


NOA

Profiles

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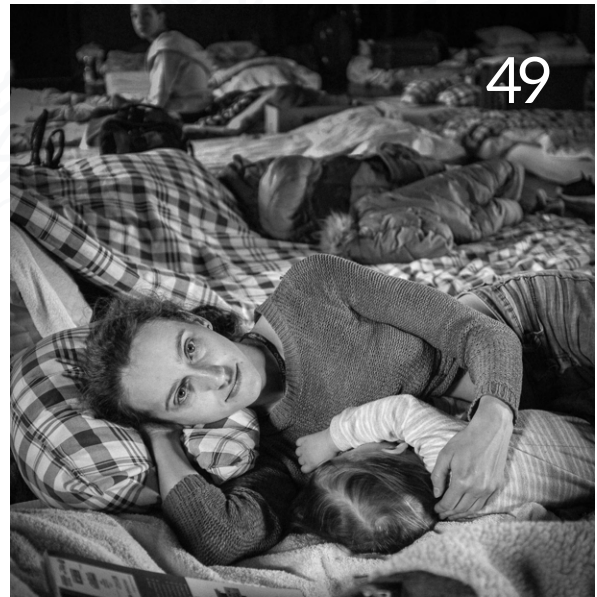
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SHAPING AN INCLUSIVE EUROPE AND FOSTERING JEWISH LIFE

It is with great honour that we present the NOA Profiles, a collection of captivating stories of people, organizations, and initiatives that are contributing to an inclusive and democratic Europe and are fostering Jewish life.

Through interviews and conversations, we have had the privilege of connecting with individuals from various sectors of society and from across the European continent. From activists and artists to historians and faith leaders, each person we encountered has imparted profound insights and unique perspectives on how to support Jewish life and create inclusive societies.

We want to express our deepest gratitude to the remarkable individuals and organizations that generously shared their experiences with us.



Your authenticity, passion, and personal journeys are beacons of inspiration, igniting a sense of hope and possibility in the hearts of those who read your stories.

We invite you to join us on this remarkable journey. Thank you for being part of our mission.

The NOA Team



POLAND'S MAIN JEWISH MUSEUM LEADS BY CURATING TOLERANCE

Opened in 2013, the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw offers a trove of knowledge about the rich history of Jewish life in Poland.

Located in what used to be the heart of the Warsaw Ghetto during Nazi Germany's occupation of Poland, the POLIN Museum is one of the most important institutions in the field of Jewish history in Europe today.

Fewer than 10,000 Jews live in Poland, yet before the Holocaust the country was home to one of the largest Jewish populations in the world.

NOA spoke with Joanna Fikus, the Head of the Exhibitions department of the POLIN Museum, about their work showcasing 1,000 years of Polish Jewish history, while building a more tolerant society.

JOANNA FIKUS, HEAD OF THE EXHIBITIONS DEPARTMENT OF THE POLIN MUSEUM



Photo © courtesy of Joanna Fikus

NOA: How do you decide where to begin telling the story of 1,000 years of Jewish history in Poland?

JK: We decided to tell this history from a specific perspective – from the perspective of Jews living in each time period. We chose to show it in a way that would make our visitors feel as though they were in the same position of Jews back then, to imagine you have the knowledge limited to that very specific time period, to identify with the individual persons.

With our temporary exhibitions we do it differently. Every time we choose a subject, we are trying to find something universal about the experience. In an exhibition about the antisemitic campaign of March 1968, we thought: How can we make this relevant to a young person today? Step by step we created the essence of our message: How would you feel if someone came to you and told you

that you are a stranger in your own home, your own country, that you don't belong here? In March 1968 Jews were simply told they don't belong in Poland. And there are many other cases in the world where people are forced to leave as refugees. Unfortunately, it's a common experience.

NOA: What has changed in Polish society in the last 10 years since the POLIN museum opened?

JK: In the first years of the museum's operation, our focus was really to bring back the history of Jews in Poland, because this history was quite unknown among young Polish audiences. After several years we decided to be more ambitious. Why do we want to recall the history of Polish Jews? To counter antisemitism, discrimination, and exclusion by creating mutual understanding and respect.



Some people were afraid to come here. Afraid to deal with a difficult subject, they were not ready to be confronted with it. As a result, we have diverse activities for them: Musical concerts, educational programs for kids and parents. We want them to come here and see this is not only a museum talking about the Holocaust. Once we bring them in and make them more familiar, and willing, and open, then it's easier to discuss the difficult topics.

NOA: What has surprised you the most?

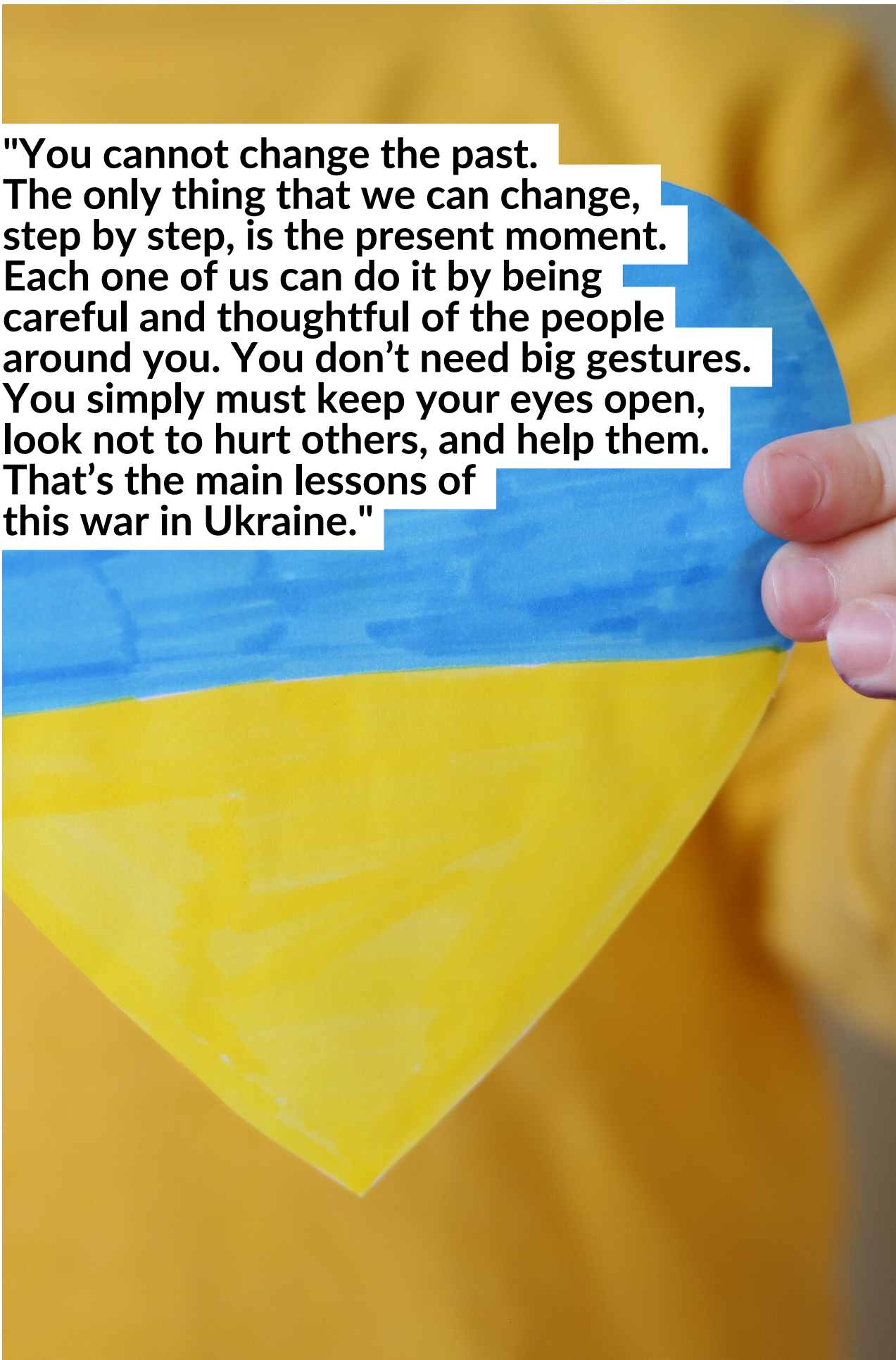
JK: I didn't expect how many people would be interested in the subject that we are dealing with. In Poland with this current political situation, it is difficult. We are not open to blunt

conversations about dark and bright moments in our history. It's hard to change the mindset of other people. But we thought, who will do this if not us?

NOA: Did the war in Ukraine bring changes for the museum?

JK: Of course. There was a huge wave of Ukrainian refugees who came to Poland and to Warsaw. We had to adjust our program and activities to their needs, to Ukrainian women and children. Many of them are traumatized. We wanted to show them this is a safe place.

This place is also about their story, about them. Historically, much of the story of Polish Jews happened on the historical territory of Ukraine.



**"You cannot change the past.
The only thing that we can change,
step by step, is the present moment.
Each one of us can do it by being
careful and thoughtful of the people
around you. You don't need big gestures.
You simply must keep your eyes open,
look not to hurt others, and help them.
That's the main lessons of
this war in Ukraine."**



A FESTIVAL FOR JEWISH CULTURE IN EUROPE

The European Days of Jewish Culture is one of the major Jewish festivals in Europe. A collaboration between a network of both Jewish and non-Jewish institutions, taking place in 35 countries, the festival celebrates Europe's Jewish heritage and brings it to the wider public.

While in 2020 the festival was held online due to the pandemic, the European Days of Jewish Culture was able to return to in-person events in September 2021. Victor Sorensen, one of the organizers, spoke about their 2021 festival plans.

"2021 is a unique edition. The central theme for the festival is 'dialogue.' Dialogue within the community, dialogue between generations, dialogue between cultures, dialogue between religions," Sorensen explained.

"We've been working together on a very interesting journey, with the aim not only to present dialogue and its historical importance – dialogue as a part of the DNA of Judaism – but also with the opportunity of practicing dialogue nowadays. Of celebrating the diversity of our continent."



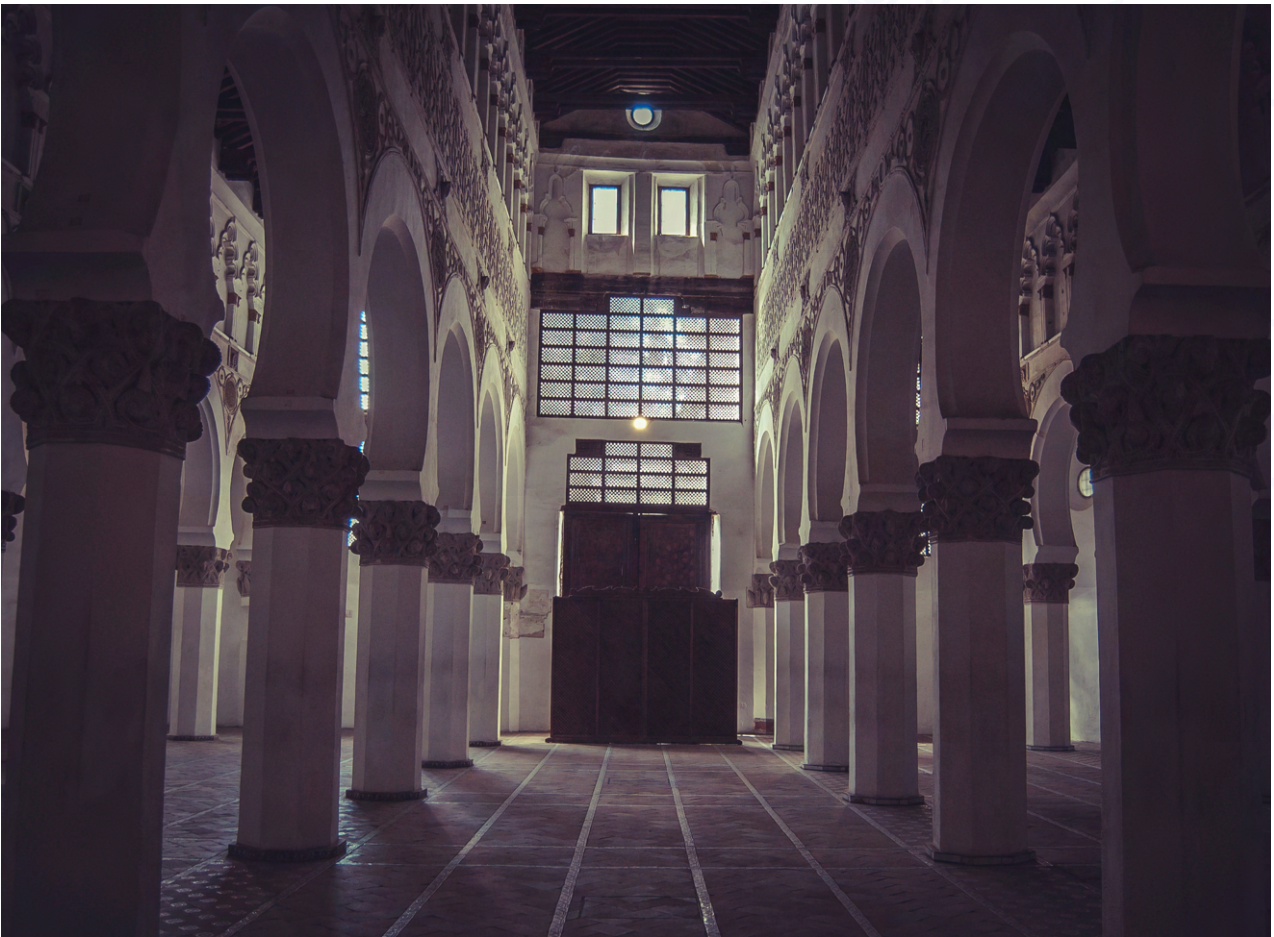
SPAIN: JEWISH LIFE FLOURISHES AGAIN AFTER 500 YEARS

More than 500 years after the expulsion of its Jews, Jewish life is flourishing again in Spain. The southern European country is home to a Jewish community of some 30,000 people.

Rabbi Haim Casas is the first Spanish-born Progressive Rabbi, and works with Jewish communities in France, Spain, and Switzerland.

“My experience as a Jew in the south of Spain, my experience as the first Andalusian rabbi in the south of Spain in 500 years, is very positive,” Rabbi Casas told the NOA project during a zoom interview in 2020.

After obtaining a degree in law, Rabbi Casas committed himself to recovering Jewish life in Spain. “I’m very optimistic about the future of the



Jewish community in Spain. Spanish people are rediscovering their roots. And they are approaching the community. Either to study, sometimes to convert back to Judaism or to convert to Judaism. And I think that Spanish people in general will say that each day they feel more and more connection with the Spanish Jewish community.”

In 2005, Rabbi Casas and others founded the Casa de Sefarad, a cultural center and museum in the Jewish quarter of Cordoba. He also opened Casa Mazal, a cultural café devoted to Sephardic gastronomy. And he is the founder and director of Makom Sefarad in Seville, which facilitates interactions between Jewish visitors to Spain with local Jews.

“Living in a diverse society can offer us an opportunity for growing together. It is a challenge, but it is worth it,” Rabbi Casas says. “Jews, non-Jews. Let’s create together a better Spain, a better society, a better world.”

Watch the video





JEWES IN BARCELONA REVIVE THE INTERCULTURAL TAPESTRY OF THEIR CITY

Barcelona's Mozaika magazine started in 2009 as a project initiated by a group of Jewish friends. Through their self-published magazine, they wanted to share and preserve the history and culture of Catalonia's Jewish history, **while also overcoming a legacy of silence which the Jewish community faced for centuries.**

On top of the magazine, Mozaika has grown into one of the largest Jewish cultural organizations in Barcelona.

They have popularized Jewish culture, bringing it to a wider audience with literature, art, history, and more. “If you keep your identity private and hidden, it’s like it doesn’t exist. We are not ashamed to be Jewish. We are here to stay,” says Mozaika co-founder Manu Valentin.

Among their activities is organizing ‘Sefer,’ Barcelona’s Jewish book festival. Mozaika’s ‘Toldot Barcelona’ project runs walking tours showcasing the places which were crucial in the city’s Jewish history.

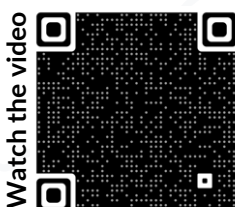
They hold small communal dinners in private homes featuring different Jewish cuisines, where participants, many of whom are not Jewish, learn about the history.

