

2018

ANNUAL REPORT



**SOUSA MENDES
FOUNDATION**

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Cover image: Sousa Mendes visa recipients Stefan Rozenfeld and Armand Lerner. Photo: Cristina Cerone

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Olivia Mattis

Our programming in 2018 began with a sensational musical performance to a full house in the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah on the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The performance was of Neely Bruce's dramatic oratorio ***Circular 14: The Apotheosis of Aristides***, and it was performed by 500 young people from all over the state of Utah, spearheaded by the Utah Youth Orchestras and Ensembles and their artistic director Barbara Scowcroft.

Other programming throughout the year included **exhibitions, film screenings, lectures, school visits and other educational events** across the United States in communities in Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC, as well as in Portugal.

Behind the scenes, we continued to **interview survivors** saved by Aristides de Sousa Mendes in 1940 and gather their memories and histories. In parallel, we have continued to amass the world's leading collection of documents, artifacts, and publications **documenting this important history** and making the collection available to researchers. And we have produced a **Curricular Unit** for students in grades 6-12.

All of these vital activities, detailed in the pages that follow, are made possible with your generous help.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Olivia



Olivia Mattis, right, with Portuguese Consul General in New York **Fatima Mendes** and Portugal's Ambassador to the United States, **Domingos Fezas-Vital**, holding a copy of the Foundation's 2017 Annual Report

IN MEMORIAM

The Sousa Mendes Foundation mourns the loss of two former Board members who died in 2018. **Dr. Sylvain Bromberger**, a Sousa Mendes visa recipient originally from Belgium, became a famous philosopher. His story of survival was told in [The New York Times magazine](#) on Sunday, December 30, 2018 in the section, "The Lives They Lived." **Sebastian Mendes**, grandson of the hero, was a founding Board member. He was an artist whose installation [There is a Mirror in My Heart](#) was a personal response to his grandfather's action. They are both deeply missed.

OUR MISSION

The Sousa Mendes Foundation, dedicated to honoring the memory of the Holocaust rescuer 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.

RESPONSE TO PITTSBURGH TERRORIST ATTACK



STRONGER THAN HATE

Here is our message released on October 30, 2018 and picked up by the press:

The Sousa Mendes Foundation mourns with the Jewish community of Pittsburgh and commends the brave police officers who ran into harm's way to save innocent lives. They are true heroes.

In the wake of this vicious attack, a hate crimes reporting portal has been established by the Justice Department. To access the portal, go to: <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes>

Fear of refugees was a motivator in this heinous crime. The killer specifically named the refugee resettlement agency HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, as his justification for the murder of innocent lives. Our response as a society needs to be to oppose the demonization of refugees, and to keep guns out of the wrong hands, among other measures. Aristides de Sousa Mendes, Righteous Among the Nations, stood in solidarity with refugees, and so must we all.

This violent attack on a synagogue, just days before the anniversary of Kristallnacht, reminds all of us in the Holocaust remembrance community that our work isn't done.

INTRODUCING THE ARCHITECTS OF THE SOUSA MENDES MUSEUM



*Pedro Azevedo and
Susana Rosmaninho*

The architectural firm of Rosmaninho + Azevedo has been selected for the restoration of the Sousa Mendes home, **Casa do Passal**, in Cabanas de Viriato, Portugal. Based in Porto, **Susana Rosmaninho** and **Pedro Azevedo** specialize in the preservation and transmission of cultural memory.

The top floor will house a documentation center and offices, and the basement will hold the museum reserves. In between will be two floors of exhibition galleries. The large garage building will be transformed into a small auditorium to receive groups and host special events.

Rosmaninho + Azevedo are involved in all types of projects, both public and private, from houses to museums, from temporary exhibitions to city planning. Their most recent project, a cultural center in Portugal's Tua Valley, won the Jury Special Award at the Trophée Archizinc-VMZinc, an international competition of architectural creations based

Susana and Pedro on the Sousa Mendes museum project:

It is a great honor and privilege to be selected for the task of restoring the Casa do Passal, the home of the late diplomat and national hero Aristides de Sousa Mendes. We take up the challenge with a sense of great responsibility for everything that the memory of Sousa Mendes represents and all the expectations surrounding the project. Our goal is to transform the house into a welcoming space for international and local visitors, where the legacy and memory of Sousa Mendes can be transmitted through exhibitions and educational activities."

in Paris. The firm was a finalist in the 2018 Architectural Review Emerging Architecture Awards (AREA) at the recent World Architecture Festival in Amsterdam. They have been nominated for the prestigious 2019 Mies van der Rohe Contemporary Architecture Prize, awarded by the Mies van der Rohe Foundation.

