

ANNUAL REPORT

2017



SOUSA MENDES FOUNDATION

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COVER IMAGE: Gerald Mendes accepts the Order of Liberty medal on behalf of his grandfather from His Excellency President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Republic of Portugal, April 3, 2017.

DESIGNER: Fiona Cashell

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



In June of 1940, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese Consul-General in Bordeaux, France, was faced with real human suffering. Refugees by the thousands clamored for Portuguese visas as they escaped persecution and war. The crowds multiplied by the day, and pressure mounted. But the Portuguese government was intransigent and forbade the issuance of visas to Jews, Russians, stateless refugees and others without prior approval. Time was of the essence, as the Nazis were approaching Bordeaux. What could he do? What **should** he do?

Sousa Mendes, at great personal risk, chose to follow his conscience. In a short period of time, he issued visas to thousands of refugees, thereby saving their lives. And he never regretted his decision. “I could not have acted otherwise,” he declared.

Now, more than ever, the work of the Foundation is urgent and timely. Our educational programming brings the moving and powerful story of Sousa Mendes to communities from coast to coast in order to **promote the value of moral courage** and apply the lessons of history to today's world.

Let us face this task together!

Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Olivia".

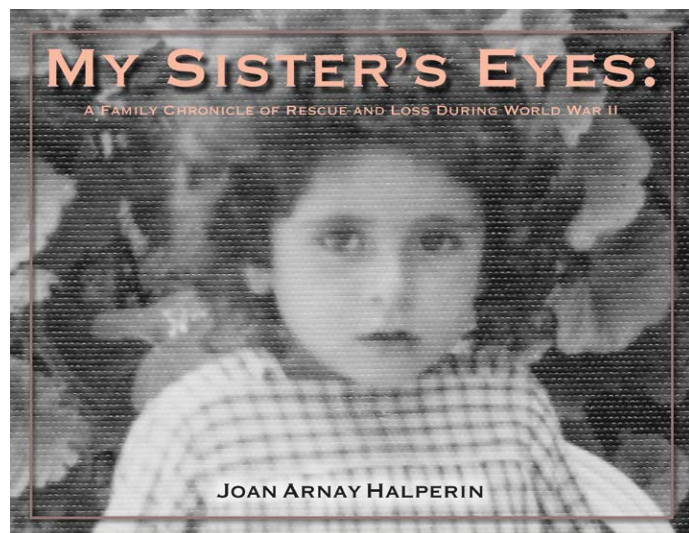
Olivia Mattis, Ph.D.

President, Sousa Mendes Foundation



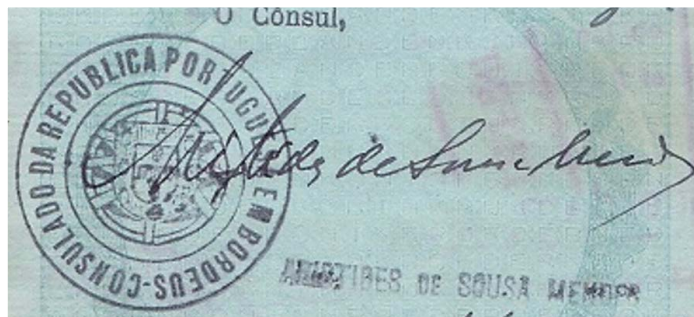
The Sousa Mendes Foundation, dedicated to honoring the memory of Aristides de Sousa Mendes and to educating the world about his good work, has a two-fold mission: raising funds for the restoration of the Casa do Passal and the creation within its walls of a museum and memorial site; and sponsoring US-based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

Read the Touching Story of One Family Saved by Aristides de Sousa Mendes



“My Sister’s Eyes is a charming work written with precision and passion. It tells the story of the Krakowiak family from their prosperous life in Poland and Belgium through the Nazi onslaught and their perilous flight to freedom. The story unfolds so gracefully that one does not quite realize its power as we experience the world before in its elegance, the descent into hell, the struggle to find a way out of Europe, the moral heroism

SOUSA MENDES FOUNDATION LAUNCHES INITIATIVE TO DOCUMENT AND PRESERVE THE SOUSA MENDES LEGACY



Sousa Mendes visa in Dutch passport of refugee Annelies Kaufmann, courtesy of Rebel and Evie Good



Author Joan Arney Halperin with brother Richard Arney at her booksigning, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC

of the Portuguese Consul in Bordeaux and then their escape from the inferno and their journey to a new world and a new life. The brevity of the work intensifies the depth of the journey, the words that are written and what cannot be written.”