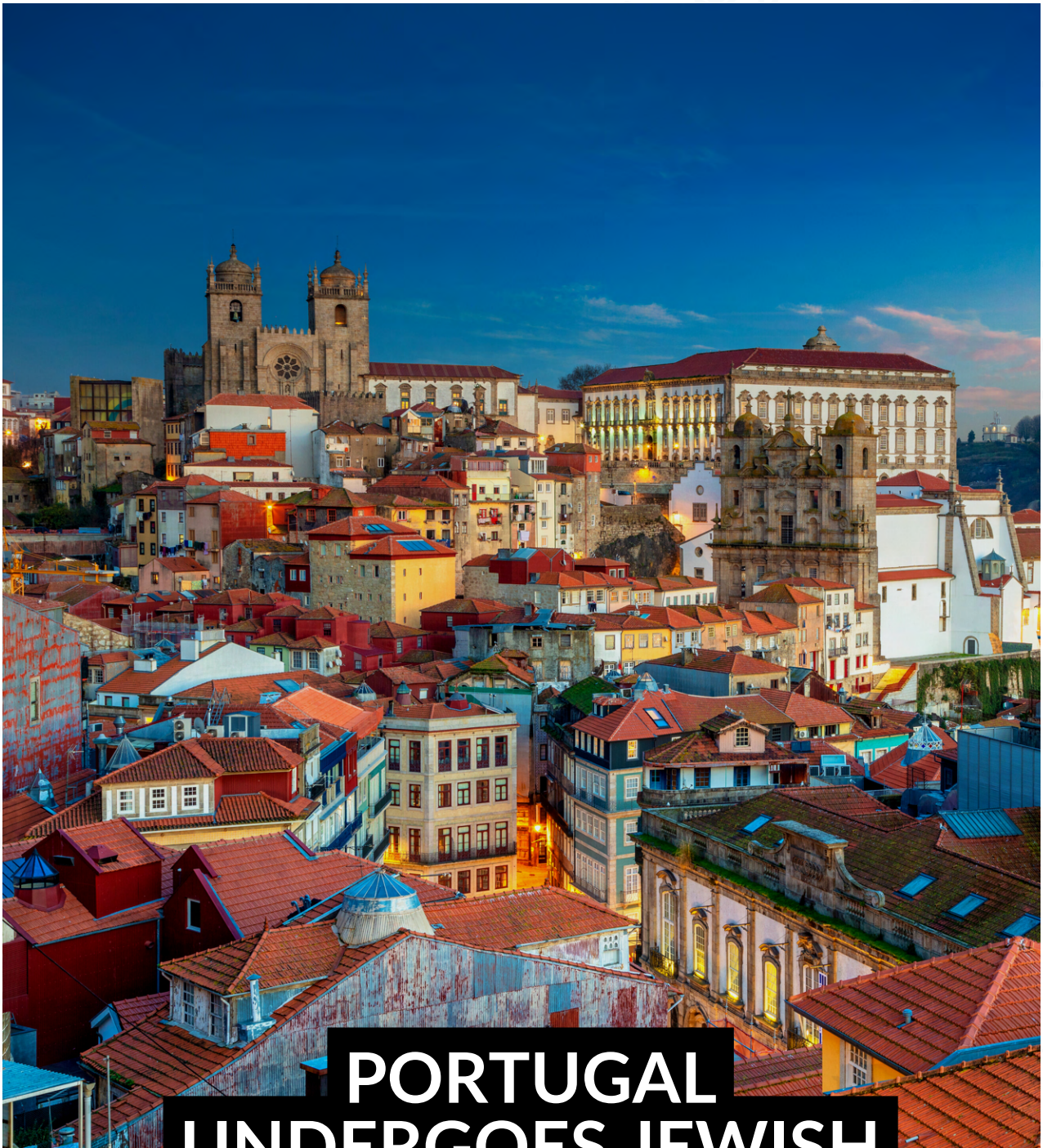
The Salam Shalom Barcelona initiative, founded in 2016, unites members of the Muslim and Jewish communities through interfaith dialogue. Their first public event was a joint celebration of Rosh Hashanah and R’as as-Sanah.



Photo © courtesy of Mozaika

Their goal is to showcase that both cultures have much in common, as well as much to offer to Catalan society. “There are many challenges we have as Jews in Europe today. The ability to work together, regardless of religious denomination, is fundamental,” says Mozaika co-founder Victor Sorensen.





PORTUGAL UNDERGOES JEWISH RENAISSANCE

Portugal expelled its 70,000 Jews in 1497. But today, **the Portuguese Jewish community is enjoying a Renaissance** with synagogue restorations and new museum openings.



About 6,000 Jews reportedly live in Portugal today, split between the country's two largest cities, Lisbon and Porto. Some are descendants of Morranos, those who secretly continued to practice Judaism after the expulsion.

Jews began trickling back in the 19th century, first from Gibraltar and Morocco, then from Eastern Europe. During WWII, Portugal played an important role, as thousands of Jewish refugees passed through the country for its ports, attempting to leave Europe.

In 2012, the government allowed descendants of expelled Jews to reclaim Portuguese citizenship. And so the last decade has witnessed

was renovated; a Jewish museum, and most recently, a Holocaust museum have opened, vowing to fight antisemitism and intolerance in Europe. The Porto community also has an ecumenical approach to relating to their non-Jewish neighbors. They focus on education and outreach, including working on joint projects with the Catholic diocese and Muslim communities.

Among some uncertainties, the future of the community holds great potential. "Two millenia of Jewish history in Portugal taught that Jews should not give up their security," says Gabriela Cantergi, Board Member of the Porto Jewish Community." Nor "the teaching of their history to others than themselves."



JEWS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA WHO FOUND A HOME AND SUCCESS IN EUROPE

After France's colonies gained independence after WWII, almost 250,000 Sephardic Jews emigrated, often to Israel, but also to France. Jews from Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia have turned 21st century France into the home of the world's third-largest Jewish population – **and injected the country with renewed cultural, commercial, and political energy.**

On November 30th, we commemorate the plight of these Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa. On that occasion, consider a few French-Jewish success stories.

Begin with Algerian-born Jacques Attali. An economist, writer, political advisor, and civil servant, he served as a counselor to President François Mitterrand from 1981 to 1991 and launched the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Outside of politics, he's a prolific author writing essays, novels, biographies, memoirs, and even children's stories.

On a musical note, listen to Sapho [pictured above], a singer born in Marrakesh as Danielle Ebguay. She emigrated to France at the age of 16 and helped bring North African sounds into the French mainstream, singing in French, English, Arabic, Spanish, and Hebrew.

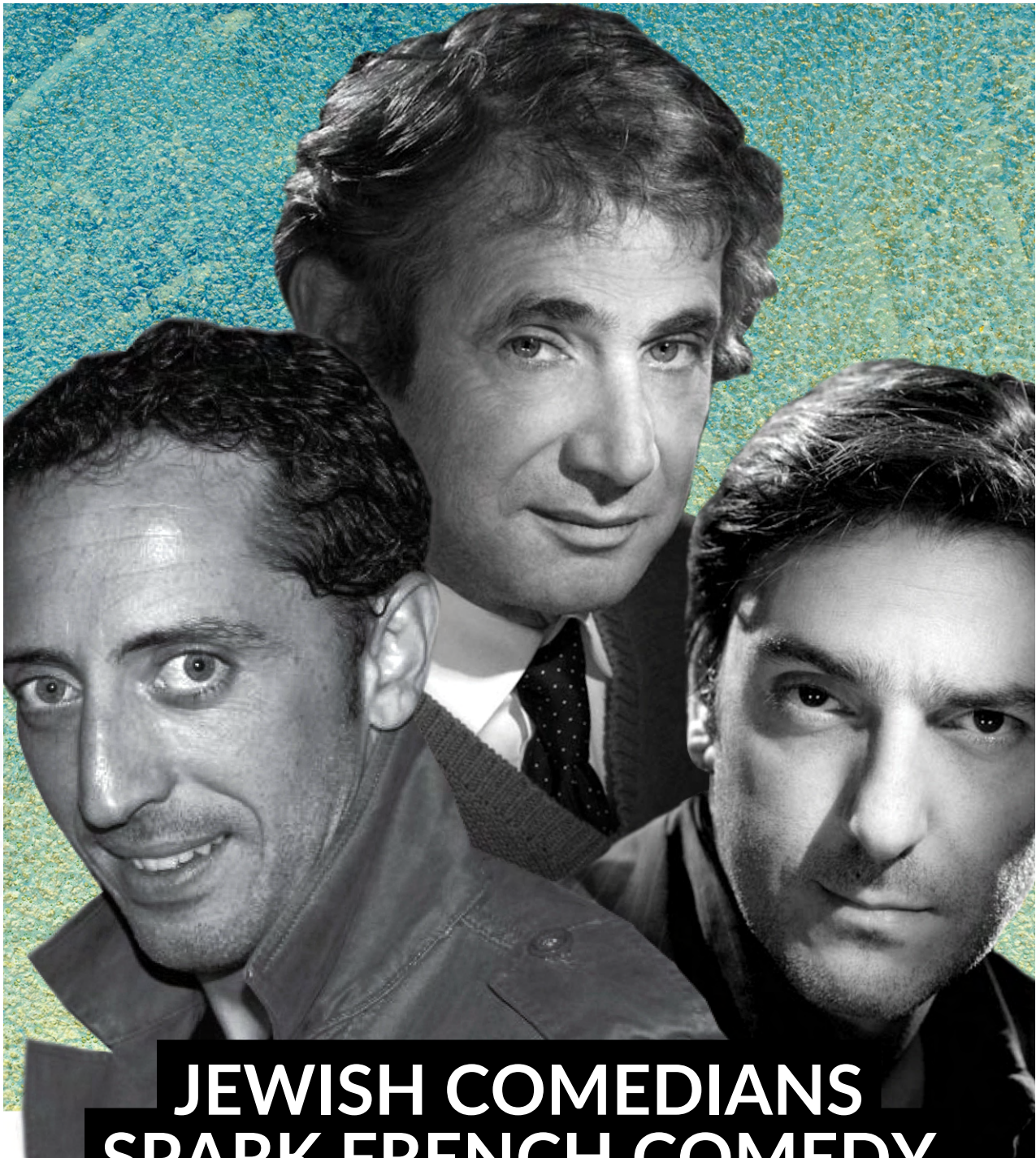
Other Sephardic Jewish singers include jazz pianist Frank Ansellam, born in Oran, pop singer Patrick Bruel, originally Patrick Benguigu, and DJ David Guetta, son of a Moroccan Jewish family.

Many of the country's most distinguished philosophers and literary critics draw their roots from North Africa.



Algerian-born Helene Cixous and Jacques Derrida created deconstructionism. Bernard Henri-Lévy, born in 1948 in Beni Saf, Algeria, became the quintessential activist philosopher, launching the "Nouveaux Philosophes" (New Philosophers) movement of the activist thinker engaged in pursuing social justice for, among others, Bangladeshis and Kurds.

When Jews think of France, they often focus on terrorism, antisemitism and aliyah. They should add another just-as-important focus: Success.



JEWISH COMEDIANS SPARK FRENCH COMEDY

It's a running American joke: Without Jews, there would be little laughter. **It now has become a French joke, too, as Jewish immigrants to France are generating chuckles.**

BUT WHILE THE JEWISH AMERICAN COMEDIC TRADITION OFTEN DRAWS ON ASHKENAZI TRADITIONS, THE JEWISH FRENCH COMIC SPIRIT IS SEPHARDIC IN TONE AND TEMPERAMENT.



Its leading proponents include Michel Boujenah (center), Yvan Attal (right), and Gad Elmaleh (left). All are of North African origin. Boujenah comes from Tunisia, Attal has Algerian roots, and Elmaleh was born and raised in Morocco.

French comedians play the anxiety of being a rootless outsider. Boujenah's first hit was his one-man-show back in 1980 called 'Albert,' which drew on his Jewish Tunisian origins and his experience leaving these roots to settle in France. One example of his humor: After praising his wife of 25 years for her cooking as "my dream," his friend asks why he continues to heap such generous praise on her. "Because I forgot her first name," he responds.

Elmaleh became a star in France for playing characters such as Chouchou, a North African transvestite, and Coco, a Sephardic businessman who alienated his family while planning his son's bar mitzvah.

Filmmaker Attal scored a big hit with his spoof about French antisemitism "They Are Everywhere." In the film, he pokes fun in a series of sketches skewering antisemitic myths, such as "Jews killed Jesus," "Jews have money," and "Jews play up the Holocaust."

In recent years, Jewish French and American humor has merged – literally. "They are Everywhere" is now available on Netflix. So are three of Elmaleh's shows. He moved in 2015 to New York. "I'm sure you've heard this story about the man that moved to America with one dollar in his pocket and he worked so hard and he made a fortune," he says. "I moved here with a fortune." His breakthrough American performance, appropriately, came on Jerry Seinfeld's show, "Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee," with Seinfeld and Elmaleh driving around in a 1950 Citroën and trading jokes.



BLIND NOISE: A BUDAPEST KLEZMER BAND TURNS TO ACTIVISM

In Budapest, Hungary, blind Jewish musician Tomi Juhász is a role model in many ways, demonstrating that **culture plays an important role in inclusion and activism.**

THIS NOA PROFILE WAS CREATED FOR JEWISH DISABILITY AWARENESS, ACCEPTANCE, AND INCLUSION MONTH, WHICH OCCURS IN FEBRUARY, TO RAISE AWARENESS AND FOSTER INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.



A guitarist, singer, and writer, Juhász has been performing in a klezmer group for several years. Juhász says his experiences growing up in Budapest's Jewish community – and the interpersonal exchanges of culture and religion – greatly affect his music-writing, with a sound that mixes new-wave, alternative rock, and folk.

The group, called Juhász Tomi – Vaklárma (or 'Tomi Juhász – Blind Noise'), sings about the problems of their generation, about love, finding one's way, and acceptance – something which Juhász says he knows a lot about through his blindness. An avid writer as well, the themes of Juhász's novels have also centered on Jewish identity.

But perhaps most importantly, Juhász says a main goal of his music and the band's public platform is to raise awareness of pressing social and political issues in the country.

"These are the things that I am surrounded by," he explains. They have advocated for environment and climate protection in Hungary, encouraged their followers to join them in community service activities, and raised money for projects that are helping people with disabilities. Juhász wants his listeners to understand the importance of facing the problems that are in front of them: "Learn from mistakes, and from history, to avoid repeating it."



A WORLD OF YIDDISH IN SWEDEN

This is how one country in northern Europe has gone on to become a **large producer of contemporary Yiddish content.**



In 1999, Yiddish was declared an official national minority language in Sweden.

It's been spoken there by Ashkenazi Jews for hundreds of years. There are 20,000 Jews living in Sweden today, and, according to estimates, between 1,500 and 3,000 Jewish Swedes are native Yiddish speakers, most of them elderly. The official status given to minority languages assures that Yiddish speakers can conduct government business in their native language.

Sweden also offers Yiddish-language courses in universities, supports Yiddish language TV and radio programming, including a focus on children's programming, and book publishers are creating media in Yiddish.

Malmö-based journalist Thomas Lunderquist produces a monthly Yiddish-language radio show for Sverige Radio, the national radio channel, which explores little-known connections in Yiddish language and culture. Sweden's state television previously produced a four-part travel series which follows Yiddishist Tomas Woodski as he travels to four cities (Bucharest, Tel Aviv, Paris, and London) and talks to local Yiddish speakers.

There are also Yiddish-language versions of well-known Swedish children's shows. The Sveriges Jiddischförbund, Sweden's largest Yiddish cultural organization, released a series of music videos teaching Yiddish songs to children, along with Yiddish vocabulary.



YOUNG JEWS IN GEORGIA BUILD ROOTS

Georgia is a multiethnic country in the South Caucasus, home to different ethnic groups and religions. But with high levels of intermarriage and assimilation, **Georgia's Jewish community is dwindling in size.**

MOST OF GEORGIA'S JEWS - SEVERAL TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE - LEFT THE FORMER SOVIET REPUBLIC IN THE 1970S TO 1990S. TODAY AN ESTIMATED 2,600 - 6,000 JEWS LIVE IN GEORGIA, MANY OF THEM ELDERLY.



Through Hillel Tbilisi, the Georgian branch of the global student organization, Ketí Chikviladze and her peers are working to rebuild an active young Jewish community.

In Tbilisi, members of the organization are helping young people reconnect with their Jewish roots. Ketí and her friends host regular Shabbat dinners, Jewish history and culture talks, heritage trips, as well as group environmental clean-ups.

"I was 16 years old when I first 'met' the Jewish community," Chikviladze told the NOA project during an interview in the Georgian capital Tbilisi in October 2021.

"Before that, I only knew that my grandma is Jewish. At home my mother would say that our grandma is Jewish, but my grandma herself wouldn't talk about that much."

