

Aristides de Sousa Mendes – Defiance in the Name of
Compassion

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Group Documentary

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The story of Aristides de Sousa Mendes' struck us as unique and an inspirational learning experience. We were immediately captivated by his act of courage and aspired understand this obscure yet undoubtedly impactful man. After listening and reading to accounts of the many people saved by his actions, we discovered new depths of Mendes' heroism and were touched by his noble, loving actions. The underlying emphasis Mendes' story had on breaking barriers made it a clear project choice. A man with a story so rife with sacrifice, compassion, and wholehearted morals, Sousa Mendes broke the barrier between patriotic duty and personal beliefs, saving the lives of thousands of war-torn refugees.

Our research revealed that Mendes, though courageous, was truly overlooked by much of history. We learned that Sousa Mendes willingly defied the Portuguese government by signing visas for 30,000 fleeing refugees, a selfless decision that cost Mendes his life and reputation. In our research, The Sousa Mendes Foundation became a familiar source as we searched for primary sources of our topic, providing many live testimonies and a plethora of visa images. Created by Sousa Mendes' family and visa recipients, it shaped our vision for this project – to become a reminder of the courage of Sousa Mendes and the refugees' plight during WWII, to share Mendes' significant impact on the lives of people in our world, and to honor his last wish to restore his family name.

Documentaries weave elements of media into a sensational, living, project. Just as the recipients of Sousa Mendes' kindness were able to live through his actions, we hoped the audience would experience our message seamlessly through a documentary and live to empathize with our forgotten hero. In Sousa Mendes' decision to save the lives of countless others, only shame and disgrace met his name, his family became outcasts. Taking this in mind, we sought to portray Mendes as a hero in the dark, someone who truly valued humanity beyond

political stances, regardless of race, beliefs, or status. His willingness to take action when others stayed silent is the very reason millions of people are still alive today.

Aristides de Sousa Mendes, a man who broke barriers for millions of refugees, understood his conscience overruled the political agenda of António Salazar and the Portuguese government when so many needed the help he could give. Supported by his faith, his actions towards human rights over law broke the political barrier surrounding morality. He is an example of how measures towards good must be taken when one's morals ultimately precede, even against popular opinion. When Sousa Mendes' obligations as a Catholic and morally righteous man conflicted with the orders of his unjust government, he made a decision to break the barrier between religion and politics, when many others failed to do so, acting from his character, moral values, and inner conscience. Aristides de Sousa Mendes's tale of sacrifice is a reminder of the actions we all must take to do what is right in the name of compassion.

Annotated Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES:

SECONDARY SOURCES:

Aboutcentro. "Aristides De Sousa Mendes: the Insubordinate Consul." *Center of Portugal*, 2006, www.centerofportugal.com/article/aristides-de-sousa-mendes-the-insubordinate-consul/. Accessed 28 Oct. 2019.

This website provides background information about Sousa Mendes' life and his impact on WWII and the Jewish refugees. The information helped us in the short-term impact and heart of the story sections of research.

"A Portuguese Diplomat Sacrificed Everything to Save Thousands of Jews During the Holocaust." *USC Shoah Foundation-Visual History Archive*, Visual History Archive, 7 Mar. 2019, <http://sfi.usc.edu/news/2013/07/portugals-unforgettable-forgotten-hero>. Accessed 16 Nov. 2019.

A summary of Sousa Mendes's lifetime in relation to current conflicts. This source contains important information regarding the struggles that Sousa Mendes went through in his mission.

"Aristides De Sousa Mendes: His Life and Legacy - Sousa Mendes Foundation." *Sousa Mendes Foundation ICal*, 2019, sousamendesfoundation.org/aristides-de-sousa-mendes-his-life-and-legacy/. Accessed 23 Nov. 2019.

This source aided us in our heart of the story and impact research. It was one of the websites created by the Jews Mendes saved in order to honor him, and is a lasting testament to Sousa Mendes' long-term impact.

