



# SOUSA MENDES FOUNDATION

*2023  
Year in  
Review*



Jan de Moncada (left), great-grandson of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, shakes hands with Sousa Mendes visa recipient Marc Cassier at the bust of Aristides de Sousa Mendes. Bordeaux, July 2023

# TABLE OF CONTENTS & MISSION

3	PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
4	JOURNEY ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM
5	DOCUMENTARY ON OUR JOURNEY
5	EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS
6	INTERVIEWS WITH SURVIVORS
6	SOUSA MENDES VIDEO SCULPTURE ON VIEW IN GERMANY
7	THE FUTURE SOUSA MENDES MUSEUM
7	EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH
7	SOUSA MENDES FOUNDATION AWARDED COLLECTION OF FIRST EDITION BOOKS
8	STORIES OF RESCUE, RESISTANCE AND HOPE
12	DONOR HONOR ROLL

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## 2023 JOURNEY ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM PLANNING COMMITTEE

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**DESIGN** Rosanne Guararra

## 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 public about his action. It has a two-fold mission: raising funds for the restoration of the Sousa Mendes ancestral home “Casa do Passal” along with the creation within its walls of a museum and memorial site, and sponsoring US-based projects that perpetuate his legacy.



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The year 2023 brought the end of most pandemic restrictions, but the beginning of a terrible war in the Middle East involving the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. With the knowledge that Jews remain unsafe amid an alarming rise in global antisemitism, we need to redouble our efforts to teach the lessons of history.

The Sousa Mendes Foundation is dedicated to perpetuating the memory of the Holocaust hero Aristides de Sousa Mendes, Righteous Among the Nations. As the Portuguese Consul General in Bordeaux, France, he issued thousands of life-saving Portuguese visas in 1939 and 1940 to refugees seeking to leave Europe as the Nazis were overrunning the continent. In issuing these visas he went against the orders of his government, and simply followed his conscience. His act of moral courage can be an example for all of us today.



Dr. Olivia Mattis



Dr. Mordecai Paldiel

☪☪ *The Sunday programs, in which I have been privileged to participate these last several years, seek to bring to light stories in recent history, especially the Holocaust, that highlight acts of humanitarian courage, in the spirit of Aristides de Sousa Mendes – the hero who symbolizes human behavior at its elevated best. In the words of Irena Sendler, who saved hundreds of children from the Warsaw Ghetto: 'The most important thing in the world and in life is goodness.'* ☪☪

– Dr. Mordecai Paldiel

We organized a tour, **Journey on the Road to Freedom**, through France, Spain and Portugal, retracing the footsteps of the refugees of 1940. We continued conducting **interviews with Sousa Mendes visa recipients** about their memories of their escape from Nazi-occupied Europe. Our **commissioned sculpture, Candelabro – Aristides de Sousa Mendes**, was shown in Germany. And we hosted a Portuguese delegation for a study visit to our archive and library to plan the storyline and contents of the **future Sousa Mendes Museum**.

Our generous donors who made all of these activities possible in 2023 are listed on the back page of this report. I would like to thank them and the whole Foundation team listed on the facing page. Together, we are making a difference!

In 2023 the Foundation continued with our popular series of Sunday programs on **stories of rescue, resistance and hope** – beautiful true stories that are intended to inspire during these difficult times. Recordings of these programs are maintained on our YouTube channel as a permanent library of goodness.

We continue our collaboration with the **Austrian Service Abroad** program, and we are pleased to host intern **Luis Liebl** in 2023-24. Luis works alongside our great administrative team of **Michael McCabe** and **Matthew Spirn** in making sure that our programs run smoothly and that our donors are promptly thanked, and he also works with our talented archivist **Nicole Bubolo** in maintaining our library and archive.