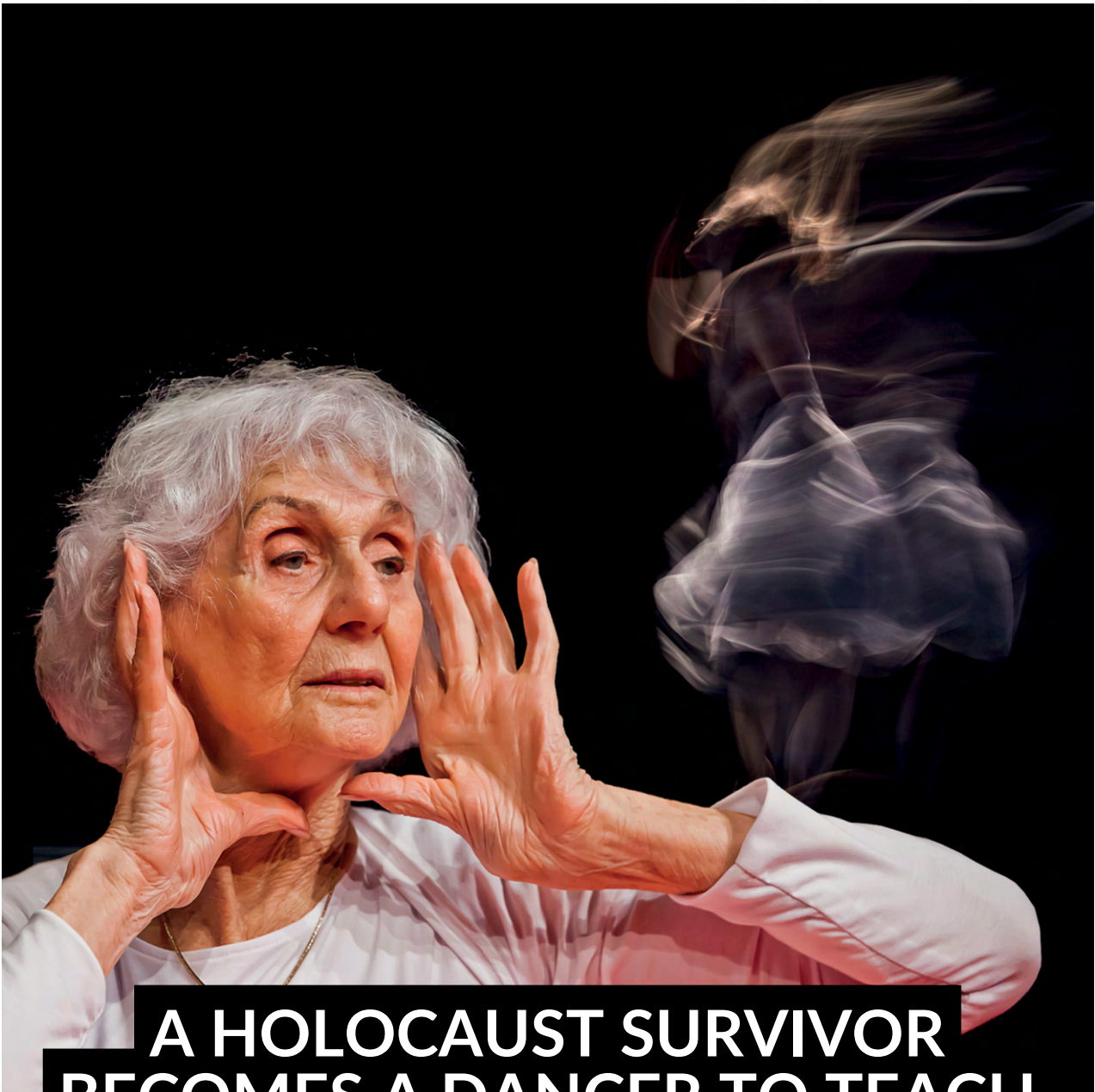
"We have many young people who had no idea about their Jewish roots. In Hillel, they saw and learned for the first time what is Shabbat, what is Pesach, Rosh Hashanah. They saw everything here."

The group is creating young Jewish leaders who are active in Georgia's diverse society.

"Unfortunately, Jews are hugely assimilated in Georgia, and many go to Israel," Chikviladze continued.

"I hope very much that with the help of Hillel, we will plant this important seed in young people, which they will pass on to their kids, and their kids, and so on."





A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR BECOMES A DANCER TO TEACH THE NEXT GENERATIONS

Eva Fahidi was 18 years old when she was deported to Auschwitz with her family from their home city of Debrecen, Hungary. Her mother, father, and younger sister perished there. In recent years, **Fahidi has become outspoken in expressing what happened in the Holocaust, using dance as her medium.**



Fahidi's performance, "Sea Lavender or The Euphoria of Being," a duet with dancer Emese Cuhorka, who is 60 years her junior, premiered in 2015. The title was inspired by a plant that can grow in poor soil, symbolizing Fahidi's difficult life. The duo performed altogether 95 times in Budapest, as well as in other cities in Europe including Vienna, Berlin, Weimar, Stadtallendorf, Subotica. It was Fahidi's first time performing in front of an audience. "All my life, I knew it [dance] was a way I could express myself best of all," Fahidi explained in an interview with DW.

For decades, Fahidi was silent, unable to speak about her terrible memories from the Holocaust era.

But a 2003 visit to the notorious death camp where she lost her family pushed her to put pen to paper and write her memoir about her interrupted youth.

Fahidi also advises several Holocaust memorial foundations, and has spoken before parliamentarians at the German Bundestag. A 2020 Hungarian documentary film about her dance performance, "The Euphoria of Being," won multiple international awards.

Now, Fahidi's goal is to reach young audiences, at a time when populism is rising again in Europe. "I believe in youths," she said. "My generation made so many mistakes. The young generation should learn a lesson from our mistakes and experience."

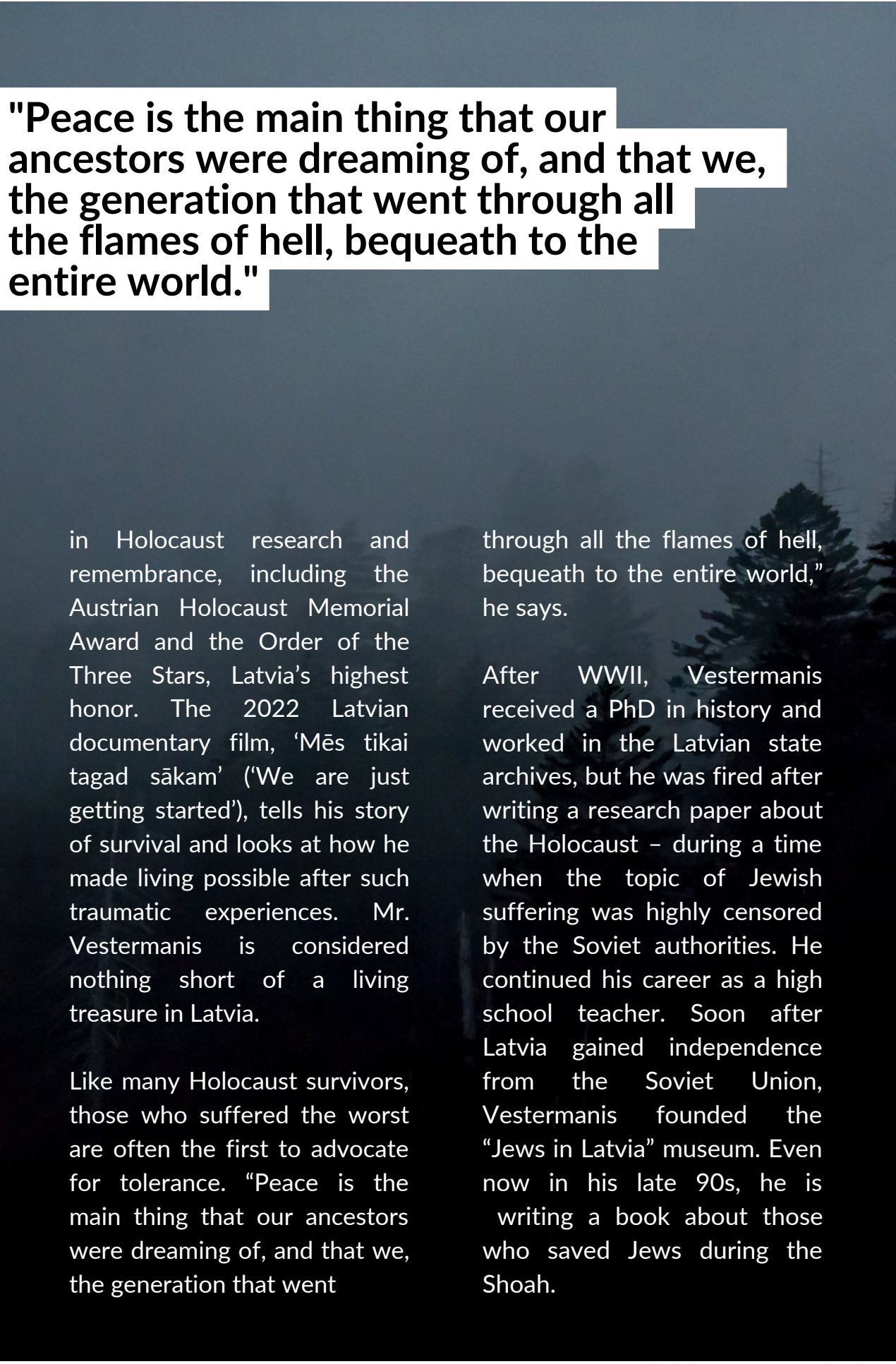


AT ALMOST 100, A LATVIAN HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR PROMOTES TOLERANCE

90,000 Jews lived in Latvia before the German invasion during WWII. But only 200 Jews survived the Holocaust on Latvian territory.

As a teenager, historian Margers Vestermanis was imprisoned in the Riga ghetto with his family. He was the only one of his family to survive the Rumbula massacre in 1941, when the Nazis and their local collaborators shot over 25,000 Jews from the ghetto in the nearby Rumbula forest.

When the Riga ghetto was liquidated, Vestermanis was sent to several concentration camps. He escaped a death march and joined partisan groups in the forest. Today, Margers Vestermanis is one of the last Holocaust survivors in Latvia. Born in Riga in 1925, he has dedicated his life to education and documenting Latvian Jewish history and culture. He has received numerous awards for his work.



"Peace is the main thing that our ancestors were dreaming of, and that we, the generation that went through all the flames of hell, bequeath to the entire world."

in Holocaust research and remembrance, including the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Award and the Order of the Three Stars, Latvia's highest honor. The 2022 Latvian documentary film, 'Mēs tikai tagad sākam' ('We are just getting started'), tells his story of survival and looks at how he made living possible after such traumatic experiences. Mr. Vestermanis is considered nothing short of a living treasure in Latvia.

Like many Holocaust survivors, those who suffered the worst are often the first to advocate for tolerance. "Peace is the main thing that our ancestors were dreaming of, and that we, the generation that went

through all the flames of hell, bequeath to the entire world," he says.

After WWII, Vestermanis received a PhD in history and worked in the Latvian state archives, but he was fired after writing a research paper about the Holocaust – during a time when the topic of Jewish suffering was highly censored by the Soviet authorities. He continued his career as a high school teacher. Soon after Latvia gained independence from the Soviet Union, Vestermanis founded the "Jews in Latvia" museum. Even now in his late 90s, he is writing a book about those who saved Jews during the Shoah.



IN HUNGARY, AN EXHIBITION REMEMBERS A LOST JEWISH COMMUNITY

In July 1944, nearly 3,000 Jewish citizens of Szombathely were crammed into wagons and deported to Auschwitz. **Only 300 returned after the war.**

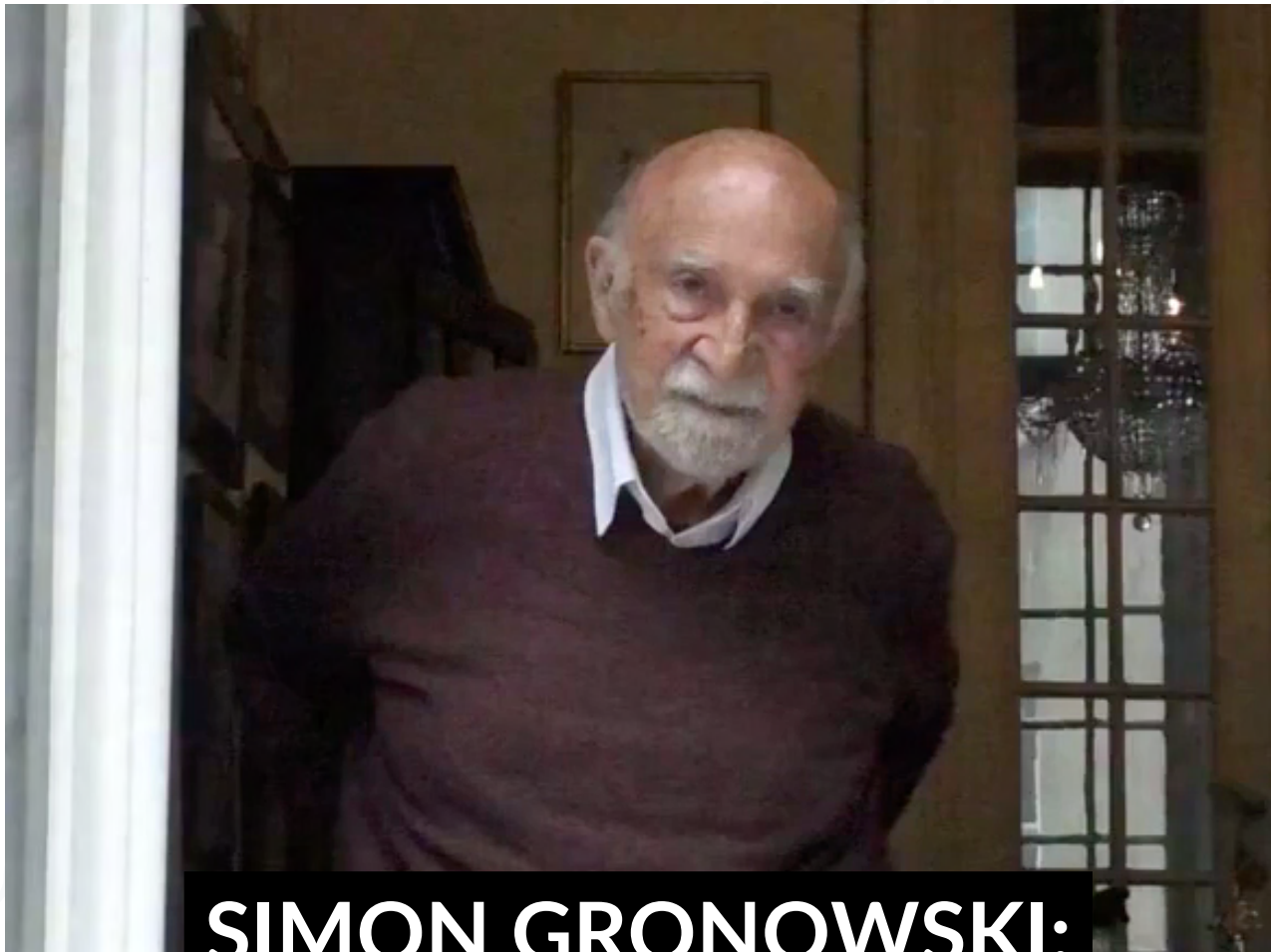
Today, a permanent photo exhibition in the town, “Eye to Eye,” gives insight into the everyday lives of the Jews of Szombathely, and attempts to render tangible the void that was left by the Holocaust.

The story behind the discovery of photos is remarkable in itself. Hungarian historian Krisztina Kelbert found an archive of forgotten photos documenting Jewish communal life in the 1930s.

Consisting of over 20,000 glass negatives, she was able to match the identities of the people in the negatives with the archives. Kelbert worked with the Hungarian Jewish community, the Szombathely municipality, and the Savaria Museum to exhibit the photos. Perhaps most importantly, students are taken on school trips to visit the exhibition, where they are encouraged to ask questions and learn about the Jewish community’s past and present.

Symbolically, the exhibition is hosted in the former classrooms of the Neolog Jewish Primary School, where generations of Jewish students studied.





SIMON GRONOWSKI: PLAYING JAZZ TO OVERCOME THE HOLOCAUST AND THE PANDEMIC

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced everyone inside, Holocaust survivor Simon Gronowski lifted his spirits by opening the window of his Brussels apartment – and playing piano for the neighborhood to hear.

The NOA project had the honor of meeting with Mr. Gronowski in May 2021. “My daughter Katia said to me one day that she sees that I am down because of the lockdown.

She told me: ‘Dad, open the window, and play for the neighbors, for the passers-by. It will lift their morale. And yours too.’”

In March 1943, an 11-year-old Simon Gronowski was taken by the Gestapo in Brussels, Belgium, together with his mother Chana and sister Ita. The young Jewish boy was being deported to the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz when, “by a miracle,

"To defend today's freedom and democracy, we must be aware of yesterday's evils... I tell young people: 'Never forget, long live peace and friendship between men.'"

I jumped from the train and escaped," he recounts. His mother and sister died in Auschwitz, and his father, Leon, left devastated by their deaths, also passed away within months of the end of the war. The young Gronowski was left alone in the world.

"I adored my sister. She was a great classical pianist. And she loved jazz. So after the war, thinking of my sister, I started playing the piano. And I became a jazz pianist," Mr. Gronowski said.

During the first lockdown in Belgium, Mr. Gronowski, then

90 years old, opened his apartment's ground floor window every evening and let his fingers move. Neighbors opened their windows and clapped in approval. The New York Times featured his impromptu concerts, and the New Orleans jazz group Tuba Skinny arranged to play a zoom concert with him.

Simon Gronowski has important words to impart, as recorded in previous interview: "To defend today's freedom and democracy, we must be aware of yesterday's evils.... I tell young people: 'Never forget, long live peace and friendship between men.'"



AN ITALIAN HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR FIGHTS RACISM

Nonagenarian Liliana Segre is one of Italy's most active and vocal Holocaust survivors. She has been speaking publicly for decades at schools and events about her experience during the Holocaust, **warning about the dangers of hatred.**

In 2018, Segre was awarded the title of 'Senator for Life' by Italy's prime minister for her efforts. That year marked the 80-year-anniversary of when racial anti-Jewish laws were passed by Mussolini's Italy in 1938.