"Aristides De Sousa Mendes Do Amaral e Abranches." *geni_family_tree*, 24 May 2018, www.geni.com/people/Aristides-de-Sousa-Mendes-do-Amaral-e-Abranches/6000000002044779886. Accessed 18 Oct. 2019.

This article gave us information about Aristides de Sousa Mendes' daring actions, as well as the saddening realization that he has not been remembered as he should. We were able to take away information for short/long-term impact as well as build-up research.

Beardsley, Eleanor. "Portugal's Schindler' Is Remembered, Decades After His Lifesaving Deeds." *NPR*, NPR, 4 Aug. 2016, www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/08/04/486735086/remembering-portugals-schindler. Accessed 12 Nov. 2019.

This article is a small testimony for the impact Sousa Mendes has on many Jews that were saved by him, as well as those descended from the people he saved. It gave us information about how the people are doing what they can do honor and remember Mendes, a big part of our long-term impact research.

Biniáz, Benjamin. "The Memory of a Hero: Aristides De Sousa Mendes' Legacy Preserved in Testimony." *USC Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive*, 5 Aug. 2016, sfi.usc.edu/blog/benjamin-biniáz/memory-hero-aristides-de-sousa-mendes-legacy-preserved-testimony. Accessed 12 Nov. 2019.

This is a website with the testimonies of those saved by Mendes. It was an extremely useful source for short and long-term impact, as well as a good provider of insight into the more detailed aspects of the heart of the story.

Cirurgiao, Maria Julia, Hull, Michael D. "Aristides de Sousa Mendes." *Jewish Virtual Library*, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/aristides-de-sousa-mendes>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2019.

This website provided background information on WWII and Jews in France. It also contained helpful information about who Aristides de Sousa Mendes was and how his influence on the war. This information was used in the buildup and heart of the story portions of our documentary.

Davis, Daniel L. "The Super Simple Reason Nazi Germany Crushed France During World War II." *The National Interest*, 18 Feb. 2017, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/the-super-simple-reason-nazi-germany-crushed-france-during-19484>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2019.

This article was used to gather an understanding of France's history in WW II. We used information from this website in the build-up of our documentary and to explain why Jews needed visas to escape France.

Dolsten, Josefin, et al. "LA Jews Honor Ex-Diplomat Who Saved 10,000 from Holocaust." *The Times of Israel*, JTA, 22 Jan. 2016, www.timesofisrael.com/la-jews-honor-ex-diplomat-who-saved-10000-from-holocaust/. Accessed 16 Nov. 2019.

This article showed the actions of Jews saved by de Sousa Mendes and how they have honored him. This gave us insight into the impact Mendes had as well as the people he saved.

Dolsten, Josefin, et al. "Portuguese State Airline Honors WWII Diplomat." *Portuguese State Airline Honors WWII Diplomat | The Times of Israel*, The Times of Israel, 14 Sept. 2014, www.timesofisrael.com/portuguese-state-airline-honors-wwii-diplomat/. Accessed 19 Oct. 2019.

This article gave information about the impact and recognition Aristides de Sousa Mendes is getting in the present day. It gave us insight to use in the long-term section of our research.

Dotinga, Randy. "Portugal Plays Each Side against the Other in World War II." *The Christian Science Monitor*, The Christian Science Monitor, 17 Feb. 2012, <https://www.csmonitor.com/Books/chapter-and-verse/2012/0217/Portugal-plays-each-side-against-the-other-in-World-War-II>. Accessed 23 Oct. 2019.

This article provided information on Portugal's stance in the WWII. It showed us how Portugal, despite being a neutral country, was able to manipulate their interactions for their benefits.

Donovan, John. "Aristides de Sousa Mendes Saved Thousands From Holocaust, But Lost All, " *How Stuff Works*, HowStuffWorks, 11 Jun. 2019, <https://history.howstuffworks.com/historical-figures/aristides-de-sousa-mendes.htm>. Accessed 25 Nov. 2019.

This article source was used in the Heart of the Story portion of our documentary. It provided information on what Aristides de Sousa Mendes did.