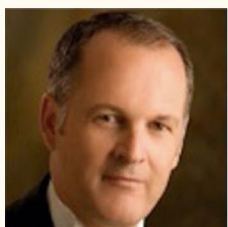
DAYS OF MEMORY

In 2018, the Sousa Mendes Foundation continued its collaboration with the Fundação Aristides de Sousa Mendes (FASM), which owns the Casa do Passal. SMF Board members **Leah Sills** and **Mariana Abrantes** participated in FASM's "Days of Memory" project in September 2018. Leah shared the precious mementos of her family's flight from Poland to Portugal and to the United States with Portuguese researchers as an example of the type of documentation available for the future museum.

Casa do Passal



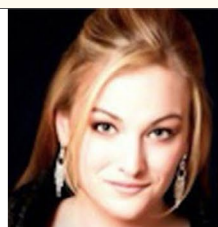
SOUSA MENDES ORATORIO BY NEELY BRUCE PRESENTED IN THE MORMON TABERNACLE



Barlow Bradford



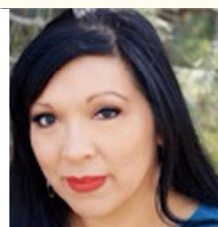
Adam Griffiths



Elizabeth Peters



Michel Gill



Michelle Pedersen



David Sauer



Andrew Neumayer



Neely Bruce

The Sousa Mendes Foundation and the Utah Youth Orchestras and Ensembles presented a rousing performance to a full house in the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah of the magnificent oratorio ***Circular 14: The Apotheosis of Aristides*** by **Neely Bruce**. This concert, conducted by the world-renowned conductor **Barlow Bradford**, was held on January 27, 2018 on the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day. In attendance were two of Sousa Mendes' grandsons, **Aristides Mendes** and **Gerald Mendes**, and visa recipient **Dr. Daniel Mattis**. The concert was extensively covered in the news media.

Soloists included **David Sauer**, tenor (Aristides de Sousa Mendes), **Michelle Pedersen**, soprano (Angelina), **Andrew Neumayer**, baritone (Rabbi Kruger), **Adam Griffiths**, tenor (Salazar), and **Elizabeth Peters**, soprano (Andrée Cibial). The narrator was the actor **Michel Gill** (César). Performers included the University of Utah Chamber Choir, the University of Utah A Cappella Choir, and seven high school choirs from across the state. An accompanying video montage of historic images was by Los Angeles-based video artist **Carole Kim**. The orchestral musicians were prepared by **Barbara Scowcroft**, Music Director of the Utah Youth Orchestras and Ensembles.

Sponsors included: The Lynn and Richard Bleil Charitable Foundation, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Foundation, the Lawrence T. and Janet T. Dee Foundation, the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation, the John and Marcia Price Family Foundation, Transworld Business Advisors of Utah County, the United Jewish Federation of Utah, the Utah Division of Arts and Museums, and numerous individual donors. **Mary Kay Lazarus Public Relations** generously provided pro bono services for the event. Thanks too to **Matt Cowan**, **Daniel and Noémi Mattis**, **Diane Hartz Warsoff**, and the staff at the Temple Square Concert Series, all of whom worked tirelessly to assure the program's success.

Congressman Ben McAdams, at that time the Mayor of Salt Lake County, delivered opening remarks:



This concert is a spiritually powerful remembrance of how an ordinary man performed extraordinary acts to defy evil. It is our responsibility and sacred duty as citizens to 'never forget' the Holocaust, its toll on the world and how nations rallied to defeat the Nazis."