With the coronavirus pandemic, Segre encouraged others to overcome vaccine skepticism and to get vaccinated. But because of her position, she became the target of online antisemitic attacks, and is under police protection since 2019. In response, Segre spearheaded an initiative to create a parliamentary committee tasked with fighting hate, racism, and antisemitism.

It is a warning she understands from her life's story. Segre is one of only 25 Italian child survivors of Auschwitz.

Born in Milan in 1930, Segre was deported in January 1944 together with her father. They were separated upon arrival, and she never saw her father again.

Segre's early experience has marked her approach to her fellow man. "We need to think of those millions of people in the world today who are hungry - and knocking at our door," she said.





THE “SECRET LISTENER”

Eric Mark was a “secret listener.” Along with other German-speaking émigrés, he worked for British intelligence during WWII, eavesdropping on the conversations of imprisoned German generals.

Eric passed away in 2020 at the age of 98, the last of the listeners to leave us, and leaving a legacy that testified to the horrors and happiness of Jewish life over the past century.

Born in Magdeburg, Germany, Eric remembered clearly the hyper-inflation of the 1920s, his parents’ anxiety at Hitler’s rise to power, the forced closure of the family business, and his parents’ struggle to buy enough food after Jewish bank accounts were blocked.

Evicted from his grammar school as a Jew, Eric’s parents sent him away in 1935 to obtain an education. He saw his parents just once more, during the 1936 summer holidays. In 1943, the Nazis sent them to Treblinka and gassed them on arrival.

When the UK joined the Common Market in 1973, Eric joined the European Commission. He soon acquired fluent French on top of his English, Dutch, and German. He worked as a transport economist and directed a Common Transport Policy unit. In this role, he improved road safety, imposing speed limits and flexible motorway crash barriers throughout Europe. His achievements include regulations requiring compulsory seat belts, the mutual

Born in Magdeburg, Germany, Eric remembered clearly the hyper-inflation of the 1920s, his parents' anxiety at Hitler's rise to power, the forced closure of the family business, and his parents' struggle to buy enough food after Jewish bank accounts were blocked.

recognition of driving licenses, and helping manage the engineering for the Channel Tunnel.

In 1987, Eric retired to his adopted homeland Belgium. Until the classified files were released between 1999 and 2004, the story of the "listeners" was classified. Eric didn't speak about it. Once they were made public, a riveting book, "The Walls Have Ears," published in 2019, told about his experiences.

Each Yom Kippur at the Brussels International Jewish Centre, Eric read out the names of the deceased at Yizkor. Later in his life, Eric slowed down and his wife Miriam read the names by herself. At the time of writing this article, Miriam, 89, remains in the hospital, recuperating from COVID-19.

Eric leaves three children, David, Anne, and Sandra, and four grandchildren. He also leaves a long and remarkable legacy.



THE HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS WHO BUILT AND CHANGED EUROPE

For International Holocaust Remembrance Day, NOA shared the stories of several survivors who stayed in Europe after the war, and **created meaningful impact in their societies.**

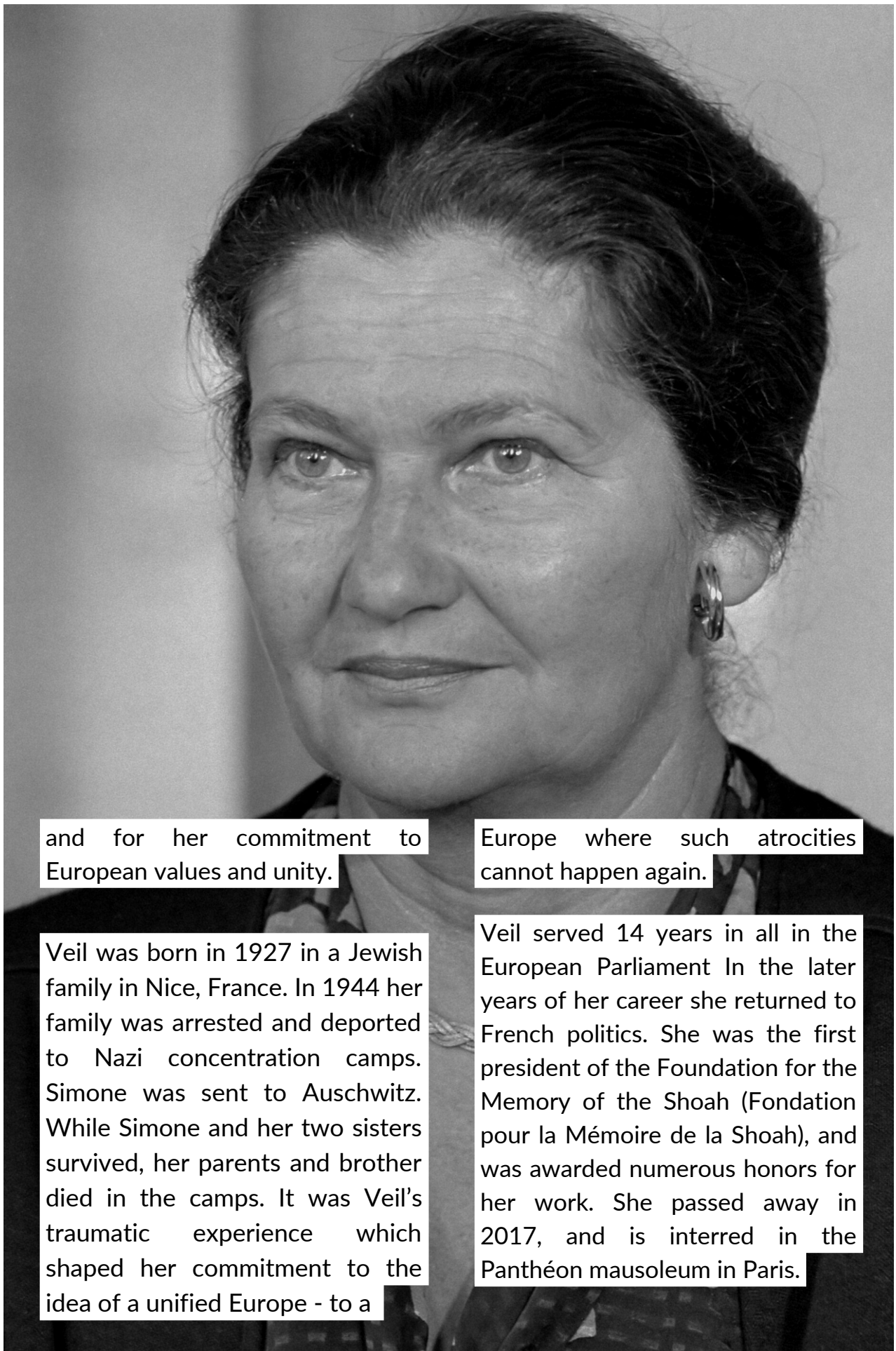


SIMONE VEIL

December 10th marks Human Rights Day, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, proclaiming that every person is entitled to inalienable rights as a human being.

French-born Simone Veil – a Holocaust survivor, feminist, lawyer, and politician – was a champion of human rights. She is remembered in

France for improving the lives of women and the conditions of prisoners. Veil served as France's health minister, and pushed to legalize abortion. In 1979 she became the first female president of the European Parliament, a post she held until 1982. Veil is also known for honouring and preserving the memory of the six million Jews killed during the Holocaust,

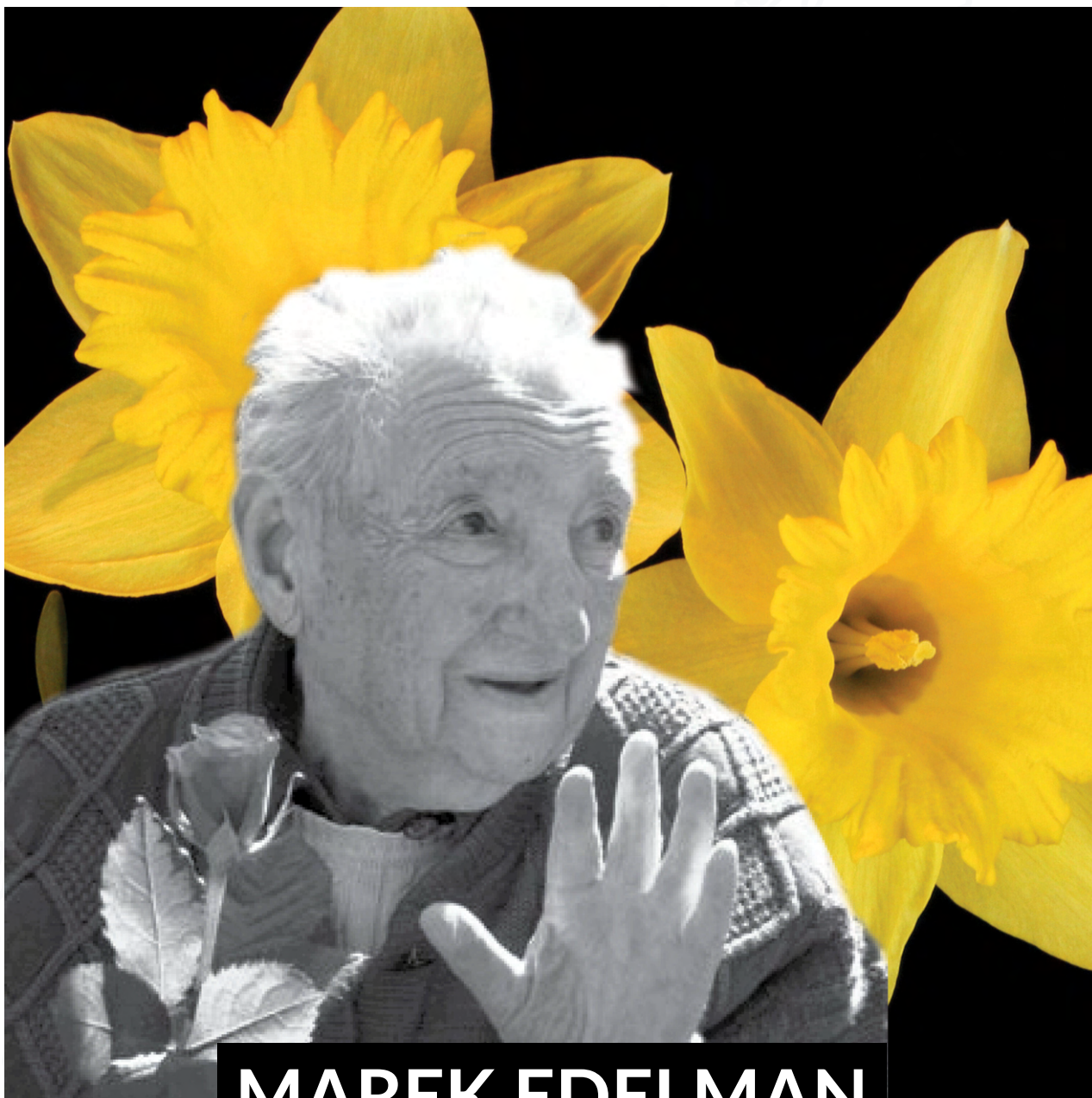


and for her commitment to European values and unity.

Europe where such atrocities cannot happen again.

Veil was born in 1927 in a Jewish family in Nice, France. In 1944 her family was arrested and deported to Nazi concentration camps. Simone was sent to Auschwitz. While Simone and her two sisters survived, her parents and brother died in the camps. It was Veil's traumatic experience which shaped her commitment to the idea of a unified Europe - to a

Veil served 14 years in all in the European Parliament. In the later years of her career she returned to French politics. She was the first president of the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah (Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah), and was awarded numerous honors for her work. She passed away in 2017, and is interred in the Panthéon mausoleum in Paris.



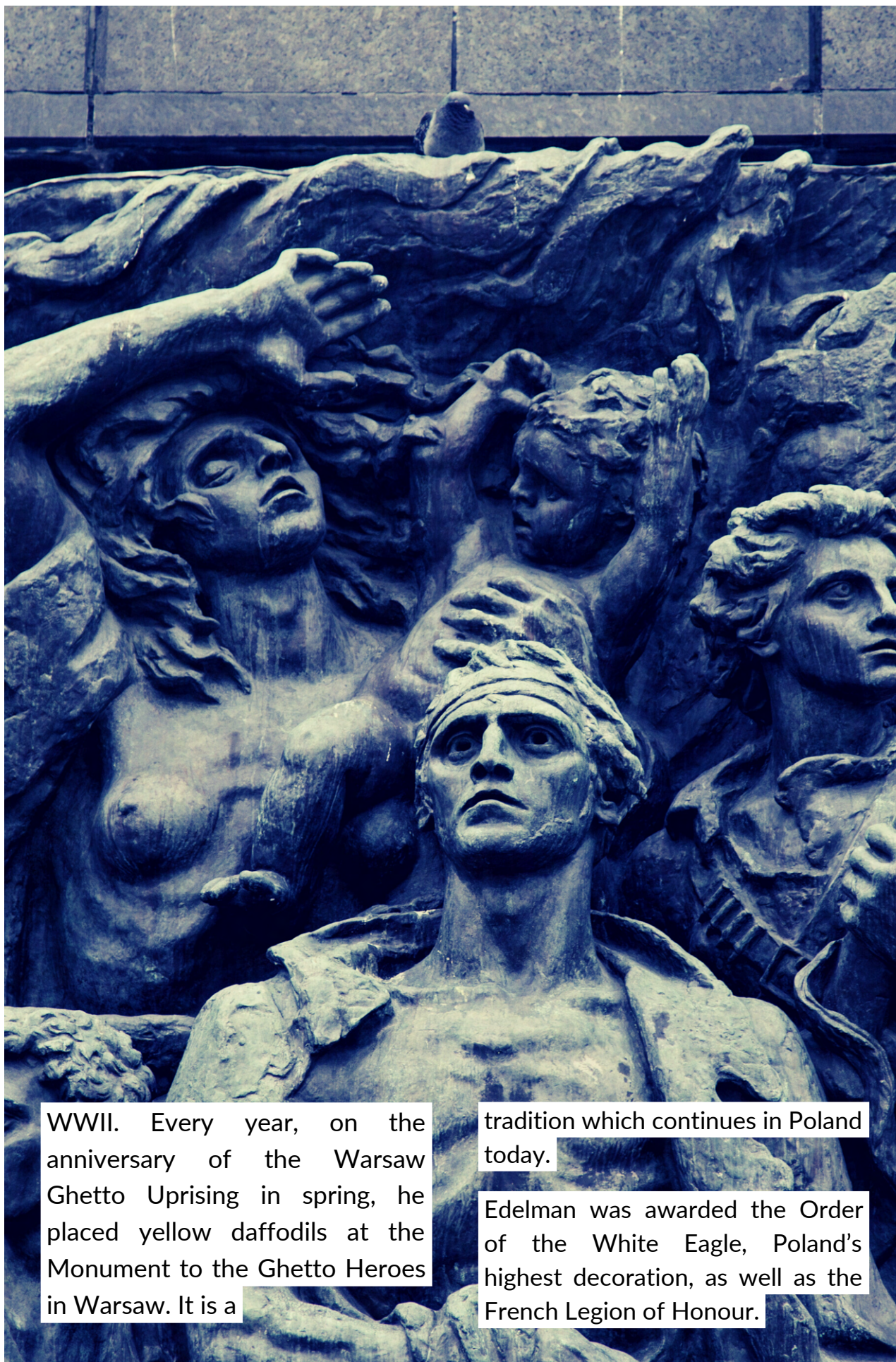
MAREK EDELMAN

“Hate is easy, love requires effort.”

Marek Edelman, who passed away in 2009, was the last surviving leader of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Born in 1919 or 1922, he was one of the founders of the Jewish Combat Organization (ZOB) in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Holocaust, and was the ZOB's last commander. Edelman survived the ghetto

uprising, and also fought in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. He chose to continue living in Poland after the war, but didn't speak about his experience for decades.

He pursued a career as a cardiologist and was a pioneer in the field of heart surgery. Edelman wrote books documenting the history of Poland's resistance to the Nazi occupation of



WWII. Every year, on the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in spring, he placed yellow daffodils at the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes in Warsaw. It is a

tradition which continues in Poland today.

Edelman was awarded the Order of the White Eagle, Poland's highest decoration, as well as the French Legion of Honour.



