a student intern from St. Mary's College, has researched and written a companion glossary of people and places mentioned in

the work. We are delighted to announce that the translations were completed this summer and we are now looking for a publisher. You can expect to see the book for sale on our website soon. It will be a treasured volume for visa recipients and their descendants to pass along so that future generations will understand the richness and drama of their own history and appreciate the role of Aristides de Sousa Mendes in ensuring their family's survival.





# SOUSA MENDES FOUNDATION IN THE NEWS

A sample of the press coverage we have received in Canada, India, Israel, Portugal, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

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Ávila, Miguel Valle, "Was Lisbon Journalist 'Onix' Portugal's Deep Throat? Aristides de Sousa Mendes Defended in the US Press in 1946," **The Portuguese Tribune** (1 October 2013): 28.

Chang, Sophia, "Holocaust Survivor Thanks Savior at Exhibit," **Newsday**, 2 April 2011.

Fischer, Thomas, "Auf Fluchtwegen der Vorfahren nach Lissabon," **Neue Zürcher Zeitung**, 25 June 2013.

Gonchar, Michael, "6 Q's About the News; Paying Tribute to a Diplomat Who Saved Thousands from Nazi Persecution," **The New York Times**, 11 July 2013.

Hecht, Warren, "It's Never Too Late to Give Thanks," **Queens Jewish Link**, April 2013.

House, Christian, "Sousa Mendes Saved More Lives Than Schindler So Why Isn't He a Household Name Too?" **The Independent** (London), 17 October 2010.

"Jews Make Pilgrimage to Honor Portugal's 'Righteous'," **The Forward**, 10 July 2013.

Lieber, Chavie, "New Exhibit Honors a Portuguese Diplomat Who Saved Thousands From Nazis," **Tablet**, 1 August 2013.

Maltz, Judy, "A Pilgrimage to the Home of 'the Portuguese Schindler,'" **Haaretz**, 1 August 2013.

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Schiffman, Lisa, "Sousa Mendes' List," **Newsday**, 29 November 2012, pp.B1, B4-B5.

Schrafel, Danny, "New Film Heralds Unsung Hero," **The Long-Islander**, 26 April 2012, cover story.

"Search is Launched for Families Who Escaped the Holocaust Through Portugal," **PR Newswire**, 9 January 2012.

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Soares, Alexandre, "A lista de Sousa Mendes," **Visão**, 13 June 2013, cover story.



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