Michel Gill narrated in the role of César de Sousa Mendes



L-R: Matt Cowan, Daniel Mattis, Barbara Scowcroft, Olivia Mattis, Michel Gill, Barlow Bradford



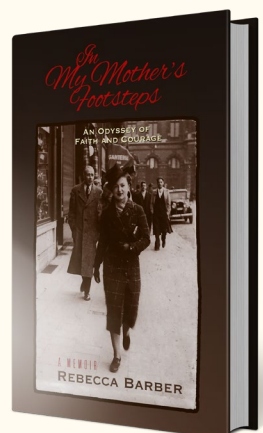
Girl Scout Troop 756 in the Mormon Tabernacle before the concert. The Girl Scouts of Utah offered merit badges to any Girl Scouts who attended the free event.

Girl Scouts of Utah CEO Janet Frasier on the educational value of the concert:

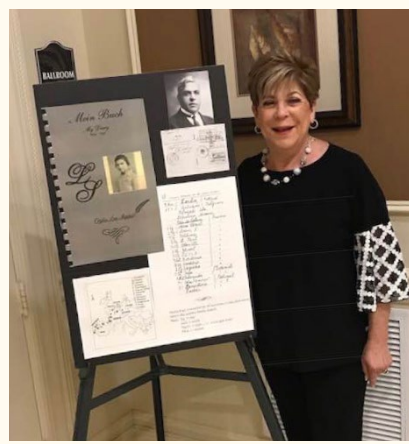


This event provides the kind of experience that will connect many Girl Scouts with a historical event of monumental proportions. We believe this experience will contribute meaningfully to their understanding of the world, their own leadership development and advocacy for others."

IN HER MOTHER'S FOOTSTEPS



There is a reason that www.ancestry.com and DNA kits are so popular. People want to know their family story, where they came from, why they left, and the route they took. **Rebecca Barber**, whose mother, Leah Steppel, was a Sousa Mendes visa recipient, has penned a memoir, *In My Mother's Footsteps*, due to be published in early 2019.



Rebecca Barber presents her mother's story

In 1939, at age 19, Leah began a long journey of escape from her home in Dusseldorf. It has taken thirty-five years, but Rebecca has pieced together her mother's life between 1938 to 1941 due to the discovery of two German-language diaries which Leah kept but never revealed. In 2017, Rebecca participated in the Sousa Mendes Foundation's pilgrimage tour, *Journey on the Road to Freedom*, and thereby deepened her understanding of her mother's wartime experience.

JOURNEY MAPS 1940



Artist **Gaia Starr** under her Map of France, 2018.

In December 2018, SMF Board member **Leah Rozenfeld Sills** opened her home to an exhibition and artist talk. Ceramic artist **Gaia Starr** presented her "ceramic novel" *Journey Maps 1940*, an installation of nearly forty sculptures and a video, documenting the wartime exodus of her Dutch mother and grandparents. For more on this ambitious and impressive project, please go to www.fiveclays.com.

Installation of Journey Maps 1940.



EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH



Leah Sills

B'NAI BRITH YOUTH ORGANIZATION (BBYO) ANNUAL CONVENTION

In February, Board Vice-President **Leah Sills** spoke in Orlando, Florida to the BBYO's International Convention, the largest gathering of Jewish teenagers in the world. During two days of workshops, Leah presented her work with the Sousa Mendes Foundation. One session was held at the Holocaust Memorial and Education Center of Florida, where students were introduced to the heroic actions of Aristides de Sousa Mendes. In attendance were members of the **Axelrod family**, recipients of life-saving visas from Sousa Mendes. In the second and smaller onsite Limmud session for teen participants, Leah wove the story of her family into her talk "**Blessed. Now what?**" and engaged the students in a discussion about recognizing people who are examples of moral courage today and how can we teach youth about standing up to injustice.