"Family - Sousa Mendes Foundation." *Sousa Mendes Foundation ICal*, ARISTIDES DE SOUSA MENDES FOUNDATION - US, 2019, sousamendesfoundation.org/family/van-havre. Accessed 19 Oct. 2019.

This source provided us with images of Jews that Sousa Mendes helped, as well as information about specific families he tried to save.

France-Presse, Agence. "Welcome to Portugal, the European Nation Desperate for Migrants." *South China Morning Post*, 2 July 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/europe/article/2153400/welcome-portugal-european-country-desperate-migrants-because-its>. Accessed 1 Nov. 2019.

This website allowed us to learn more about the recent population crisis of Portugal, and how the government worked in reaction to this situation. We used this website to compare this current day situation to the government action taken to address the refugee crisis during Aristides de Sousa Mendes' time.

Guttman, Nathan. "This Portuguese Diplomat Was Disgraced For Saving Jews. Now, He's Getting His Due." *The Forward*, 26 Apr. 2015, <https://forward.com/news/306652/a-righteous-diplomat-disgraced-for-saving-jews/>. Accessed 12 Nov. 2019

This website provided insight to what Aristides de Sousa Mendes accomplished, including detail about the short-term impact of his work and the recognition he is beginning to receive for his work.

Hazikaron, Har. "Aristides De Sousa Mendes." *Yadvashem.org*, 2019, www.yadvashem.org/righteous/stories/mendes.html. Accessed 12 Nov. 2019.

This source allowed us to gain information and images of Aristides de Sousa Mendes and the Jewish refugees he aided. It was useful for compiling images for our documentary and building up heart of the story.

House, Christian. "Sousa Mendes Saved More Lives than Schindler so Why Isn't He a." *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 23 Oct. 2011, www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/sousa-mendes-saved-more-lives-than-schindler-so-why-isnt-he-a-household-name-too-2105882.html. Accessed 19 Oct. 2019.

This source gave us in-depth information about Sousa Mendes' decisions and actions. It also provided a justified argument as to why more people should know and remember him, one that we could cite in our long-term impact research.

Hull, Michael D. "WWII Heroes: Aristides De Sousa Mendes." *Warfare History Network*, 8 Sept. 2016, warfarehistorynetwork.com/2016/09/08/wwii-heroes-aristides-de-sousa-mendes/. Accessed 14 Nov. 2019.

This source helped us gather information about WWII and Sousa Mendes' actions. It has quite an in-depth view of Sousa Mendes' position and connections, as well as clear descriptions of what happened because of Mendes' defiance. The source's information was useful in both short term impact, heart of the story, and background/context.

Hurowitz, Richard. "He Helped Jews Escape the Holocaust. He Died Unknown." *The New York Times*, 27 Jan. 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/27/opinion/sousa-mendes-holocaust-jews.html>. Accessed 21 Oct. 2019.

We used this website to gather information on Aristides de Sousa Mendes's main impacts on WWII and what he did for his country. This information was used in the Heart of the Story portion of our documentary.

History.com Editors. "Francisco Franco." *HISTORY*, A&E Television Networks, 7 Jun. 2019, <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/francisco-franco>. Accessed 30 Nov. 2019.

This secondary source is an article written about Francisco Franco, a general and dictator of Spain during WWII. This information gathered from this source helped us explain why refugees weren't allowed into Spain and Portugal after Germany invaded France.

History.com Editors. "Blitzkrieg." *HISTORY*, A&E Television Networks, 4 Nov. 2019, <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/blitzkrieg>. Accessed 24 Nov. 2019.

This source contains information regarding the war technique used by the Germans in world war two, known as blitzkrieg.

Mattis, Olivia. "Sousa Mendes's List" — The Search for Survivors," Avotaynu Online, 9 May 2015, <http://avotaynuonline.com/2015/05/sousa-mendess-list-search-for-survivors/>. Accessed 24 Nov. 2019.

This secondary source article provided information about the search for recipients of Sousa Mendes's visas. We used the information from this source to understand the significance of his work and how far and long his work truly went.