Luis Liebl

Photo: Valentin Hasler

☪☪ *I am thankful to be a part of the Sousa Mendes Foundation, collaborating with a dedicated team of inspiring individuals. Working with this organization enables me to play a role in preserving the memory of genuine heroes from our past and promoting the importance of tolerance and understanding.* ☪☪

– Luis Liebl

Announcing our

**HEROES OF THE HOLOCAUST  
RESCUER PLAYING CARDS!**

*Order yours today!*

<https://sousamendesfoundation.org/store/>





Journey participants and co-leaders relaxing in a wading pool in Figueira da Foz, Portugal. L-R: Ruth Aronson, Heidi Omlor, Monique Wardner, Elizabeth Eames, Françoise Lotstra, Corinne Zimmerman, Sima Broza. In front: Cookie Fischer.



Brothers Brendan Good and Owen Good share memories of their grandmother, Sousa Mendes visa recipient Annelies Kaufmann.



President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa greets the Journey group at the Presidential Palace in Lisbon, Portugal.



Marc Zimmerman and Corinne Zimmerman, brother and sister, took the Journey to learn more about their mother Annette Fortgang's escape from Nazi-occupied Europe in 1940.

# JOURNEY ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

Every few years, the Sousa Mendes Foundation organizes a very special tour called **Journey on the Road to Freedom**. This 10-night/11-day trip through France, Spain and Portugal retraces the footsteps of Aristides de Sousa Mendes and the refugees of 1940 from Bordeaux to Lisbon. In 2023 we organized our fifth Journey, and we had a fabulous international group of participants comprised of Sousa Mendes visa recipient families, members of the Sousa Mendes family, Holocaust educators and others interested in history. The tour co-leaders were **Mariana Abrantes** (Portugal), **Cookie Fischer** (entire trip), **Hellen Kaufmann** (Bordeaux), **Dr. Olivia Mattis** (France) and **Dr. Heidi Omlor** (entire trip).

What makes our tour unique is that it unfolds and reveals its lessons during the course of the experience. At each stop, participants narrate the tour themselves through testimonials and readings. The testimonials are family stories or anecdotes pertaining to the particular place being visited. Readings are eyewitness accounts from June of 1940 of the Fall of France, the refugee multitudes and the neutrality of Spain and Portugal. Accommodations on the Journey are all four- and five-star hotels, and the meals are bountiful and delicious.

Interest is already building for our next trip (dates to be determined), so reserve your spot today! Write to us at: [info@sousamendesfoundation.org](mailto:info@sousamendesfoundation.org).

Marc Cassier discovers the house in Figueira da Foz, Portugal where he spent one year as a refugee child in 1940 when the family name was Horwitz. Back row L-R: Marc Cassier, Jr., Michel Cassier, Marc Cassier, Maria Cassier, Monique Wardner. Front row L-R: Teresa de Sousa Mendes, town archivist Paula Cardoso.





“ The most memorable trip I’ve ever taken.”  
 – 2023 Journey participant



The Journey group gathers in Hendaye, France, at the international bridge to Spain.



Mariana Abrantes (left) and Heidi Omlor, two of the Journey co-leaders, with President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa of Portugal.



Jan de Moncada stands next to the sculpture of his great-grandfather Aristides de Sousa Mendes on the Esplanade Charles de Gaulle in Bordeaux, France.

## DOCUMENTARY FILM ABOUT THE JOURNEY

A fabulous film was made about our 2023 Journey by the German media company *Der Spiegel* in collaboration with the French-German cultural television station, ARTE. Journalist Tanja Dammertz and her crew Frank Gutsche (camera) and Julio Rodriguez (sound and drone) accompanied our group and profiled three of the participants: Marc Cassier, Jan de Moncada and Corinne Zimmerman. We will be showing the film, *Saved by Sousa Mendes*, in our 2024 Sunday series of programs on stories of rescue, resistance and hope.



Wreath laying by Isaac Powell, 4th generation Sousa Mendes visa recipient, and Marc Cassier, Sousa Mendes visa recipient.

## EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS

Teacher Denise Bérubé-Mayone holding the Journey brochure.



Before the 2023 Journey, Dr. Heidi Omlor, Joan Arnay Halperin and Laura Seltzer-Duny, of our Educational Initiatives Committee, met with the teachers going on the tour to provide them with tools to use in the classroom, including the film *Nobody Wants Us*, the book *My Sister's Eyes* and a specially prepared PowerPoint slideshow. Following the tour, SMF Vice President Monique Rubens Krohn met with visa recipient family members to equip them with materials for telling their own family stories to groups in their home communities.