- **Dr. Michael Berenbaum**, Director, Sigi Ziering Institute, American Jewish University; Founding Curator, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.

Proceeds of the sale of this touching and richly-illustrated book by Joan Arney Halperin benefit the educational work of the Sousa Mendes Foundation. **Order your copy today!** \$19.95. For more information, please visit www.sousamendesfoundation.org/store.

The Sousa Mendes Foundation holds a significant collection of materials documenting the 1940 exodus from Nazi-occupied Europe and the inspiring action of the Holocaust rescuer Aristides de Sousa Mendes. The Foundation, in collaboration with the Palmer School of Library and Information Science at Long Island University, is processing and preserving this collection for the future. Special thanks to our wonderful archivists Barbara Boies and Nicole Bubolo for their dedication to this project.

Do you have any items connected to World War II and/or the Sousa Mendes story such as family memoirs, artifacts, or passports with visas?

Please consider donating these items to the Sousa Mendes Foundation, as we are actively adding to the collection on a daily basis. Please **contact us** for details at (877) 797-9759 or olivia@sousamendesfoundation.org.



PORTUGAL'S HIGHEST HONOR

On Monday, April 3, 2017, Portugal's President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa bestowed a posthumous decoration on Aristides de Sousa Mendes: the **Grand Cross of the Order of Liberty**. Receiving it in front of the Sousa Mendes family home in Portugal was Gerald Mendes, grandson of Aristides de Sousa Mendes. "This is a very special honor," remarked President



His Excellency President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa with members of the Sousa Mendes family, Cabanas de Viriato, April 3, 2017.
Photo: António Gallobar

Rebelo de Sousa, "given at a time when the tragedies of new wars and persecutions bring painful images of rootless people looking for a land of freedom, in what is today the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War." **With each new honor comes justice for a man who saved so many lives and was so harshly punished.** At a time when the world needs heroes, Aristides de Sousa Mendes is now achieving a level of public appreciation that matches his place in history.

A Toast to Freedom!

On Sunday, October 29, 2017, the Sousa Mendes Foundation held its gala luncheon “A Toast to Freedom!” at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Battery Park, New York City. On this festive and joyous occasion, we honored Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Holocaust expert Dr. Eva Fogelman, and refugee advocate Maggie Favretti, and we paid tribute to the Spanish rescuer Eduardo Propper de Callejón. Guests were treated to highlights from Neely Bruce’s beautiful oratorio, *Circular 14: The Apotheosis of Aristides*, sung by Marina Harris, Gilad Paz and Benjamin Sloman. More photos here: <https://tinyurl.com/smf gala2017>.



Event sponsor Carlos Rodrigues, CEO of Banco BiG, Portugal



Honoree Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) with Sheila Abranches-Pierce, granddaughter of Aristides de Sousa Mendes



Above: His Excellency Domingos Fezas Vital, Ambassador of Portugal to the United States



Left: (from left to right) Ismail Ameen, Hannah Schmelkin, Gala Chair Leah Rozenfeld Sills, honoree Maggie Favretti, Mariana Abrantes and Axel Ahdriz



Honoree Dr. Eva Fogelman with husband Prof. Jerome Chanes



The Steppel family, children of siblings who received visas from Aristides de Sousa Mendes, had a family reunion at the gala.