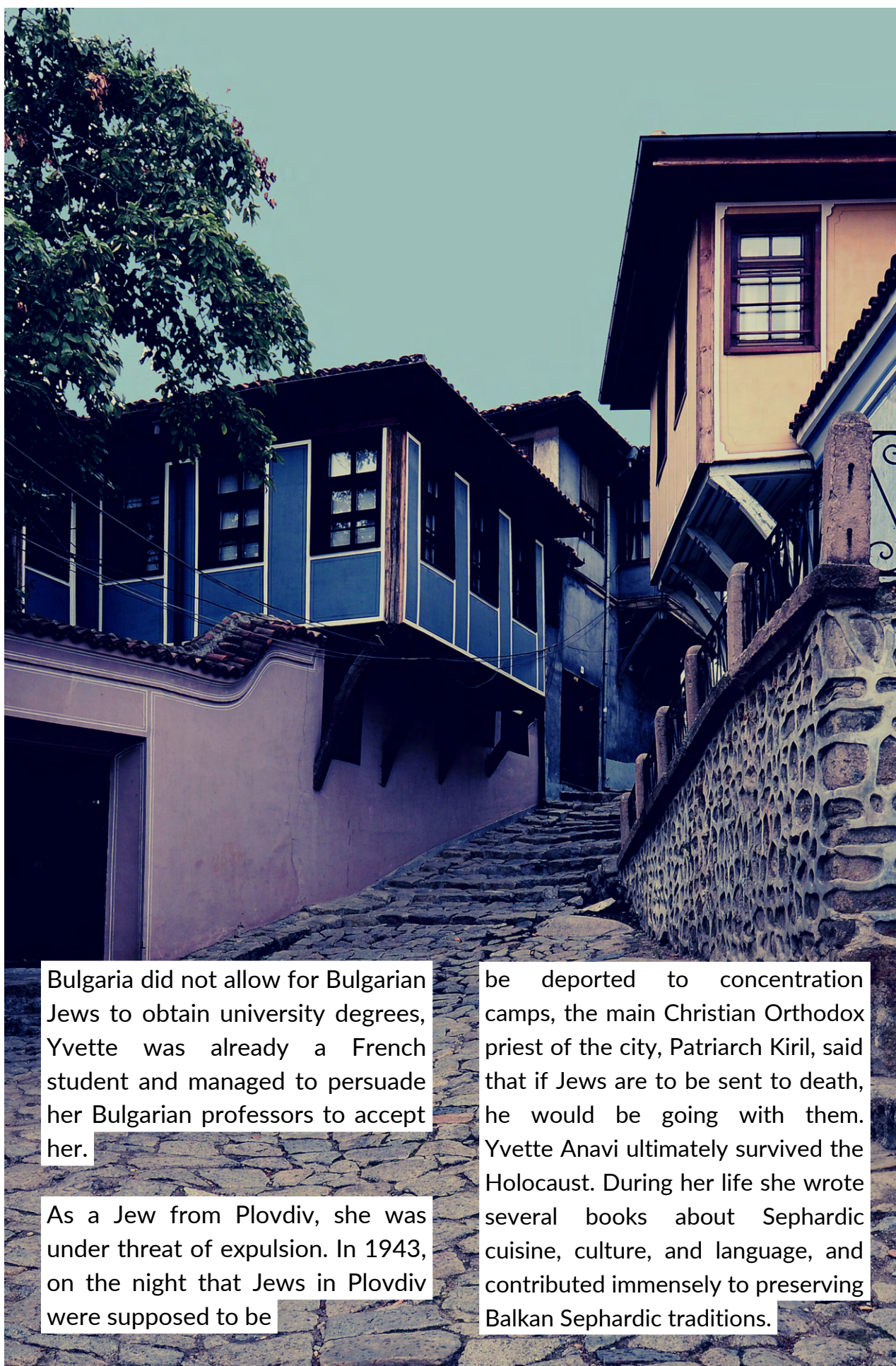
YVETTE ANAVI

In December 2020, just a few days before her 101st birthday, Yvette Anavi (maiden name Kalo), a Holocaust survivor from Bulgaria and inspiring writer, passed away.

Born in Plovdiv, an ancient city which had a large Jewish community, Yvette studied French literature in college in Strasbourg in 1938. It was a turbulent time, and after WWII began she had

to return to Bulgaria. Nazi soldiers were placed in the building of her college in Strasbourg; some of her fellow students were sent to concentration camps.

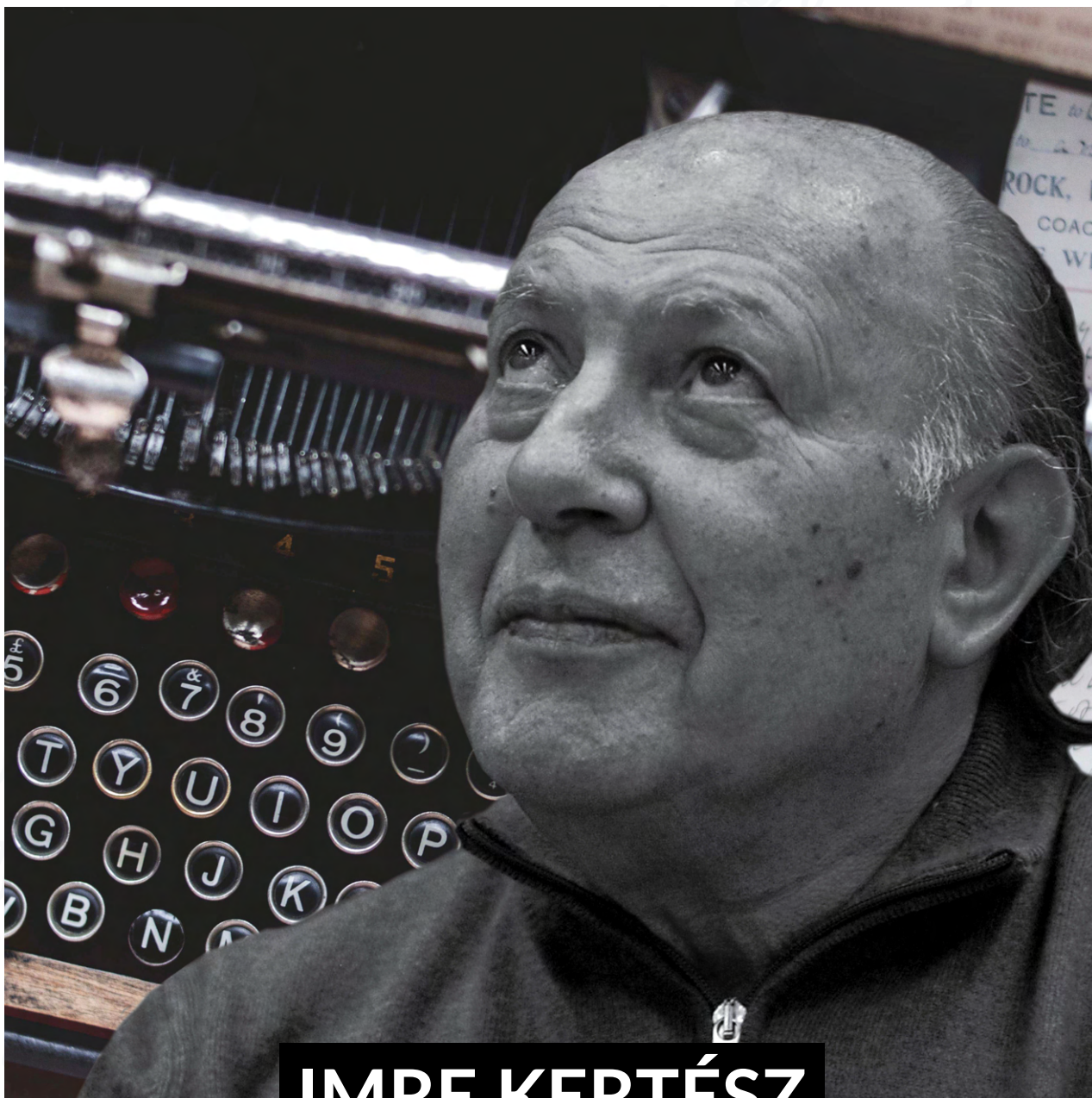
Yvette continued her studies at Sofia University and graduated in 1943, even though most Jews were banned from universities. While the 'Law for the Protection of the Nation' in



Bulgaria did not allow for Bulgarian Jews to obtain university degrees, Yvette was already a French student and managed to persuade her Bulgarian professors to accept her.

As a Jew from Plovdiv, she was under threat of expulsion. In 1943, on the night that Jews in Plovdiv were supposed to be

be deported to concentration camps, the main Christian Orthodox priest of the city, Patriarch Kiril, said that if Jews are to be sent to death, he would be going with them. Yvette Anavi ultimately survived the Holocaust. During her life she wrote several books about Sephardic cuisine, culture, and language, and contributed immensely to preserving Balkan Sephardic traditions.



IMRE KERTÉSZ

Hungarian Jewish writer Imre Kertész was born in Budapest, Hungary in 1929. During WWII, at the age of 14, he was deported to Auschwitz and from there to Buchenwald.

His first novel, 'Sorstalanság,' which translates as 'Fateless,' is a semi-autobiographical book based on his experiences in Auschwitz and Buchenwald, published in 1975.

It became the first instalment in a trilogy reflecting on the Holocaust, the two other novels being 'A kudarc' ('Fiasco') and 'Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért' ('Kaddish for a Child Not Born').

After the end of communism in 1989, Kertész made more public appearances, was translated into more languages, and took on a larger



"When I am thinking about a new novel, I always think of Auschwitz."

literary role in Europe. Among his numerous decorations for his work, he won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2002, "for writing that upholds the fragile experience of

the individual against the barbaric arbitrariness of history."

He passed away in 2016 at the age of 86.

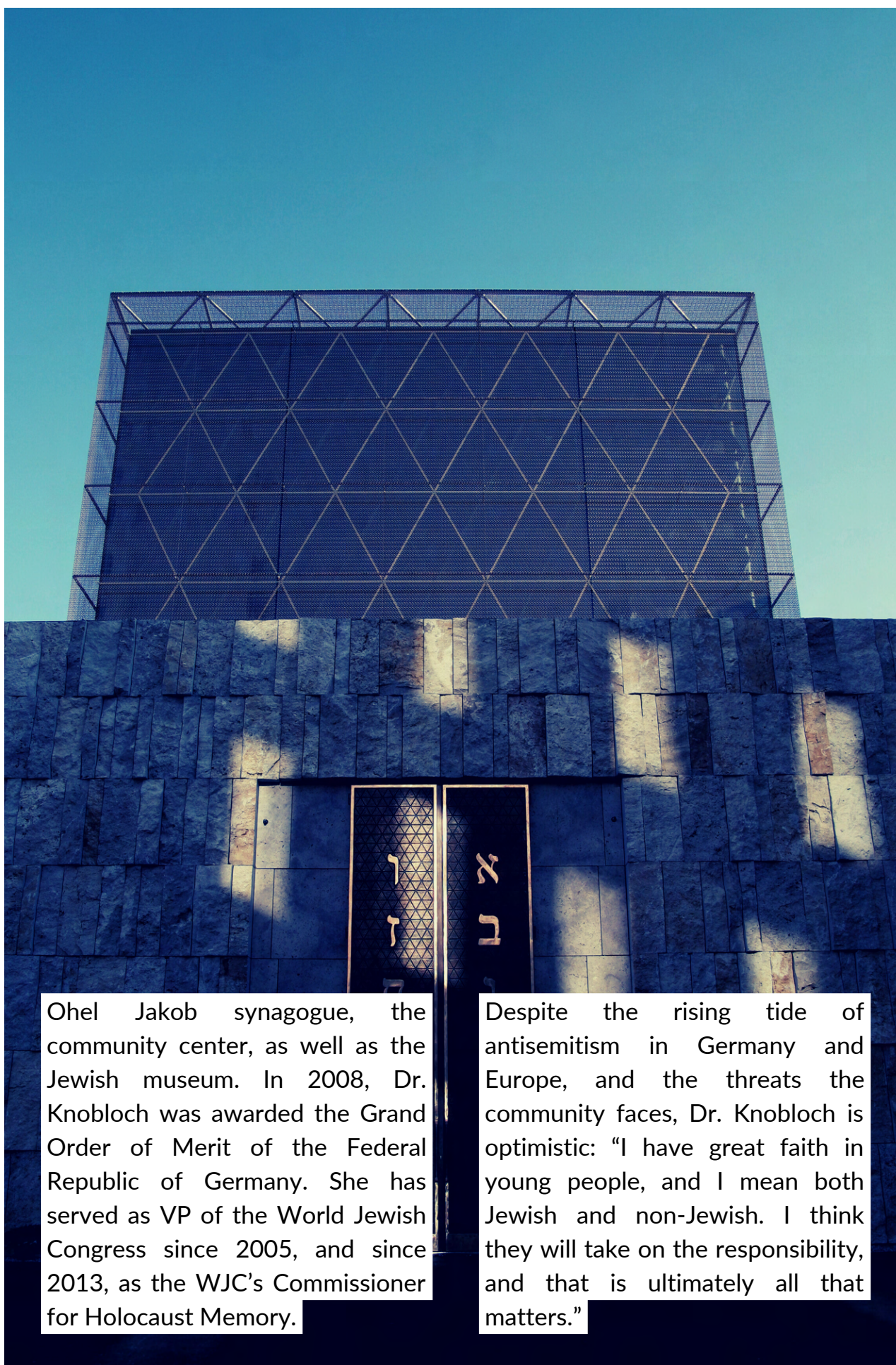


CHARLOTTE KNOBLOCH

Charlotte Knobloch survived the Holocaust in hiding with a Christian family on a farm in northern Bavaria, Germany.

After the war, she and her husband, also a Holocaust survivor, planned to emigrate to the US, but they abandoned their plans and stayed in Germany. Decades later, Dr. Knobloch went on to lead the Jewish

community of Munich, serving as the community head beginning in 1985 and serving as the president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany from 2006-2010. It was the first time a woman was elected to lead the organization. She dedicated her efforts to the revival of Jewish life in Germany. Among her major achievements was the opening in 2006-2007 of Munich's



Ohel Jakob synagogue, the community center, as well as the Jewish museum. In 2008, Dr. Knobloch was awarded the Grand Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany. She has served as VP of the World Jewish Congress since 2005, and since 2013, as the WJC's Commissioner for Holocaust Memory.

Despite the rising tide of antisemitism in Germany and Europe, and the threats the community faces, Dr. Knobloch is optimistic: "I have great faith in young people, and I mean both Jewish and non-Jewish. I think they will take on the responsibility, and that is ultimately all that matters."



JEWISH COMMUNITIES PROVIDE AID TO REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

Jewish communities in Europe, and particularly those in countries bordering Ukraine, stepped up to help the refugees entering their countries. **Their actions speak directly to the Jewish mitzvah of ‘Tikkun Olam’ – repairing the world.**



KRAKOW, POLAND

published March 2022, updated May 2022

All photos © Chuck Fishman

Krakow's Jewish Community Centre is working round the clock to help as many refugees from Ukraine as possible.

Over 450,000 refugees have crossed into Poland from Ukraine as of March 2, 2022, according to the Polish border police. JCC Krakow quickly set out to gather supplies for the refugees – blankets, clothing, medicine, hygiene products, food, and donations. They are providing housing, are offering psychological counseling, and also launched a Ukrainian-language hotline.

"We have fully focused our efforts on helping Ukrainians, Jewish and non-Jewish, here in Krakow and when

possible, in Ukraine," Jonathan Ornstein, the Executive Director of JCC Krakow, told the NOA project.

"Our community, [located] so close to Auschwitz, knows what it is to suffer, and therefore has a particular responsibility," Ornstein said. "We have turned our center into a collection point for food, clothing, medicine, and hygienic supplies as well as providing housing, information, and assistance to anyone who comes in or that we are aware that needs help. In addition, together with local partners, we are offering psychological counseling and legal advice, and are in the process of equipping and opening an off-site Safe Room space for mothers and children."





"Our community, [located] so close to Auschwitz, knows what it is to suffer, and therefore has a particular responsibility."

JCC Krakow opened in 2008. Decades after the Holocaust, it is dedicated to rebuilding Jewish life in the city, providing social and educational services to the Jewish community of Krakow, while also offering programming to the larger society and fostering Polish-Jewish relations.

With this latest humanitarian mission, they are a vehicle through

which the Jewish community can give their support to others in need.

"We have been positively overwhelmed by the response of the local Krakow community and Poland in general in the desire to help our Ukrainian neighbors. Our worldwide partners and friends have been incredibly generous. We are incredibly thankful," Ornstein said.



As of late May 2022, over 60 tons of supplies were distributed to Ukrainian refugees from the JCC building; more than 70,000 refugees were helped directly by JCC Krakow; and an even greater number by its partners in Krakow and beyond. The center held Passover seders, including one for Jewish Ukrainian refugees, and hosted a Ukrainian Orthodox Easter party.

“Our community was decimated by the Holocaust because the world was mostly silent,” JCC Krakow Executive Director Jonathan Ornstein told the NOA Project in the early days of their volunteer refugee relief efforts. “Now we have the opportunity to help others, and we are doing just that.”

IN NUMBERS: UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN EUROPE as of July 2023

5.9

No. of millions
of refugees from
Ukraine recorded
in Europe

1.6

No. of millions
of Ukrainians
under protection
in Poland due
to the war

Source: UNHCR



In the wake of the war in Ukraine in 2022, Jewish organizations in Poland immediately took action to help displaced Ukrainians refugees. Photographer Chuck Fishman documented the moving scenes and efforts that were underway at the JCC Krakow.

“In April 2022, at the invitation of JCC Krakow, I traveled to Poland to photograph ‘survivors saving survivors.’ To photograph the efforts of the JCC in its commitment to helping all Ukrainian refugees fleeing their war-torn country,” Fishman told the NOA project.

“What I saw is testament to a central concept in Judaism, *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, social action, the pursuit of social justice, helping people in need. Upwards of 600 Ukrainian refugees per day, seven days a week, patiently wait in line to gain entry to the JCC’s distribution center. Primarily women and children, they are met by Ukrainian-speaking workers and volunteers to assist them and restock shelves with food, clothing, medicine, diapers, hygienic supplies, toys, and essential items, free of charge. I was privileged to photograph within its space.”