## INTERVIEWS WITH SURVIVORS

As a follow-up to our 2022 Jerusalem street naming, Yad Vashem ceremony, and symposium, we conducted interviews in 2023 with two Sousa Mendes visa recipients living in Israel: **Anna Thee** (born in Belgium as Annie Wolf) and **Sarah Goodman** (born in Germany as Sigrid Lustig). The interviewers were **Avi Losice** and **Beatrice Brom**, both children of visa recipients. These interviews have been edited by **Joan Halperin** and posted to our website. In Toronto, Sousa Mendes visa recipients **Benjamin Schlesinger** and **Mary Seeman** were interviewed by **Dr. Andrée Lotey**, of the Sousa Mendes Foundation Advisory Council. One of the Foundation's priorities is to preserve first-hand accounts of Sousa Mendes visa recipients who escaped Nazi-occupied Europe in 1940.



Anna Thee



L-R: Beatrice Brom, Sarah Goodman, Avi Losice.

☺☺ These interviews, to be memorialized through the Sousa Mendes Foundation, are my effort to express gratitude as a descendant of Sousa Mendes visa recipients. ☹☹

– **Avi Losice**

## SOUSA MENDES VIDEO SCULPTURE ON VIEW IN GERMANY



Werner Klotz's sculpture, *Candelabro* – Aristides de Sousa Mendes, on view at the Münster Cathedral in Ulm, Germany.

In Ulm, Germany, **Werner Klotz's** multimedia sculpture, *Candelabro* – *Aristides de Sousa Mendes*, went on display in the famed Münster Cathedral on January 27, 2023 for an 8-week stay that attracted 68,000 visitors. The exhibit was co-organized by the Documentation Center of the Oberer Kuhberg concentration camp (DZOK); the Volkshochschule adult education center; and the Stadthaus, an exhibit and conference hall, and sponsored by the Ulmer / Neu-Ulmer Arbeitskreis 27. Januar. The main co-curators were **Dr. Nicola Wenge**, director of the DZOK, and **Karla Nieraad**, director of the Stadthaus. Opening day events included a speech by visa recipient descendant **Dr. Jennifer Hartog**, who was crucial to bringing the work to Ulm. A moving musical performance followed by singer/composer **Almut Kühne** and the Münster choir of the sound composition she created for the sculpture. Other programs throughout *Candelabro's* Ulm stay included a symposium with Sousa Mendes visa recipient descendants **Mark Ginsburg**, **Monique Rubens Krohn** (also SMF Vice President) and **Harry Oesterreicher**; and Sousa Mendes' great granddaughter, **Cristiana Marohn**; school programs directed by **Annette Lein** and **Jennifer Hartog**; a seminar for teachers, and an artist talk. The exhibition was featured in the newspapers *Südwestpresse* and *Neu-Ulmer Zeitung*.



The Münster choir with (L-R in front) Almut Kühne, Monique Rubens Krohn and Jennifer Hartog.

# THE FUTURE SOUSA MENDES MUSEUM

The transformation of the Sousa Mendes family home, “Casa do Passal,” from a stately country mansion to the site of the future Sousa Mendes Museum gained momentum in 2023. Construction is ongoing throughout the large mansion, with a view to opening the museum in July of 2024. The museum project is under the leadership of **Dr. Paulo Catalino**, the Mayor of Carregal do Sal.

In January of 2023, the Sousa Mendes Foundation arranged, hosted and co-financed a Study Visit to New York for museum professional **Suzana Menezes** and historian **Dr. Claudia Ninhos** to view the Foundation’s archival collection of objects, documents, photographs, films and other materials for use in the future museum. Joining them were **Mayor Catalino** and Portuguese bank president **Carlos Rodrigues**.

In line with its mission, the Foundation is collaborating closely in the process of creating the storyline, especially regarding the dramatic experiences of the refugee families and the recognition given to Aristides de Sousa Mendes and other Holocaust heroes. Representing the Foundation in this effort are **Dr. Olivia Mattis**, **Dr. Mordecai Paldiel** and **Mariana Abrantes**. This contribution

includes working with the curating team and helping to select and to make available the key artifacts that can make this extraordinary and dramatic story come alive for an enduring visitor experience.