Rendeiro, Mark Fonseca. "The Bravery of a Portuguese War Hero Resonates Today | Mark Fonseca Rendeiro." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 29 Mar. 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/mar/29/portuguese-war-hero-aristides-de-sousa-mendes>. Accessed 14 Nov. 2019.

We used this article to understand the impact of Aristides de Sousa Mendes' work. This website showed the relevancy of his work in breaking barriers in our world today.

"RG 84: Portugal" *National Archives*, 16 November 2019 <https://www.archives.gov/research/holocaust/finding-aid/civilian/rg-84-portugal.html>. Accessed 21 Oct. 2019.

This website informed us about the state of the Portuguese government before and during World War II. The website shows the position of the Portuguese government, and their implementations upon the Jewish refugees. We used this website as a source to what the condition of the Portuguese government, and how that impacted the Jews in Portugal.

Simons, Marlise. "Nazi Gold and Portugal's Murky Role." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 10 Jan. 1997, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/01/10/world/nazi-gold-and-portugal-s-murky-role.html>. Accessed 29 Oct. 2019.

This article provided information about the relationship between the German and Portuguese government and the wealth, known as "Nazi gold", acquired by Portugal through interactions with Nazi Germany.

Smith, Doug. "Helped Thousands of Jews Escape Nazis : Family's Long Quest Ends Historical Exile for Hero." *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times, 5 Oct. 1984, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1986-10-05-mn-4673-story.html>. Accessed 30 Nov. 2019.

We used this secondary source to learn about the short term and long term impacts of Aristides de Sousa Mendes's work. This article was about how his family attempted to clear his name and redeem Sousa Mendes.

"Sousa Mendes, Aristides De." *The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous*, Claims Conference, 2019, jfr.org/rescuer-stories/sousa-mendes-aristides-de/. Accessed 26 Oct. 2019.

This article provided information on the Jewish perspective of Sousa Mendes, as well as how they have expressed their gratitude by honoring and remembering him. The article's information was useful in both the impact and heart of the story sections.

“The Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies.” *SCJS*, 2019, cryptojews.com/2018/07/john-paul-abranchesson-of-aristides-de-sousa-mendes-portuguese-righteous-gentile/. Accessed 12 Nov. 2019.

We used this secondary source to learn more about de Sousa Mendes' family and the impact his actions had on them. The source also gave us insight into the aid Sousa Mendes received from his family members in order to carry out his heroic decision. We discovered more about how Sousa Mendes' descendants have fought to have their ancestor recognized.

UCL. “Lisbon and Its Jewish Refugees: Engaging Portugal with Its World War II History.” *Research Impact*, University College of London, 28 Aug. 2018, www.ucl.ac.uk/impact/case-studies/2014/dec/lisbon-and-its-jewish-refugees-engaging-portugal-its-world-war-ii-history. Accessed 23 Oct. 2019.

This secondary source helped us understand Portugal's role in WWII as well as why refugees considered fleeing to Portugal one of their best options during the Nazi regime. The source helped us build own background knowledge.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "GERMAN INVASION OF WESTERN EUROPE, MAY 1940." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-invasion-of-western-europe-may-1940>. Accessed 24 Nov. 2019.

A recapitulation of the conflicts that occurred in World War 2. Detailed information regarding the German invasion of western Europe in May 1940

Vashem, Yad. “The Courage to Defy.” *A Tribute to the Righteous Among Nations*, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, 2019, www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/righteous/mendes.asp. Accessed 22 Nov. 2019.

This source gave us testimony from Rabbi Haim Krieger, a major influencer in Sousa Mendes' decision to sign the refugees' visas. We were able to learn about Sousa Mendes' "rescue" plan in action, and the website provided several useful and insightful quotes.

“Why Did Hitler Hate the Jews?” *Anne Frank Website*, 23 Sept. 2019, www.annefrank.org/en/anne-frank/go-in-depth/why-did-hitler-hate-jews/. Accessed 30 Oct. 2019.

This article informed us of Hitler's enmity towards the Jews as well as the deep-seated prejudice that is Anti-Semitism. It gave us insight for what Hitler's motives were in his actions, as well as why the Jews needed to flee their homes.