Each guest received an individualized passport, with visa and ship (table) name



The Kleinhaus and Subotnik families. L-R: Harry Kleinhaus, Samantha Kleinhaus, Albert Kleinhaus, Paulette Freed, Dan Subotnik, Rose Subotnik



Sousa Mendes visa recipient John Beyersdorf with daughter Susan Maes and son Paul Beyersdorf



Actor Michel Gill, Master of Ceremonies, attended with his mother Nadine Gill, herself a former refugee who escaped Nazi-occupied Europe via Portugal

Our deepest thanks to the following donors of goods and services for this event:

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We Must Remain Vigilant



Brendan Good, grandson of Sousa Mendes visa recipient Annelies Kaufmann, with Louis-Philippe Mendes.
Photo credit: Heidi Powell

On Friday, January 27, 2017, the Holocaust Museum Houston paid tribute to Aristides de Sousa Mendes and the refugees that he saved. Louis-Philippe Mendes, grandson of the hero, gave the keynote address at the event marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day. "My grandfather's story is relevant to today's world," he told the audience, "and we must remain vigilant." The exhibit "Sousa Mendes and his Visas to Freedom," curated and lent by the Sousa Mendes Foundation, was on view at the Museum until the middle of March.



EXHIBITION ON RESCUERS AT THE HOLOCAUST AND HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER OF MAINE



This postage stamp, featuring five diplomat rescuers, was issued by Israel

The Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine presented an exhibit, "Heroism in Unjust Times: Rescuers During the Holocaust" on Wednesday, from May 2-August 11, 2017 at the Michael Klahr Center, located on the campus of the University of Maine at Augusta.

Aside from Sousa Mendes, other rescuers featured in the exhibit included Oskar Schindler, responsible for saving approximately 1,200 Jewish men, women and children; Raoul Wallenberg, who saved as many as 100,000 Hungarian Jews; Father Bruno (Henri Reynders), who protected 300-400 Jews, most of them children; and Muslim-Albanian families who saved Jews.

"Heroism in Unjust Times" was co-curated by the Sousa Mendes Foundation and featured objects and documents graciously lent by Ruth Hymans Charchat, Rudolph and Janet de Winter, Marilyn Eisenbruch Jacques, Jean-Claude van Itallie, Monique Rubens Krohn, Edith Kubicek, Sebastian Mendes, Kathleen Rand, Benjamin Schlesinger, Georgette Lorié Standish, Mona Pearl Treyball, and others. Many thanks to Liz Helitzer, Executive Director of the Center, for bringing this story to the people of Maine.



Film still of *Disobedience: The Sousa Mendes Story* starring Bernard Le Coq

FILM SCREENINGS

Audiences love the film *Disobedience: The Sousa Mendes Story* by Joel Santoni that tells the gripping true story of one man who followed his conscience and saved thousands of innocent lives. In 2017, the Sousa Mendes Foundation brought this award-winning film to communities in Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, and London, Ontario — often with a speaker to lead a post-film discussion.

If you would like to bring the inspiring story of Aristides de Sousa Mendes to your own community, please contact us to arrange a film screening or other special event. Our film distribution coordinator is **Robert Jacobvitz**, and he would love to hear from you. His email is:

robert@sousamendesfoundation.org

NEW MUSEUM "FRONTIER OF PEACE"



Mariana Abrantes, right, of the Sousa Mendes Foundation with Chris Collins of the Bodhi Tree Foundation at the wall "Thank you, Portugal!" sponsored by both foundations at the museum Vilar Formoso, Frontier of Peace

On the Portuguese-Spanish border stands a new museum opened in August 2017, "**Vilar Formoso, Fronteira da Paz,**" telling the story of Aristides de Sousa Mendes and the refugees of 1940. This project was



Entrance of the museum "Frontier of Peace"

designed by the architect Luisa Pacheco Marques with historical consultant Margarida Ramalho. The Sousa Mendes Foundation supplied images of the families that received visas from Aristides de Sousa Mendes along with artifacts such as passports and visas and an original doll.

Hours of Operation:

Wednesday-Sunday: 10 a.m.-12.30 p.m. and 2-6 p.m.
Tuesday: 2-6 p.m. Closed Mondays

Admission price: 4 €

For more information, call: +351 271 149 459



The group gathers at the Sousa Mendes bust on the Esplanade Charles de Gaulle, Bordeaux. Photo: Bernard Lhoumeau