Above: 2023 Journey group at the Casa do Passal.



## EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH



Leah Rozenfeld Sills pointing out her family’s escape route from Nazi-occupied Europe during a talk at The Taft School in Connecticut.

The Sousa Mendes Foundation continues to provide speakers to congregations, schools and community groups wishing to learn more about Aristides de Sousa Mendes and his life-saving action. These presentations can be either virtual or live and are customized to the audience. On May 4, 2023, SMF board member **Leah Rozenfeld Sills** shared her family’s story with The Taft School in Watertown, Connecticut, on the occasion of Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) and May’s monthlong celebration of Jewish American Heritage Month. Other speakers in 2023 have included SMF board members **Monique Rubens Krohn** and **Joan Arnay Halperin** and SMF community liaison in Portugal **Cookie Fischer**. To request a speaker, please contact us at [info@sousamendesfoundation.org](mailto:info@sousamendesfoundation.org)

## SOUSA MENDES FOUNDATION AWARDED COLLECTION OF FIRST EDITION BOOKS

In November of 2023 the Sousa Mendes Foundation received a gift of hundreds of first edition books of Holocaust history from the estate of book collector **David L. Henry**. The Foundation was selected for this gift over all other Holocaust remembrance organizations worldwide! These books are being integrated into the Sousa Mendes Foundation archive and library, for eventual donation to the library and reading room of the Sousa Mendes Museum in Portugal. We are grateful to Mr. Henry’s estate, and especially to **Megan Davis** and **Kathi Davis**, for selecting us as the lucky recipients!



# STORIES OF RESCUE, RESISTANCE AND HOPE

Our popular Sunday film-and-discussion series organized and hosted by Dr. Olivia Mattis began in early 2020 to provide connection and hope during the darkest days of the pandemic. To date we have produced over 130 programs and featured hundreds of speakers, films and books on a wide range of inspiring true stories of history.

To view these programs go to:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/SousaMendesFdn/>

## JANUARY



Uri Borreda



Dr. Zvi Hatkevitz



Dr. Mordecai Paldiel



Michael Stolowitzky



Dr. Jud Newborn

### EXODUS – THE SHIP THAT LAUNCHED A NATION, January 15

Film: *Exodus – The True Story*

Speakers: Uri Borreda, Dr. Zvi Hatkevitz, Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, Michael Stolowitzky Moderator: Dr. Jud Newborn

