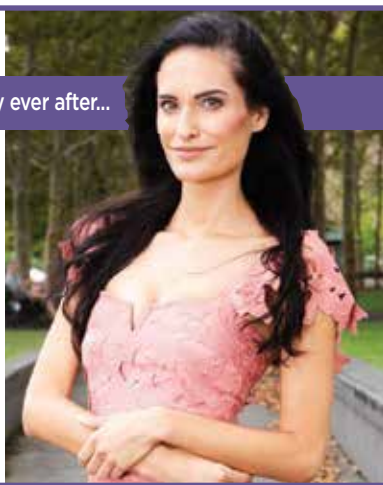




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Invited to Life: Holocaust Survivors in America

The Center for Jewish History and jMUSE will present the inspirational new photography exhibition *Invited to Life: Holocaust Survivors in America* in the Selz Foundation Gallery at the Center for Jewish History (15 West 16th Street), free and open to the public during Jewish American Heritage Month.

The exhibition, which opens May 17 to the public, features the work of B.A. Van Sise and is presented in honor of Jack Waksal, a Holocaust survivor. In a project that would span four years and take him across the country, Van Sise set out to document the lives of Holocaust survivors in the United States. *Invited to Life: Holocaust Survivors in America* features the photographic portraits that he created. This work offers the viewer a fresh opportunity to engage with the unique stories of survivors who built new lives in the U.S. The photographs also reveal the wide diversity of American Jewish experience and the many ways in which individuals and communities have practiced resilience, remembrance, creativity, and connection.

"They are mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters who survived the unthinkable, yet had the strength and courage to come to the United States with the dream of creating a new and better life for themselves and their families," said Bernard J. Michael, President & CEO, Center for Jewish History. "This exhibition captures their incredible spirit and optimism. We are proud to honor them by sharing their inspiring stories."

The exhibition experience, designed by Upswell, includes not only selected photographic prints, but also projections of the dozens of photographs that Van Sise produced. It offers perspectives on the stories of Holocaust survivors including Engelina Billauer, Saul Dreier, Julius Eisenstein, Sally Frishberg, Betty Grebenshikoff, Alex Gross, Allan Hall, David Lenga, Toby Levy, Vernon Mosheim, Werner Reich, Toni & John Rinde, Irving Roth, Rabbi Arthur Schneier, Leon Sherman, Sam Silberberg, Martha Sternbach, Mireille Taub, Doris & Meir Usharovitz, Jack Waksal, and Marion Wiesel.

"In its focus on survival, personal and communal reinvention, and the vast range of American Jewish experiences, *Invited to Life* is in keeping with the important work of the Center for Jewish History," said Michael S. Glickman, Founder & CEO of jMUSE. "The Center's exhibitions and programs highlight under-studied aspects of Jewish history, expand public understanding of the diversity of Jewish life, and engage public audiences in explor-



ing the contemporary relevance of the past."

This presentation of *Invited to Life* is made possible by the Samuel D. Waksal Foundation, with the generous support of the David Berg Foundation and the Stefany and Simon Bergson Foundation.

B.A. Van Sise is an author and photographic artist focused on the intersection between language and the visual image. His work has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Center for Creative Photography and the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, as well as in group exhibitions at the Peabody Essex Museum, the Museum of Photographic Arts, the Los Angeles Center of Photography, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. A number of his portraits of American poets are in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery. Van Sise is an Independent Book Publisher Awards gold medalist, and his *Invited to Life* exhibition is a 2021 Prix de la Photographie Paris award-winner.

Invited to Life, the book, is forthcoming in September 2022.

The Center for Jewish History illuminates history, culture, and heritage. The Center provides a collaborative home for five partner organizations: American Jewish Historical Society, American Sephardi Federation, Leo Baeck Institute, Yeshiva University Museum, and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. The partners' archives comprise the world's largest and most comprehensive archive of the modern Jewish experience outside of Israel. For more information call 212-294-8301.

jMUSE is an arts and culture venture founded on and committed to the principles of collaboration and exchange. It brings together institutions, experts, and philanthropists to experiment with new ways to present important ideas and innovative content across the United States and Europe.

WJCS: Providing Services to our Dynamic Jewish Community



BY SHERRY BIRNBAUM, LCSW

Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS) was founded in 1943 with a small grant from UJA-Federation of New York. While we have grown to become one of the largest human service agencies in Westchester and the largest provider of licensed community-based mental health services in the county, our core values have stayed the same. Our commitment to tikkun olam (repairing the world) is reflected in the breadth of programs and services we offer.