NEW EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR GRADES 6-12

The Sousa Mendes Foundation is excited to announce our new **Curricular Unit** to accompany the book ***My Sister's Eyes: A Family Chronicle of Rescue and Loss During World War II***. Co-written by **Jane Robins Denny**, **Joan Arnay Halperin** and **Olivia Mattis**, and with a preface by **Michael Berenbaum**, this study guide suggests activities and discussion questions to assist the student in discovering essential truths and lessons of history. Topics covered include: historical context; Aristides de Sousa Mendes and other rescuers; the refugee experience; document study, and much more. A glossary of terms rounds out the publication. **The Curricular Unit is available free of charge to qualified educators.**



Joan Arnay Halperin and Michael Berenbaum

MY SISTER'S EYES STUDIED ON TWO CONTINENTS

Joan Arnay Halperin, Director of Educational Initiatives for the Sousa Mendes Foundation, has been busy this year. Sharing the story of her family's rescue from the horrors of the Holocaust is at the heart of her speaking engagements on two continents. The first of three audiences this past spring was to congregants at Temple Beth Am, at the invitation of **Donna and Charles Rosenblum**. Donna is the Supervisor of the Nassau BOCES Library System and Charles is Vice-President and Chairman of the Board of the congregation. Joan spoke to three sixth grade classes at the Chatterton Elementary School at the invitation of **Ellen Widawsky**, librarian in Merrick, New York. She also spoke to the confirmation class of Congregation Adas Emuno at the invitation of Rabbi and Torah scholar **Barry Schwartz** in Leonia, New Jersey.



Joan Arney Halperin presents the Sousa Mendes story to 6th graders in Merrick, NY

When **Helena Romão**, English teacher in Figueira da Foz, asked Joan if she could use her personal copy of *My Sister's Eyes* to enrich her classes' study of the Holocaust. Joan answered the request by arranging for complimentary class sets of her book to be sent to two school districts in Portugal with which she has a special relationship. In June, Joan traveled to Portugal, her fourth visit, to meet the classes taught by **Dores de Carmo** and **Josefa Reis** at the Secondary School of Carregal do Sal and the UNESCO program Duty of Memory from the Aristides de Sousa Mendes Middle School in Cabanas de Viriato and to Figueira da Foz, to speak to Ms. Romão's students at the Escola Dr. João de Barros and to **Teresa Malafaia's** students at the Joaquim de Carvalho School. Teresa's grandfather, Alberto Malafaia, had befriended Joan's family from June 1940 until January 24, 1942, when they were shipped to an evacuee camp in Kingston, Jamaica BWI for an additional twenty months before they reached the United States

SMF Board treasurer **Mariana Abrantes** supported these "Meet the Author" sessions by facilitating Joan's presence and that of **José Ruy**, author of the graphic novel *Aristides de Sousa Mendes, Hero of the Holocaust*, among many other works. Joan also spoke to students and teachers of the Carlucci American International School of Lisbon at the Espaço Memória dos Exílios, an exhibition gallery in Estoril dedicated to the exiles who sought refuge in Portugal and located in the post office where many of them received their mail.

This past November, Joan spoke to educators about her book and the new accompanying **Curricular Unit**. This was at Ramapo College hosted an Echoes and Reflections Teachers' Workshop, entitled **Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust**. Echoes and Reflections Holocaust Education is the combined effort of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the USC Shoah Foundation and Yad Vashem. Joan participated by introducing her book and offering to visit local schools with her detailed PowerPoint presentation. The response of the teachers was enthusiastic.



José Ruy and Mariana Abrantes with books by Ruy and Halperin

SOUSA MENDES AND SUGIHARA



Monique Rubens Krohn

On April 17, 2018, SMF board member **Monique Rubens Krohn** shared a podium with **Mark Halpern** of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Philadelphia in a joint presentation to the Society about the two Righteous Diplomats Aristides de Sousa Mendes and Chiune Sugihara. In this well-attended event in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, Monique spoke about Sousa Mendes whose decision to go against his government's dictate and sign visas saved tens of thousands of refugees in Bordeaux, France. Mark discussed Sugihara who, as Japanese Consul in Lithuania issued 2,000 Japanese transit visas that enabled over 6,000 Jews to escape war-torn Europe in the summer of 1940.



In June of 2018 there was a month-long celebration across the United States, organized by the Portuguese government, of the long and deep ties between the two countries. The Sousa Mendes Foundation was involved in two of the events, an exhibition in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and a film screening in Washington, DC.