JOURNEY ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

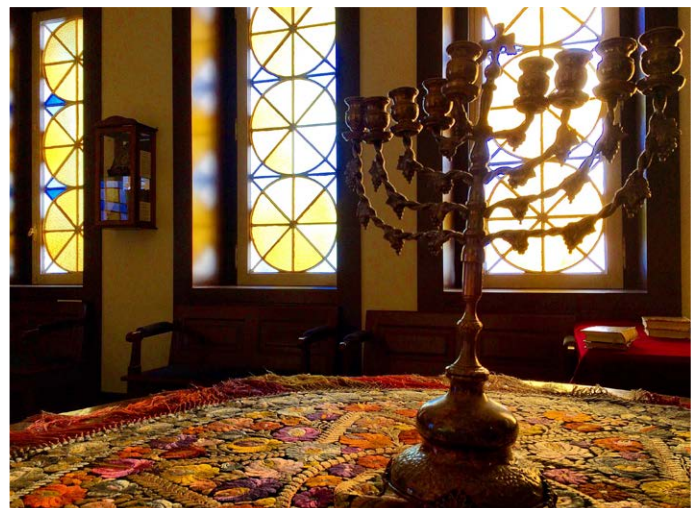
In 2017, the Sousa Mendes Foundation brought another group of visa recipient families on a pilgrimage to retrace the footsteps of Aristides de Sousa Mendes and the refugees of 1940. Participants came from France, Germany, Portugal, the United States, and even Cuba. Visa recipient Lissy Jarvik, who came on the trip in 2016 with her sons and daughter-in-law returned in 2017 with her son and granddaughters. This was the first time that we have had three generations of a family making the trip together, and it was extra meaningful.



Ella Jarvik shared her thoughts at the Sousa Mendes bust, Bordeaux

Highlights of the tour were the Bordeaux bust of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese consulates in Bordeaux and Bayonne where the visas were issued, the Bordeaux synagogue where refugees gathered, the “bridge to freedom” connecting France

and Spain, the new “Frontier of Peace” museum in the Spanish-Portuguese border village of Vilar Formoso, the Sousa Mendes family home in Cabanas de Viriato, the refugee quarter and synagogue in Porto, the synagogue



Congregation Shaare Tikvah in Lisbon, where refugees gathered in 1940. Photo: Misha Pinkhasov

in Lisbon, and the Presidential Palace where we were received by the President himself. At each stop along the Journey, participants shared family stories, testimonials, tears, and laughter.

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!*

Please join us on our next tour – it’s a trip you will never forget! Open to Holocaust educators!



FUTURE SOUSA MENDES MUSEUM IN PORTUGAL

PHASE II CONCEPT COMPETITION

Since its inception in 2010, the Sousa Mendes Foundation has had as one of its prime objectives helping to raise funds for the creation of a memorial museum in his family home, Casa do Passal, in Cabanas de Viriato. The project to restore the home and transform it into a memorial museum entered the important Phase II in July 2017 with the launching of an architectural Concept Competition.

Casa do Passal has been unoccupied since Aristides de Sousa Mendes died in Lisbon in 1954 and his family dispersed. It was purchased by Fundação Aristides de Sousa Mendes (FASM) in 2001 with funds from the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and classified as a Portuguese National Monument in 2011. Having fallen into ruin with the collapse of the roof, the home was saved in 2014 with emergency restoration work (Phase I) by the regional heritage authorities, Direção Regional de Cultura do Centro (DRCC), to the great joy and relief of the growing number of admirers of Aristides de Sousa Mendes worldwide. Although the interior is not yet restored, the house is becoming one of the most photographed sites in the region.

The Concept Competition, spearheaded by the Municipality of Carregal do Sal, with technical assistance from DRCC, was open to architects qualified to practice in Portugal, and six proposals were submitted on

September 25, 2017. The Competition is a formal public procurement procedure, since the Phase II work will again be supported by public funds, including grants from the European Union, with publication in the platform www.acingov.pt. The proposals were evaluated and ranked by a jury, and the results were presented publicly on November 6, 2017.

The winner of the contract will be announced by the Municipality in 2018. Then, there will be open public hearings to further define the contents of the project. The Sousa Mendes Foundation plans to participate in this process on behalf of the visa recipient families worldwide.



Journey on the Road to Freedom group inside the Casa do Passal, June 29, 2017

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Michel Gill, spokesman and Master of Ceremonies
Mary Kay Lazarus Public Relations
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