Often referred to as the 911 and 411 for the Jewish community, WJCS Center for Jewish Programs responds to the challenges faced by individuals, from early childhood through the life span. We partner with 40+ synagogues, day schools, Jewish early childhood centers, and senior adult living facilities in Westchester to provide educational, spiritual, recreational, and mental health programs as well as counseling to individuals in need. We care for and support families facing life-limiting illnesses and the long trajectory of a dementia diagnosis. We offer support and socialization opportunities for Holocaust families as well as for individuals with intellectual and

developmental disabilities. New on the horizon: our newly-formed Youth Resiliency Roundtable will bring together representatives from Jewish days schools, community youth groups, and synagogues to assess mental health needs of Jewish youth in Westchester. Services offered will include individual clinical counseling, trainings, and support groups.

Thanks to funding from UJA-Federation of New York and private philanthropy, we offer the following programs; Alzheimer's and Related Dementia Services; Bereavement Services; Behavioral Support Services for Synagogue-based Nursery Schools; Consulting Services for Parents of Children and Adolescents; Holocaust Survivor and Family Services; Home-Delivery of Kosher Meals to Seniors; Jewish Programs for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities; Jewish Spiritual Healing Center; Locator Bracelets for Individuals with Dementia; Mental Health Services; On-site Services with Partnering Jewish Institutions; Respite for Family Caregivers; Support Services for Individuals and Families Facing Serious Illness; Support for Families Facing Domestic Abuse; and Youth Resiliency Round Table.

Sherry Birnbaum, LCSW, is Assistant Executive Director of the WJCS Center for Jewish Programs. For more information about WJCS services for the Jewish community, go to wjcs.com or contact Sherry Birnbaum at (914) 761-0600 x2140; sbirnbaum@wjcs.com.

No Hate in Our States and Jewish American Heritage Month



BY MYRA CLARK-SIEGEL,
AJC WESTCHESTER/FAIRFIELD REGIONAL DIRECTOR

May is Jewish American Heritage Month, designated by Congress in 2006. That's an important sign that the American Jewish community is valued in this extraordinary country, and yet recognition that we are still a tiny minority. Indeed, the American Jewish community hovers somewhere around 2.4% of the U.S. population. However, ask any number of American Jews if they know about this special designation and most will look at you quizzically.

As we know from AJC's groundbreaking research, including our 2021 State of Antisemitism Report coupled with FBI hate crimes statistics, antisemitism is surging in the United States, with Jews the target of 55% of all religiously motivated hate crimes reported. The word reported is key since the FBI notes that this statistic is woefully under-reported.

At AJC (American Jewish Committee), we believe that celebrating Jewish Heritage Month means showing that we are #JewishandProud. Indeed, AJC, the leading global Jewish advocacy organization, first introduced #JewishandProud at the "No Hate, No Fear" Rally in New York in January 2020, where over 25,000 Jews and allies marched together against antisemitism. The hashtag went viral, with Jews, allies, and civil society leaders, expressing Jewish pride or showing support for the Jewish community.

Throughout the month of May, as part of Jewish Heritage Month, AJC is encouraging Jews and all people

of goodwill to exhibit their pride by wearing Judaica, like a Star of David, in public and posting photos with the hashtag #JewishandProud on social media.

Yet social media posts are not enough. We must raise awareness about the threat of antisemitism here in the United States with our interfaith and intergroup partners; with government officials at the local, state, and federal level; and with decision makers and opinion leaders. Antisemitism is not an issue for the Jewish community to solve alone. Indeed, levels of antisemitism reflect the health of civil society, and like all forms of hatred and racism, must be addressed by society overall, and leaders in particular.

Any act of racism or hatred against any community should be taken seriously and we expect that leaders would respond quickly, clearly, and as strongly as needed. That should be the case with universities, corporations, and government officials. We call upon these leaders to stand with the Jewish community, just as with other minorities.

The days of "don't rock the boat" are over. It is our responsibility to our ancestors, ourselves, and our children to raise awareness about antisemitism's ugly surge and hold our leaders accountable. When we say, "No Hate in Our States," we must work with our partners and leaders to ensure that becomes a reality. And we must also walk tall as Jews, to be outwardly even more Jewish, whether wearing a Star of David, or a kippah, or t-shirt with Hebrew on it. That also means affirming our pride in Israel, the only Jewish state. To end Jew-hatred, to ensure that there is No Hate in Our States, means to be openly "JewishandProud" not only during American Jewish Heritage Month, but every day of the year.

Myra Clark-Siegel is AJC Westchester/Fairfield regional director. To join the efforts and to highlight your own examples of #JewishandProud, email at: westchester@ajc.org