### SYMPHONY OF COURAGE, January 22

Film: *Symphony of Courage*

Speakers: Dr. Ahmad Sarmast, Beth Mendelson

Moderator: Jeannette V. "Cookie" Fischer



Beth Mendelson



Jeannette V. "Cookie" Fischer



Dr. Ahmad Sarmast



H. Vail Barrett



Shuli Eshel

### A VOICE AMONG THE SILENT – THE LEGACY OF JAMES G. MCDONALD, January 29

Film: *A Voice Among the Silent*

Speakers: H. Vail Barrett, Shuli Eshel, Dr. Rafael Medoff



Dr. Rafael Medoff

## FEBRUARY

### MARCEL MARCEAU AND THE FRENCH RESISTANCE, February 5

Film: *The Art of Silence*

Speakers: Maurizius Staerkle Drux, Joanne D. Gilbert, Daniel Loinger

Interviewer: Dr. Andrée Lotey



Maurizius Staerkle Drux



Joanne D. Gilbert



Daniel Loinger



Dr. Andrée Lotey

### THE WALDHEIM WALTZ, February 19

Film: *The Waldheim Waltz*

Speakers: Ruth Beckermann, Valentin Hasler

Moderator: Dr. Shulamit Reinharz



Ruth Beckermann



Valentin Hasler



Dr. Shulamit Reinharz

### IN THE GARDEN OF THE RIGHTEOUS, February 12

Book: *In the Garden of the Righteous*

Speakers: Leslie Camhi, Richard Hurowitz



Leslie Camhi

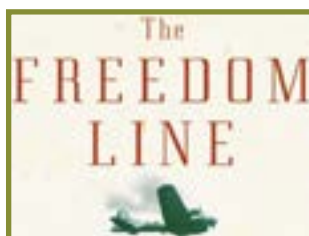


Richard Hurowitz

### THE FREEDOM LINE, February 26

Book: *The Freedom Line*

Speakers: Musha Salinas Eisner, Peter Eisner



Musha Salinas Eisner



Peter Eisner



## MARCH



### A PROTEST TO THE WORLD: THE DRAMATIC STORY OF SZMUL ARTUR ZYGIELBOJM, March 6

Film: *The Death of Zygielbojm*

Speakers: Dr. Jud Newborn,  
Dr. Arthur Zygielbaum

Moderator: Sharon Douglas

Co-sponsored by the Anne Frank Center



Dr. Jud  
Newborn



Dr. Arthur  
Zygielbaum



Sharon  
Douglas

### REMEMBRANCE IN GERMANY TODAY – STORIES OF HOPE, March 12

Film clips: A variety of inspirational clips produced by  
Widen the Circle

Speakers: Joel Obermayer, Christiane Simon

Moderator: Dr. Shulamit Reinharz

Co-sponsored by Widen the Circle



Joel  
Obermayer



Christiane  
Simon



Dr. Shulamit  
Reinharz



### YANKEE RESISTANCE: THE STORY OF A SMALL CONNECTICUT TOWN THAT CHALLENGED THE NAZIS AND WON, March 19

Film: *Home of the Brave – When Southbury said NO to the Nazis*

Speakers: Ed Edelson, Rabbi Eric Polokoff

Moderator: Dr. Jud Newborn



Ed Edelson



Rabbi Eric  
Polokoff



Dr. Jud  
Newborn

### INTO THE ARMS OF STRANGERS, March 26

Film: *Into the Arms of Strangers*

Speakers: Lady Milena

Grenfell-Baines,

Mark Jonathan Harris,

Dr. Mordecai Paldiel



Lady Milena  
Grenfell-Baines



Mark Jonathan  
Harris



Dr. Mordecai  
Paldiel

## APRIL



### BESA – THE PROMISE, April 23

Film: *Besa – The Promise*

Speakers: Shay Etrogy, Ermal  
Hoxha, Dr. Mordecai Paldiel,  
Jason Williams



Shay  
Etrogy



Ermal  
Hoxha



Dr. Mordecai  
Paldiel



Jason  
Williams

## MAY

### SALLY NOACH – THE ANGEL OF LYON, May 7

Film: *The Forgotten Soldier*

Speakers: Jacques Noach,  
Dr. Mordecai Paldiel,

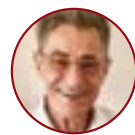
Herman Veder



Jacques Noach



Dr. Mordecai  
Paldiel



Herman Veder



### WILFRID ISRAEL, HOLOCAUST HERO, May 21

Film: *The Essential Link: The Story of Wilfrid Israel*

Speakers: Yonatan Nir, Dr. Ilan Baer, Naomi Shepherd

Moderator: Dr. Jud Newborn



Yonatan  
Nir



Dr. Ilan  
Baer



Naomi  
Shepherd



Dr. Jud  
Newborn

## JUNE

### **"WE MUST SAVE THE CHILDREN" – THE NEWLY-UNCOVERED STORY OF THE HEROIC RAILWAY WORKERS OF LILLE, FRANCE, June 4**

Film: *Sauvons les enfants* (We Must Save the Children)