EXHIBITION IN NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

The Sousa Mendes Foundation's original exhibition ***These are my people! The Story of Aristides de Sousa Mendes*** was shown at the New Bedford Whaling Museum in collaboration with the Portuguese Consul General of New Bedford, **Shelley Pires**. In addition, original artifacts on loan from the Sousa Mendes Foundation and individual visa recipient families were on display such as passports with visas, toys carried by child refugees, and other items. **Portugal's president Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa** visited the exhibition in a private tour shortly before the display was opened to the public.

FILM SCREENING IN WASHINGTON, DC

The Sousa Mendes Foundation held a screening of ***Disobedience: The Sousa Mendes Story*** at the Avalon Theatre in Washington, DC, in collaboration with Embassy of Portugal to the United States. Introducing the event was **Ambassador Domingos Fezas-Vital**, who spoke of his family's roots in Cabanas de Viriato, Portugal, the same village that the Sousa Mendes family called home. He also spoke of his pride as a Portuguese diplomat and as a Portuguese citizen for the action and moral courage of Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Following the screening, a discussion was led by **Olivia Mattis** and **Robert Jacobvitz**, representing the Sousa Mendes Foundation. Also in attendance was **Cecilia Cassidy**, who had worked on the Sousa Mendes cause in the 1990s and who generously donated her Sousa Mendes-related archives to the Sousa Mendes Foundation.



L-R: **Cecilia Cassidy**, **Robert Jacobvitz**, and **Olivia Mattis** in front of the Avalon Theatre

Robert Jacobvitz is in charge of our film distribution. To schedule a screening in your community, please write to robert@sousamendesfoundation.org



João Crisóstomo

DAY OF CONSCIENCE

June is the month that marks the anniversary of Aristides de Sousa Mendes's rescue action of 1940. In 2018, as in previous years, Sousa Mendes Foundation advisor **João Crisóstomo** – a longtime activist in the cause – coordinated religious observances throughout the world on June 17th to commemorate the Day of Conscience, the fateful day (exact date unknown) when Sousa Mendes chose to act.

DOCUMENTING AND PRESERVING THE PAST



Passport of Sousa Mendes visa recipient **Elsa Stadlerová** with rare forged signature of Aristides de Sousa Mendes in the upper right. The forger, whose identity is unknown, was part of the "assembly line" delivering visas under Sousa Mendes' authority. Passport generously donated by **Edith Kubicek**.

The Sousa Mendes Foundation holds the world's largest collection documenting the history of Aristides de Sousa Mendes and the refugees he saved. The collection includes original World War II passports with Sousa Mendes visas, other artifacts belonging to Holocaust refugees, First Edition refugee memoirs, newspaper clipping scrapbooks from the war period to the present, photographs, correspondence, audio-visual materials, and posthumous honors and awards given to Aristides de Sousa Mendes. The Collection, managed by archivists **Barbara Boies** and **Nicole Bubolo**, includes the files of the International Committee to Commemorate Dr. Aristides de Sousa Mendes (active in the 1980s and 90s), documents and objects from families rescued by Aristides de Sousa Mendes, and newly acquired items. The materials are in Dutch, English, French, German, Hebrew, Portuguese, and Yiddish. The archive lends to exhibitions and receives researchers. The Sousa Mendes Foundation actively seeks to add to the Sousa Mendes Collection.

If you are in possession of family memoirs, artifacts, or passports connected to this important story that you would like to donate, please [contact us](#). Thank you!

INTERVIEWING SURVIVORS



Ella Andriesse

Our oral history project, **Visas to Freedom, Stories of Rescue**, is ongoing. In 2018, **Ella Andriesse** joined the interview team. She gathered testimonials from **Til van Perlstein** in Pleasantville, NY, and **Clare van Beusekom** in Switzerland. The videographers were **Anton Evangelista** and **Jo Pisoni**. These interviews, providing first-hand accounts of the refugee experience of 1940 and the heroic rescue action of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, will join the others that have been posted on our website.



Sousa Mendes visa recipient **Til van Perlstein**

"Save a life, save a world!" - The Talmud

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JANUARY 1-DECEMBER 31, 2018

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Garvey Schubert Barer, legal services
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Pisoni, Jo, videography services
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Abrantes de Sousa, Mariana
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Millersville University
Paldiel, Dr. Mordecai
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Ginsburg, Rachel and Andrew
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Good, Evie
Gordon, Jacob
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Thank you for your generous support!