ROMANIA

published March 2022

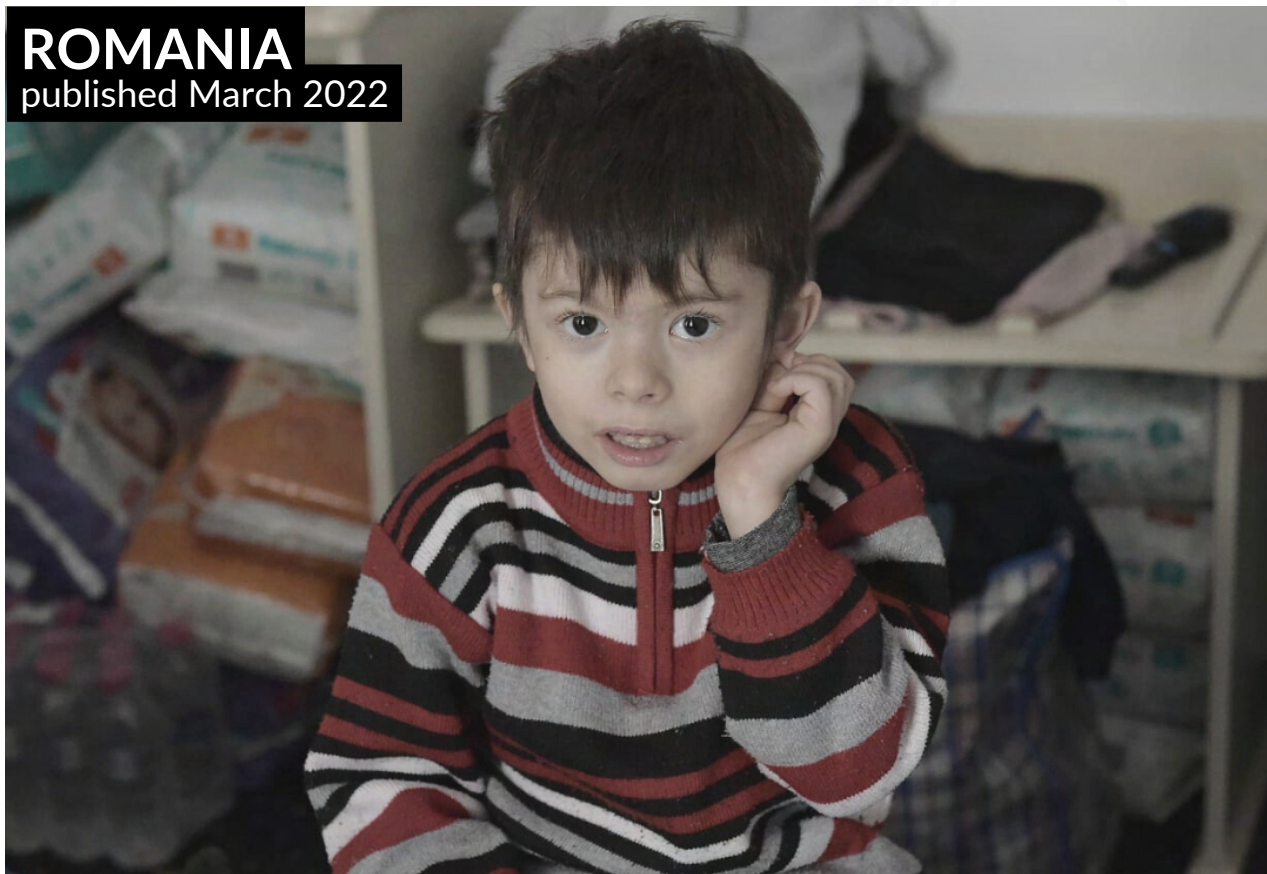


Photo © courtesy of the Federation of the Jewish Communities of Romania

Jewish communities bordering Ukraine have stepped up to help the refugees entering their countries. As of March 13, 2022, an estimated 400,000 Ukrainian citizens entered Romania since the conflict began, according to Romanian border police, and thousands continue to come each day. Jewish groups mobilized immediately.

“If not us, then who?” Eduard Kupferberg, the Executive Director of the Federation of the Jewish Communities of Romania said in a phone interview with the NOA Project. “This is our responsibility as Jews. It is our moral obligation... We have to help them. It’s not even a choice.”

The Federation of the Jewish Communities of Romania has two welcome centers on the borders with Ukraine: One at Siret, which is the main border crossing, and one at Sighetu Marmatietii. All their efforts are made in partnership with JDC Romania (the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee). The Jewish organizations have a welcome tent at each border point, open for all refugees regardless of ethnicity or religion. They are serving 2,000 hot meals per day, and volunteers are distributing clothing and blankets. They also have a 24/7 helpline available in English, Russian, and Hebrew.


The Federation of the Jewish Communities of Romania has carried out at least 30 transports from the border,

either to other places of accommodation throughout Romania or to the airport. The skies are closed over Moldova, meaning that the refugees who crossed into Moldova from Ukraine then need to reach Romania before boarding planes to further destinations.

In addition, the Jewish Federation is currently taking care of approximately 2,000 Jewish refugees, providing accommodation, food, and medical care. "We have hundreds of calls every day, we are guiding them for everything that they need,"

Kupferberg explains. "But we even do it with pleasure."

Still, there are many logistical challenges. The border with Ukraine is a remote part of Romania. It can reach minus 10 degrees at night, and those working at the welcome tents often go 36 hours in a row without sleep. "It is a challenge for us because we are not a big community," says Kupferberg. "And we are not a young community. But we are managing to do everything. A lot of people are involved. And they are doing their best."

A photograph showing a young child in a pink winter coat and hat sitting on a pile of luggage. The child is looking towards the camera. In the background, there are other people, including one in a red jacket and another in a blue jacket, suggesting a busy travel or border area.

"This is our responsibility as Jews. It is our moral obligation... We have to help them. It's not even a choice."

HUNGARY

published March 2022



In Budapest, over 50 Jewish NGOs formed a crisis team to coordinate their efforts for refugees, among them Mazsihisz, the JDC, JAFI, JCC Budapest, and the World Jewish Congress. As of March 8, 2022, an estimated 180,000 people have come to Hungary from Ukraine, according to Hungarian border police.

When the refugee influx began, Mazsihisz met them at the border, providing assistance with accommodation, meals, medical supplies, transportation. They've launched a large-scale fundraising campaign to help Ukrainians Jews, while Jewish NGOs have also established a crisis hotline. "Beyond sympathy we also want to take

action," JCC Budapest wrote on Facebook. "We [will] provide assistance to refugees from Ukraine regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliation."

Now with the crisis team in coordination, Jewish groups will have information points at the two main train stations in Budapest where refugees are arriving. They also have an information point at the Záhony border crossing, which is the main crossing between Hungary and Ukraine, with buses to bring refugees to Budapest, in addition to another four information points at other border points. JCC Budapest is also setting up a website connecting organizations and individuals that give help with those who are seeking help.

A STAR VOLUNTEER OF BERLIN'S JEWISH COMMUNITY



Photo © Chris Hartung

In March 2022, Bella Zchwiraschwili encountered one of her most challenging tasks, when she and her rabbi received a phone call from a rabbi in the Ukrainian city of Odessa. They were evacuating 120 children from two orphanages in Odessa because of the war, as well as the children's caretakers. The group was arriving in Berlin in two days.

For decades, Bella Zchwiraschwili has been working for the Jewish community of Berlin and volunteering for Jewish causes. A professional events manager, she worked for the Central Council of Jews in Germany, organizing conferences and seminars. She has organized Hanukkah celebrations at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate; Yom HaShoah memorial events; and put together kosher and Israeli food markets. She is a key contact person for German government ministries when it comes to Jewish affairs, and also coordinates events

and programs for the Israeli embassy. Zchwiraschwili immediately came to the aid of the refugees. "That was the hardest time for me mentally," she told the NOA project. They had 48 hours to find housing for them, which they did quickly through their networks, in a hotel owned by a Jewish family. They prepared water, food, and clothing for the children. A group of 100 volunteers, mostly women, was also assembled to help the children settle in. "Without them, these 'mamas,' we couldn't manage," Zchwiraschwili affectionately says.

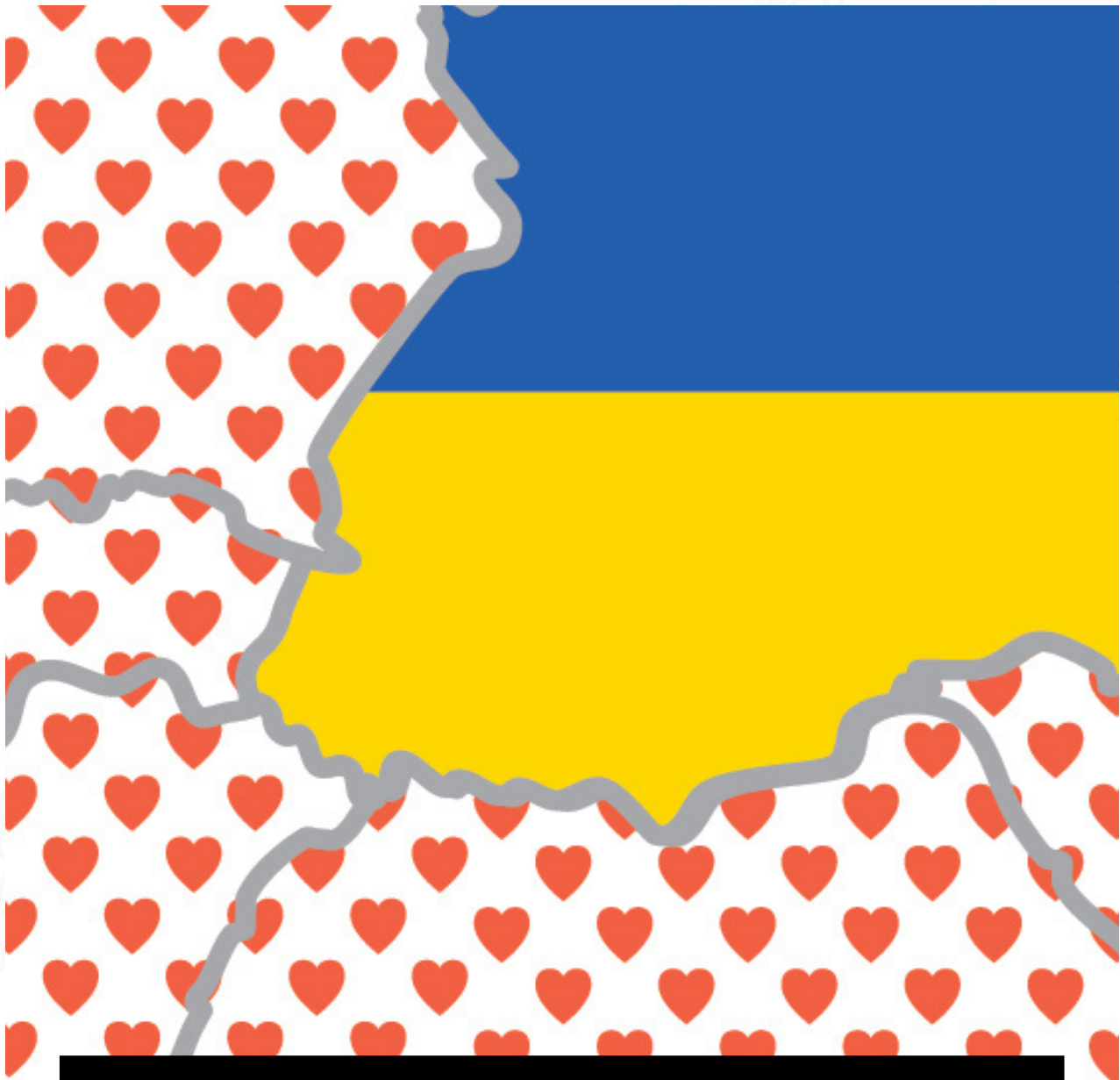
The challenges, of course, didn't end there. Most of the children didn't have passports, yet they had to cross numerous borders to reach Germany. Zchwiraschwili and her rabbi were on the phone the whole time with the authorities to coordinate and get the children across every border. Access to healthcare for the kids was another issue.



Since that phone call, a whole community was built around integrating the kids into their new surroundings. Zchwiraschwili, who was born in Israel to immigrants from Georgia and Ukraine and came to Germany at four years old, understood firsthand the importance of integration. They established a kindergarten and a school where the kids are residing. They've held celebrations for the chaggim, and were approached by a well-known football club to create a sports program for the kids at the club's stadium. Months later, work at the improvised orphanage was on-going. "My younger brother works there every day. He is a hero,"

Zchwiraschwili says. "Ultimately, it's a family. We must thank them that we can help them."

In 2022, Zchwiraschwili received an official honor from German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier for her civic engagement and commitment to making Jewish life more visible. Her newest endeavor now is as director of the Pears Jewish Campus in Berlin, a Jewish community facility focused on educational, cultural, and sport programs, opening in 2023. "The goal of the campus is that it is an open house. Let people in, Jewish and non-Jewish, and give a feeling that there is no difference between us, that we are one," she says.



JEWISH HERITAGE GROUPS TURN TO HUMANITARIAN AID FOR UKRAINE

Jewish organizations in Europe mobilized immediately to help refugees and displaced people from Ukraine once the conflict began. For those working in Jewish culture and heritage preservation, **their previous activities have been suspended so that they can focus on the humanitarian crisis.**

The European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage (AEPJ) is a network of European institutions. Headquartered in Barcelona, Spain, AEPJ's partners and networks are now at work helping Ukrainians.

"We look with admiration at our partners who have transformed their usual field of work to dedicate themselves in depth to offering all kinds of help with humanitarian aid and support to refugees. Their understanding of the role of culture and heritage puts people and communities first" says AEPJ President François Moyse.

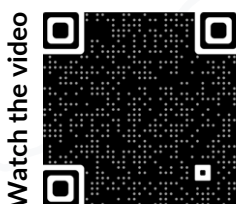
From Heritage Springs, which works in Western Ukraine, to the Agudath Israel in Moldova, an Orthodox Jewish community, the Taube Center for Jewish Life & Learning in Poland, and the Together Plan, a UK charity working across eastern Europe. All are doing their part to offer humanitarian aid to refugees.

Agudath Israel in Moldova has taken in at least 10,000 refugees. "Our Jewish history was so full of tragedies and persecution that we know better



than anybody else what it means and how important is to support people who remained without protection, belongings, home," Michael Finckel, Director of Agudath Israel in Moldova told the NOA project. In just two months, they celebrated Purim together with over 200 refugees in Chisinau; marked the bat mitzvah of a girl from Odessa; and held the chuppah for a couple from Ukraine.

The Together Plan is currently supporting vulnerable communities in Belarus. They are also raising money for its partners who are supporting refugees. "The network and connections that we have as a result of our cultural heritage work have proven to be invaluable," Debra Brunner, CEO of The Together Plan explained.





JEWISH UKRAINIAN SISTERS EMBRACE THEIR UNIQUENESS THROUGH HIP HOP

Hip hop trio Fo Sho isn't the kind of music group you would expect to come out of Kharkiv, Ukraine – nor from a Chabad school. **But it's exactly that.**

"Kabbalah, the Torah, they all say that, that everything happens for the best. And since I'm Jewish, I'll say that too."


Composed of three black Jewish sisters born and raised in Ukraine – their parents are Ethiopian Jews – Fo Sho made a splash on Ukraine's music scene after they first formed in 2019. They even became semi-finalists for Ukraine for the 2020 Eurovision competition. The entire family is living safely in Germany, having fled after war began in Ukraine in February 2022. From Europe, Fo Sho continues to share their message of love and acceptance.

"Everything that happens is for the best," Betty Endale, the eldest of the Fo Sho sisters told the NOA project in a phone interview. "Kabbalah, the Torah, they all say that, that everything happens for the best. And since I'm Jewish, I'll say that too." After several months of recovery after being forced from her home country due to the violence, Endale found a way to approach their

new situation with humor. "Last year my dad complained that he was getting old," she explained. "But because he was 60, he was able to cross the border [out of Ukraine]. So now he says he loves his age."

Perhaps not surprisingly, Fo Sho's message has always been about embracing uniqueness and self-expression. "I'm so extra /extra texture," Fo Sho raps in their hit song 'XTRA.' It's a song about being out of the box – and owning it. "I call myself extra for many reasons," Endale jokes. "My size; my color; while I'm a dentist by training, but also a musician... If you know who you are, then you have inner power, and you can do whatever things you want. And you are extra."