Speakers: Catherine Bernstein, Dr. Susan Zuccotti

Moderator: Dr. Shulamit Reinharz



Catherine Bernstein



Dr. Susan Zuccotti



Dr. Shulamit Reinharz



### **VISAS FOR LIFE – THE SOUSA MENDES STORY, Part I, June 18**

Film series: *Visas for Life, Episodes 1 and 2*

Speakers: Ron Brunell, Lúcia Gonçalves, Michael Spett



Ron Brunell



Lúcia Gonçalves



Michael Spett

## JULY

### **VISAS FOR LIFE – THE SOUSA MENDES STORY, Part II, July 2**

Film series: *Visas for Life, Episodes 3, 4 and 5*

Speakers: Avi Losice, Margarida Mascarenhas, Dr. Mordecai Paldiel



Avi Losice



Margarida Mascarenhas



Dr. Mordecai Paldiel



## AUGUST

### **NAVALNY, August 6**

Film: *Navalny*

Speakers: Christo Grozev, Karl von Habsburg

Moderator: Dr. Jud Newborn



Christo Grozev



Karl von Habsburg



Dr. Jud Newborn



### **GERMANS AGAINST HITLER – THE STORY OF THE HELMRICH COUPLE, HOLOCAUST RESCUERS, August 20**

Film: *Two Trees in Jerusalem*

Speakers: Dr. Lucien Yehuda Bronicki, Dr. Mordecai Paldiel, Shoshana Schaffer



Dr. Lucien Yehuda Bronicki



Dr. Mordecai Paldiel



Shoshana Schaffer

### **HUBERT HUMPHREY AND HUMAN RIGHTS, August 27**

Book: *Into the Bright Sunshine: Young Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights*

Speakers: Jane Eisner, Samuel Freedman



Jane Eisner



Samuel Freedman



## SEPTEMBER

### OTTO WEIDT – A BLIND HERO, September 10

Film: *A Blind Hero: The Love of Otto Weidt*

Speakers: Yermi Brenner, Ariane Kwasigroch,  
Dr. Mordecai Paldiel



Yermi  
Brenner



Ariane  
Kwasigroch



Dr. Mordecai Paldiel

## OCTOBER

### LISBON – HARBOR OF HOPE, October 29

Film: *Lisbon – Harbor of Hope*  
Speakers: Pavel Schnabel,  
Vivian Shapiro  
Moderator: Mariana Abrantes



Pavel  
Schnabel



Vivian  
Shapiro



Mariana  
Abrantes

## NOVEMBER



### RETURN TO LIFE! THE STORY OF LENA'S 100 CHILDREN, November 5

Film: *My 100 Children*

Speakers: Dr. Noémi Perelman Mattis,  
Oshra Schwartz Reim  
Moderator: Dr. Shulamit Reinharz



Dr. Noémi  
Perelman  
Mattis



Oshra  
Schwartz  
Reim



Dr. Shulamit  
Reinharz

### AMONG THE RIGHTEOUS – ARAB RESCUERS OF JEWS, November 12

Film: *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories from the Holocaust in Arab Lands*

Speakers: Dr.  
Mordecai Paldiel,  
Dr. Robert Satloff



Dr. Mordecai  
Paldiel



Dr. Robert  
Satloff



### WHO SHALL LIVE AND WHO SHALL DIE, November 19

Film: *Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die?*

Speakers: Dr. Laurence Jarvik, Dr. Rafael Medoff



Dr. Laurence Jarvik



Dr. Rafael Medoff

## DECEMBER

### KLARSFELD – A LOVE STORY, December 3

Film: *KLARSFELD – A LOVE STORY*

Speakers: Peter Hellman, Beate Klarsfeld,  
Serge Klarsfeld

Award presentation: Mariana Abrantes

Testimonial: Dr. Shulamit Reinharz



Serge Klarsfeld and Beate Klarsfeld



Peter  
Hellman



Mariana  
Abrantes



Dr. Shulamit  
Reinharz

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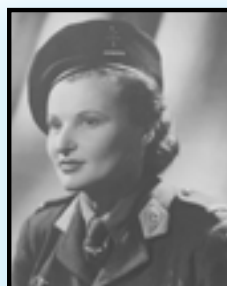
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Tamara van den Bergh  
in Charles de Gaulle's  
Free French Forces  
during World War II.

## IN MEMORIAM

We recently lost Sousa Mendes visa recipients **Tamara van den Bergh Ferguson**, originally from the Netherlands, and **Rochelle Kashtan**, originally from France. In 2023, both of their families honored their memories with generous donations to the Sousa Mendes Foundation. Our interview with Rochelle Kashtan can be seen on the **Simsovic** page (her original family name) on our website. We salute these two women of valor and extend condolences to their loved ones.

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