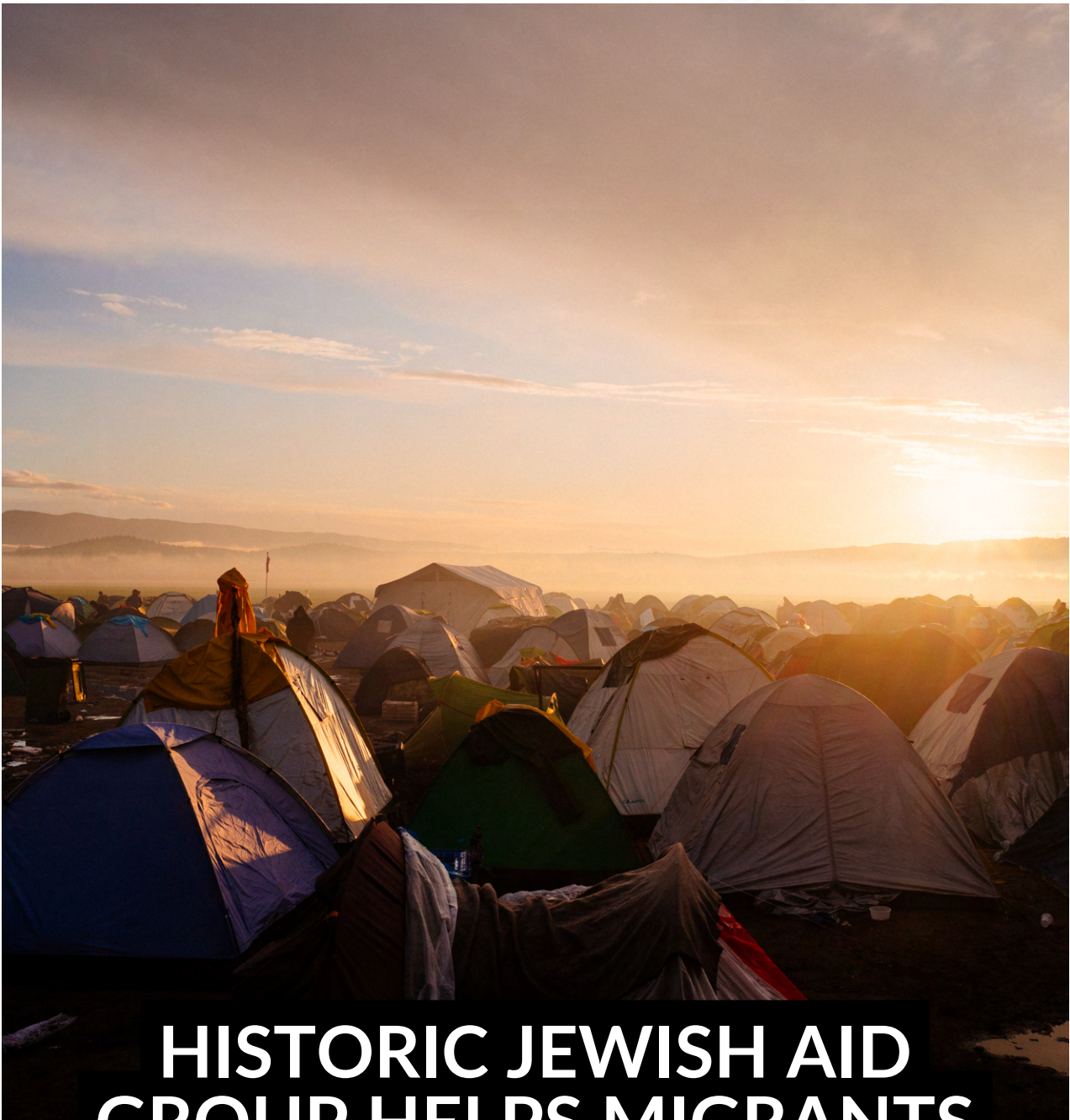
The past months in Germany have given Endale time to reflect on her world view – and it's only turned towards more love and acceptance.



“Where in the world is a safe place for me?” Endale questioned, noting that all the countries where she has attachments – Ukraine, Israel, Ethiopia – are at war. “After this, I understood that actually – I am a global citizen, I am a human being, and Earth is my planet. First things first, we are all human beings.”

Since receiving special status in Germany, Fo Sho has performed at rallies for Ukraine in cities across Europe. After a several months’ pause they are also writing new music again. In the future, they hope to incorporate Ethiopian and Jewish sounds into their music, together with hip hop.

For Endale, she sees it as room to grow. “I’m curious myself to see what will come next.”



HISTORIC JEWISH AID GROUP HELPS MIGRANTS IN GREECE

HIAS (the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) was founded in 1881 in order to assist Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe.

Today, HIAS is aiding refugees around the world, following the ethos of the Jewish value of Tikkun Olam, repairing the world.

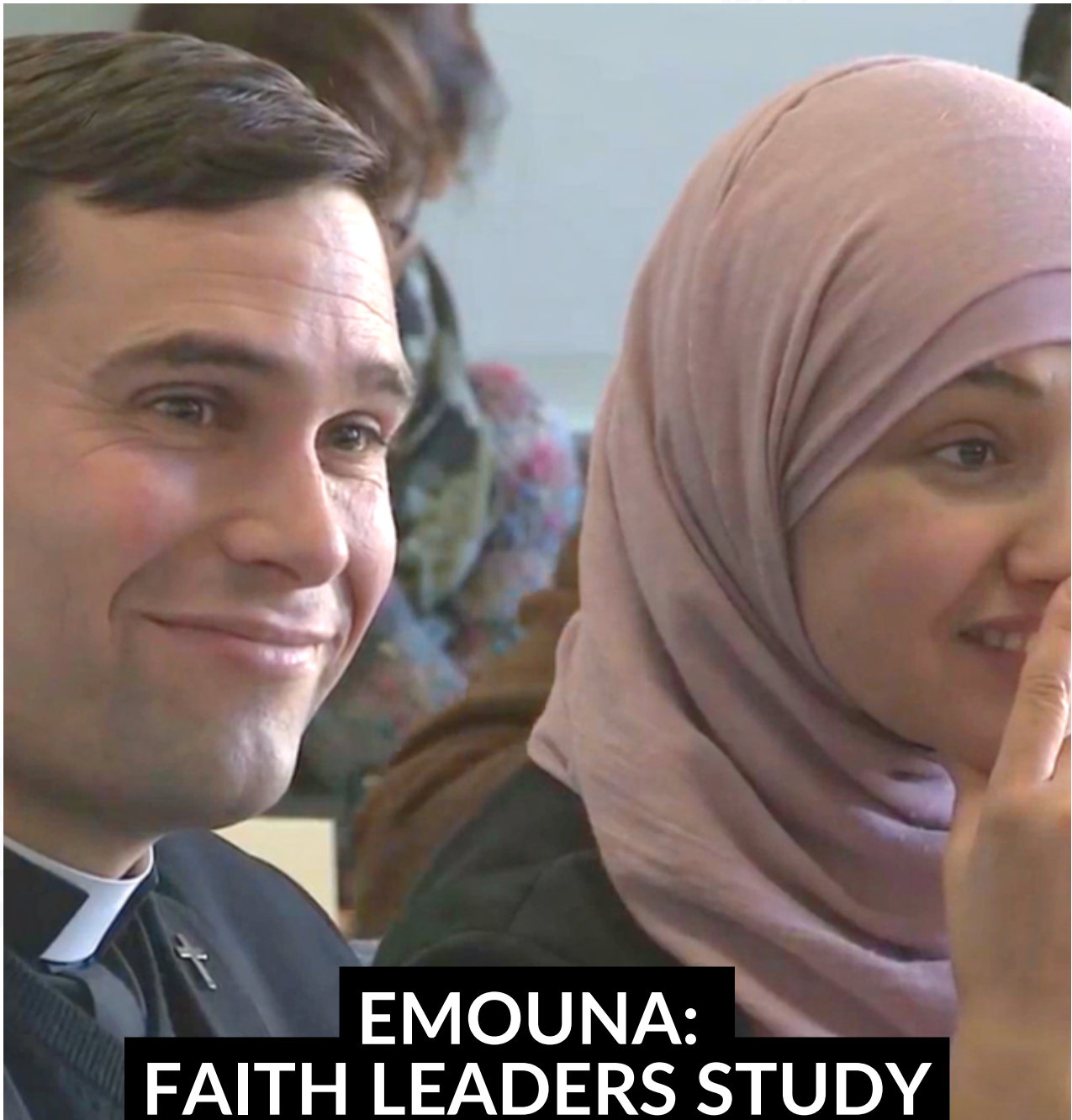
With the refugee crisis in Europe, more than one million refugees and migrants arrived in Greece in 2015 and early 2016, according to the UNHCR. Tens of thousands continue to arrive each year. As of June 2020, 122,000 refugees and migrants live in Greece.

HIAS is serving refugees in Greece by providing free legal assistance, helping them through the asylum procedure and family reunification processes, as well as aiding asylum seekers who are in administrative detention. The majority of clients are coming from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria.

The island of Lesbos became one of the main gates to Europe for asylum seekers from Syria, and asylum seekers must stay in their first point of entry during the whole legal procedure. HIAS has provided legal assistance for more than 400 cases in Lesbos.

“That’s why it’s very important that we are here; because the whole refugee status determination is taking place here,” says Vassilis Kerasiotis, director of the HIAS Greece office.





EMOUNA: FAITH LEADERS STUDY TOGETHER IN FRANCE

A Roman Catholic priest plays tennis with a rabbi. A Protestant minister discusses the merits of meditation with a Buddhist monk. **These are just some of the surprising moments of a nine-month-long French interfaith program called Emouna.**

Launched in 2016, Emouna is the brainchild of France's first female rabbi, Rabbi Pauline Bebe, who works with the European Union of Progressive Judaism.

She founded the program with a diverse group of faith leaders. "My own family history provided inspiration," Rabbi Bebe explains. "Christians saved my family during the Holocaust and my parents raised me in an environment of openness and tolerance." After the 2015 terrorist attacks rocked the French capital, Emouna represented her response to violence. In Hebrew, "Emouna" means trust, loyalty, spirituality, adherence, and commitment through acts.

Rabbi Bebe teamed up with the Paris Institut de Sciences Politique. The curriculum teaches religious leaders how to lead in a secular Western democracy. They discuss subjects ranging from biotechnology and abortion, to laws about professional secrecy, how to support the faithful in prisons or in hospitals, and the challenge of radicalization. The goal of the program is not to get an agreement between faith leaders, but simply understanding. "At Emouna, they can still become friends and work together," Rabbi Bebe says.





BULGARIA'S JEWS BUILD A CULTURE OF TOLERANCE

When neo-Nazis ignored a ban and marched through the streets of Sofia in 2019, **Bulgaria's Jews responded by organizing a symbolic March for Tolerance.**

**THE NEO-NAZIS
WERE HOLDING
THE ANNUAL LUKOV
MARCH, WHICH
HONORS A
BULGARIAN GENERAL
WHO LED A
PRO-NAZI
ORGANIZATION IN
THE 1930S-1940S.**



Bulgaria's Jews have long played a key role in the multicultural country. The Ottomans invited Sephardic Jews fleeing the Spanish Inquisition to settle in the Balkan country some 500 years ago.

'Shalom,' the representative body of Bulgarian Jewry, is behind a nationwide initiative to curb hate speech. In 2018, Shalom introduced a 'Bulgarians united against hate speech' manifesto which was signed by politicians and social leaders. Shalom has also joined forces with other faith and minority groups in Bulgaria.



It is working together with the LGBTQ+ community to fight discrimination in Bulgarian society.

The Council of Europe estimates that some 750,000 Roma live in Bulgaria, and many struggle with poverty and injustice. A Shalom project provided free eye examinations and eyeglasses for children from underprivileged families in the Roma community.

Shalom also stands in solidarity with Bulgaria's Muslim minority. It organized a fundraising campaign for the victims of a 2016 train explosion in a predominantly Muslim town in northeastern Bulgaria.

Its work continues in the streets too: A Shalom initiative removes antisemitic graffiti off the walls of Sofia.

MEETING THE NEIGHBORS IN THE NETHERLANDS

From synagogue visits to communal dinners, young members of the Jewish and Muslim communities in the Netherlands are coming together.

Chantal Suissa-Runne is one of the people who made it possible, developing the “Get to Know Your Neighbors” initiative.

Taking place in Amsterdam and two other cities, the project brings young students from diverse backgrounds to ‘meet’ the local Jewish community. With visits to synagogues and community centers, they have the opportunity to engage in open conversations about Judaism, Israel, and more.



Photo © courtesy of Chantal Suissa-Runne

So far 14,000 students have participated. Suissa-Runne has led many other interfaith and inter-friendship programs.

Suissa-Runne told the NOA project that she was strongly motivated by her Jewish family history. “My grandmother, who survived five concentration camps and a Death March, taught me the power of unconditional love, and always seeing the good and humanity in people.”



A FRIENDSHIP IN ROMANIA CONNECTED BY THE LOVE OF JUDAISM

To celebrate Hanukkah, Peninah Zilberman from the Tarbut Foundation shared with NOA a little 'miracle' story about a friendship in Romania connected by the love of Judaism:

"Several years ago, a student from the Babes Boyle University in the city of Cluj, Madalina Miron, contacted us at the Tarbut Foundation in Sighet for some help. She was doing research for her graduation paper on the mystical traditions in the creation of the 'Golem' in Jewish culture.

I am always interested to learn how young adults in the post-communist era are interested in studying about Judaism. During our conversation, Madalina told me about how much she respects the Jewish people. She asked various questions about Judaism and about the menorah. I explained to her what it is and what the difference is between a menorah and a hanukkiah. Then she asked where she could get one. I decided to send her one on behalf of the Tarbut Foundation, as a gesture for her interest in Judaism.



A few years later, we are still in touch. Madalina updates me on her studies. And every year, she continues to light the Hanukkah menorah that Tarbut gifted her.

Madalina Miron is one of Tarbut's ambassadors for the Jewish people, who stands for Jews in times of darkness. Interestingly enough, Madalina's last name, 'Miron,' sounds like a name with Jewish origins. In Romania, there are thousands of people who have lost track of their roots and family identity due to the upheavals of WWII and the communist era.

Light brings freedom, hope, understanding, clarity, joy, happiness. Most of all, it is a source of illumination."



A FOOTBALL TEAM AGAINST RACISM

Racism and antisemitism pervade European football, from the top professional to bottom amateur leagues. Amid the hate, one team stands out for its commitment to sportsmanship – Maccabi.

Across the continent, the Maccabi teams formed by local Jewish communities are setting an example for sportsmanship on the field – and opening their ranks to all religions and races.

In Belgium, Holocaust survivors launched the Brussels Maccabi team in 1953. In 2004, Flemish players from the village of Haren began shouting antisemitic chants,

including “Hiss, Hiss, To the Camps!”

The Belgian Football Association refused to disband the Haren team, so Maccabi’s club leaders launched a vocal public campaign against violence and racism. Today, Maccabi players wear a jersey with the logo “No violence. No racism.”

Brussels Maccabi’s welcoming spirit now reaches almost 300 players from age six to adult on a total of 14 teams, making makes it one of the city’s largest football clubs.

“It’s not like most Belgian football clubs,” the parent of one player of North African origin told NOA. “There’s a true spirit of tolerance.”



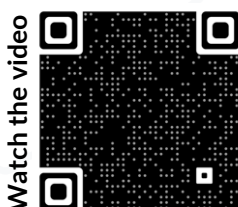
CHARITY TAXI: ACTIVISTS BUILD TIES WITH COMMUNITIES-IN-NEED IN HUNGARY

In Hungary, Adománytaxi or 'Charity Taxi' is collecting donations door-to-door in Budapest and bringing them to communities-in-need throughout Hungary. **700,000 Romani people live in Hungary, according to the Council of Europe, but are socially and economically marginalized.**

Adománytaxi provides a platform for people from diverse backgrounds to engage with each other.

Volunteers pick up the donations, including clothing, food, toys, and more, and then make trips to rural settlements where they are most needed. They've made well over 50 trips with the help of over 500 volunteers.

Founder Tamás Horn was inspired to give back after observing the 2015 migrant crisis. "Adománytaxi is based on the knowledge and values I got from the international Jewish community," he told the NOA project in 2020. "It feels good that I can give back something from the huge amount of inspiration I received."





THE RABBI AND THE IMAM: A RELIGIOUS ODD COUPLE

For International Tolerance Day, this is the story of a religious odd couple, who through their friendship, are **advocating for greater tolerance between different faith communities.**



When Progressive Rabbi Nathan Alfred wanted to learn Arabic, he went to enroll in a class at West London's Muslim College, a postgraduate Islamic seminary. The administrator rejected him. "When he walked out and one of the administrators said, 'I'm glad we told him that the class was full,'" Imam Mamadou Boucom recalls. In revolt, Mamadou approached Nathan and offered to tutor him.

The two soon became best buddies. Mamadou, born in Senegal, is tall and slender. He arrived in London and earned two masters and a PhD. Nathan, sturdy and stocky, grew up in South London and graduated from Cambridge with honors in classics. He has served as a progressive rabbi in Brussels, Luxembourg and Singapore. The two religious leaders share many passions, from football to a ferocious belief in a progressive path to

to spirituality and interfaith tolerance.

While Jews and Muslims often live side by side, in London, Paris, Brussels, and elsewhere, tensions between them are growing. Jews fear rising Muslim antisemitism. Muslims accuse Jews of helping the establishment suppress them.

Nathan and Mamadou partner to overcome the divide. They have visited and spoken at Jewish and Muslim communities. They share kosher and halal meals.

Their next common project: A documentary project called *The Rabbi and the Imam*. It will follow the two religious leaders as they travel throughout Europe, how Jews and Arabs share a long history and culture, and a common fear of being a minority in Europe.



EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH BODY POSITIVITY, BURLESQUE, AND JUDAISM

When it comes to Jewish engagement in Poland, **there's nothing Ania Ciszewska aka Betty Q hasn't done.** From volunteering at Limmud; to leading youth groups to Israel; to organizing and cooking up rooftop Shabbat dinner for young adults.

But since 2010, Ania Ciszewska has also been the powerhouse behind Poland's growing burlesque scene. As Betty Q, she leads workshops in burlesque dance, and uses her platform to promote women's empowerment, body positivity, LGBTQ+ awareness (lending her support to Poland's LGBTQ+ community, Betty Q showed up in full burlesque makeup and attire at a pop-up street event at 6am on a bitterly cold day), and to co-create a safe and inclusive space for people to dance.

She was inspired to create her burlesque alter ego Betty Q after a community Purim party, where she came dressed as the character 'Ugly Betty' from the American TV comedy series of the same name. Her friends started calling her Betty from that day on. The name not only stuck, but grew into her burlesque stage name.

Judaism and Jewish texts have made their way into Betty Q's performances. For a workshop, Betty Q once took inspiration from the figure of Jewish heroine Queen Esther, a feminist symbol within Judaism. She also has a playful act surrounded on the traditions of Hanukkah, where

she is dressed as a dreidel giving out chocolate gelt, and then becomes a Hanukkah with candles on different parts of her body.

For Betty Q, burlesque is about feminism. Her persona is also tied to her Judaism. "Burlesque is all about the joy of freeing your body from the chains of society, about impersonating strong and powerful characters, and learning from them off-stage," Betty Q said in an interview with the NOA project.

Decades after the Holocaust, Betty Q is part of the rebuilding of a young - and modern - Jewish community in Poland, as thousands of Poles have rediscovered and embraced their Jewish roots.

One of her more serious acts, 'Morte,' visualizes the position of her generation in Poland - of Jews who weren't raised Jewish. "But we all come from Eve, don't we?" she asks the viewers during the act. In the performance, the dancer's Jewish family names are written across her arms, as they are then scrubbed away, symbolizing the attempts throughout history to erase them.

"I cannot imagine just walking on stage without understanding all the details and stories behind my act. Most of my acts are narrative. I am a storyteller. And I guess, these features make my work Jewish."



THE JEWISH ACTIVIST BRINGING BREAST CANCER AWARENESS TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Nela Hasic, who grew up in Sarajevo's Jewish community, is the founder of the Think Pink Foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It supports women with breast cancer through every stage, from mammogram tests, to treatment, through post-surgery psychological support, and with awareness campaigns.

In developing or conservative countries, women's medical health is often a taboo topic in the public sphere. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), which has a mixed Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic population, access to information and services for breast cancer is often limited. Especially in rural areas, women often do not know which preventive services are available to them. For Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the NOA project spoke with Hasic, one of the people working to change that.



Photo © courtesy of Nela Hasić,

Think Pink has built a network of local NGOs across the country, and across religious and ethnic groups, to implement their work, especially in rural areas. "It is very important to treat everyone equally, that is the key. When you treat everyone equally, everyone feels welcome to collaborate with you," Hasic explains.

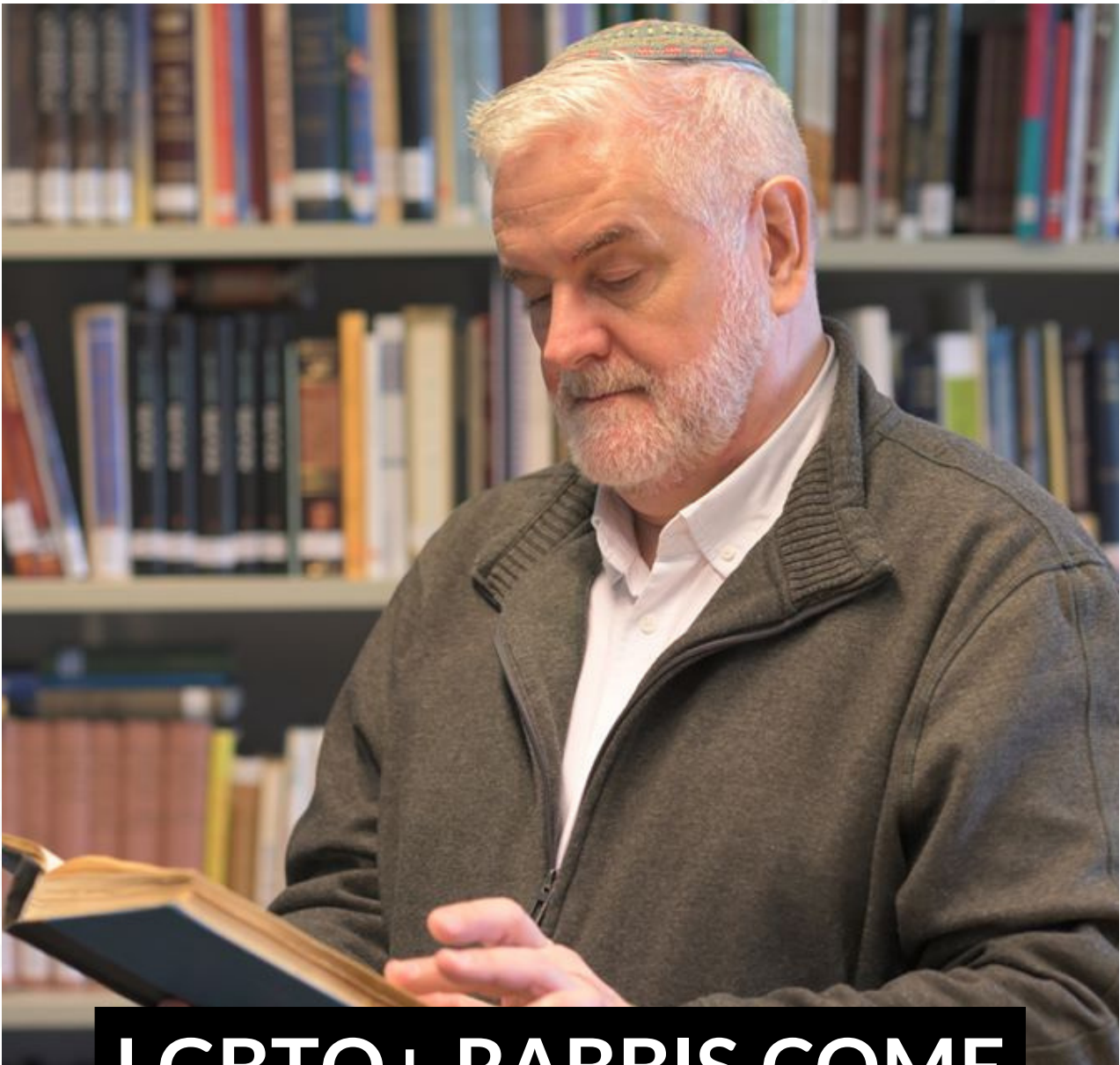
It's not an easy task in BiH, which is still suffering politically from the after-effects of the Bosnia war of the 1990s that divided the country under ethnic lines. During the war, Hasic was evacuated with her family to Israel, where they lived for 10 years. When she returned to live in her native Sarajevo, she began working with the JDC on a women's health program, and later founded Think Pink in 2017. She explains that the fact that she is Jewish – and not one of the constitutional minorities in Bosnia – enabled her to work more easily with all of Bosnia's ethnic groups:

“I was thinking: This initiative could bring us together. I really saw that women’s health issues can help with reconciliation. When you are sitting people at the table with an agenda that is common to everyone, and putting aside what is dividing people. We are like an honest broker between different groups. They know we were a program supported by JDC, but there is no problem with that; they feel our good intention.”

Think Pink’s public profile has earned them public trust – and enabled them to access all communities. This year, they ran a 45-day campaign on breast cancer awareness, inviting media, radio, and working with local influencers to talk about it on social media. In the last 12 months, they have provided 2,500 free check-ups. For the women who were diagnosed with breast cancer, those check-ups were a life-saver.

“What mattered was ‘tikkum olam,’ that is what was always in my mind. To make this world a better place,” Hasic says.





LGBTQ+ RABBIS COME TO EUROPE

Brian Doyle-Du Breuil is a soon-to-graduate rabbinical student of Abraham Geiger College at the University of Potsdam in Germany. **He's also gay - part of a growing trend of LGBTQ+ rabbis in Europe.**



“There are LGBT rabbis pretty much everywhere in Europe, some leading congregations, others involved in education or Jewish social justice projects,” says Doyle-Du Breuil. “Just as society has evolved, so have Jews.”

Not too long ago, the mere idea of a gay rabbi seemed an oxymoron. At best, gay rabbinical students and rabbis hid their personal lives. Attitudes are changing, first among Progressive Jews, but also in the Orthodox world.

Doyle-Du Breuil was born in Scotland and moved to Belgium in 1987 to study, winning tenure at the University of Leuven as Professor of the Hebrew Bible. He started the process of conversion to Judaism as a teenager and completed it as an adult

with the International Jewish Centre of Brussels, where he was later asked to be a rabbi while still studying.

“When I applied to Abraham Geiger College, they welcomed me and other LGBT candidates with extreme openness and welcome,” he recalls. “Gender equality is a key pillar of the college’s profile.” He hopes to graduate from the University of Potsdam in September and will officially become the full-time rabbi of the International Jewish Centre of Brussels at the end of the year.

“Judaism inspires us to help repair the world wherever we find it broken. That includes the world of relationships. Covid has isolated us from one another for too long and our societies are stressed, so there’s some repairing to do.”



BEYOND THE BUBBLE: OPENING JEWISH SPACES TO QUEER PERSPECTIVES

Albert Oliveras, from Barcelona, Spain, has dedicated much of their time to community building. They are currently working for Moishe House, helping young Jews around the world create and sustain community spaces that are enriching, joyful, and welcoming.

“The positives for queer Jewish people right now are that many people are just not choosing to stay silent. Many individuals are choosing to represent themselves as queer and Jewish, and proudly so.

We are looking for our own definitions. Even those who like to study Jewish religious text and sources, we are looking through those texts, and are trying to ‘queer’ Judaism – and that’s a positive. We want to connect with the text, the traditions, rituals, the community, and culture. It is our birthright to have that connection.

Sadly, it’s easy to think about the challenges. A lot of queer talent is lost in the established communities. We are often not allowed to be leaders who can really express their queerness in the way we shape community.

Little visibility is given to us, mostly superficial. But we are not really allowed to practice that, we are not allowed to work through a queer lens, be lay leaders in a queer lens. I feel we are being asked to ‘assimilate’ into straightness, to the normativity of this Jewish space.”

I’d love to see that we can be our full selves and visible when engaging with the wider Jewish community. Because in many places we are small Jewish communities, and we can’t afford to be in our bubble.”



AN INSIDE PERSPECTIVE FROM JEWISH LGBTQ+ ACTIVISTS IN EUROPE: RABBI MATI KIRSCHENBAUM



Photo © courtesy of Mati Kirschenbaum

Rabbi Mati Kirschenbaum, a freelance rabbi sharing his time between London, UK and Poland, told NOA about how European Jewish communities need to work together when it comes to LGBTQ+ rights.

"As a Polish Jew in the UK, I'm aware of the differences that effect LGBTQ+ Jewish life between the different parts of Europe. The UK is quite high on the list of progressive societies when it comes to freedoms for LGBTQ+ people. Likewise, the Reform and Liberal movements in Judaism are the most welcoming organized religious bodies that embrace and affirm LGBTQ+ Jews. But at the same time, this is not the experience of the majority of European LGBTQ+ Jews.

France and Germany have large Jewish populations. Both are progressive countries when it comes to LGBTQ+ rights. But compared to the UK, they are not as vibrant when

it comes to infrastructure for the LGBTQ+ Jewish community.

It's also partly country-specific. In Germany, the majority of Jews came from the former the Soviet Union and brought those attitudes that being LGBTQ+ is something that is stigmatized. Now, the younger generation that grew up in Germany has the knowledge to tackle these issues.

This discrepancy towards Jewish LGBTQ+ rights between European countries grows even more when you look at countries with smaller Jewish communities. And this is exactly where activists and local leaders make a difference. In countries where the larger society does not embrace LGBTQ+ people, then there's no impetus for the Jewish community to do it either. In those cases, it's up to local Jewish leaders to sway the internal dynamic of the community to be welcoming.



The most important issue here is not to treat countries as separate entities, because the Jewish community in Europe is too small for this. It's particularly crucial right now, when we are seeing a wide level of European Jewish migration. In the wake of the Ukraine war, Jews are becoming refugees again, migrating from Ukraine to Europe, and among them are LGBTQ+ Jews.

It is in Jews' best interest to condemn homophobia coming from any government or political party. We can all agree that Jewish communities can stand up and voice their opposition to intolerance towards all minority groups, because that goes against Jewish values of loving your neighbor.

This is a question of human rights, and of Jewish opposition to the weak being oppressed. When freedom of speech is endangered, it is a threat to the Jewish continuity in that country.

Because without the protection of

freedom of speech, the Jewish community's continuity is then dependent on the graces of the political leadership. It's much better to speak out before the situation comes to that.

Of course, this is much more difficult in countries that are not democratic. In non-democratic societies, I would embrace a policy of creating a democratic climate internally within the community. And when it comes to LGBTQ+ rights, to create safe spaces within the community. It's a difficult position, where Jewish leaders need to effectively play the official tune outwardly, but then have an active policy of embracing LGBTQ+ Jews internally. These leaders would need a lot of support from the larger European Jewish community.

There isn't a single policy for ensuring LGBTQ+ equality within Jewish communities in Europe. It is as diverse as Europe is diverse. But what we do need is European Jewish solidarity."

JEWISH ACTIVISTS LOUDLY JOIN NETHERLANDS' ANTIRACISM MOVEMENTS



Photo © FACESTORIES/Julie Blik

Far-right movements and antisemitism are on the rise in Europe. The NOA project spoke with Dutch Jewish activist Lievnath Faber on her efforts to unite the fight against antisemitism with other anti-racism civil society movements in the Netherlands.

"It's about building bridges. The hate and stereotypes find different ways to express themselves, but we should be united in understanding that we who are fighting racism are all in this together," she says.

Faber is the co-creator of the Oy Vey Jewish cultural hub in Amsterdam, which began in 2018. Most of their activities are held in the Uilenburgersjoel, a historic synagogue building in the former Jewish Quarter. For Faber, being in the city center was very important, as most Jewish community buildings are located in other districts further away.

And while central Amsterdam does have a Jewish museum, synagogues, and Holocaust memorial sites, through Oy Vey they wanted to create an open, inclusive Jewish space where anyone regardless of religion, ethnicity, orientation, or age feels welcome to drop by.

Oy Vey is "unapologetically Jewish," Faber told the NOA project. "Which means we are celebrating Jewish culture and identity and not hiding it in anyway. Not behind security walls, [and without] the feeling of unsafety in broader society which makes you not want to say you are Jewish. We want to create a space where you can be loudly Jewish."

After the murder of George Floyd in the US in May 2020, Oy Vey released a statement of solidarity with the black community, Jews of color, and all communities of color. "At the heart of Jewish ethics is the call to speak

out against injustice and not be indifferent to the suffering of others,” the statement read.

Since then, Faber got involved working on the intersection of racism and antisemitism as an Alfred Landecker Democracy Fellow, supported by Humanity in Action. Oy Vey gathered a grassroots group of Jewish activists that are working with a plethora of anti-racism, feminism, climate, and other movements. Not only do they express Jewish solidarity, they are also enabling Jewish voices to be heard. “By being present as Jews in these spaces, we also take space to express Jewish needs, our worries about antisemitism. All of us have felt and still feel unsafe in these movements... There are a lot of blind posts when it comes to Jews,” Faber explains.

During local Dutch elections in 2022, Oy Vey Acts, their grassroots activist branch, joined talks with other societal groups advising political actors on what needs to be done regarding institutional racism, discrimination, and exclusion, including when it comes to antisemitism.

In 2021, a coalition group including Oy Vey Acts, an Asian

rights group, black rights group, anti-Islamophobia group, and an undocumented people’s rights group won a municipal grant from the city of Amsterdam’s diversity department. Covering two years, they are working on initiatives to help combat racism and exclusion. Oy Vey was also an organizer of the 2022 ‘Week against Racism’ program, and is hosting educational talks with other Jewish communities on all things antisemitism, Israel, and the need to introduce intersectionality into the conversation.

On her part, Faber co-curated a 2021 exhibition at the Jewish Museum asking the question, “Are Jews White?” which explores how Jews are viewed differently in different circles. In one video piece, a Jewish participant describes that by being white, he doesn’t experience police discrimination.

On the other hand, he states, “we Jews have never been white, never the norm, never the majority. Throughout the largest part of history we have been excluded as an ethnic minority, persecuted, and massacred. That’s not exactly white.”

It comes back to the Jewish experience of marginalization and persecution – and the very purpose of why Oy Vey exists as such an ‘unapologetically Jewish’ hub.

"It's hard for others to understand that the trauma of the war, and hiding your identity, is very ingrained," Faber says. "You may pass as white, but you never feel safe. This is how it plays out in our lives."





ROMA VOICES IN HUNGARY GAIN VISIBILITY

August 2nd is Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, commemorating the 500,000 Roma murdered during WWII in Nazi-occupied Europe. **Nearly eight decades after the genocide, Romani people remain a socially and economically marginalized community in Europe.**

AN ESTIMATED 700,000 ROMA PEOPLE LIVE IN HUNGARY, ACCORDING TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE, MAKING THEM THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST ETHNIC MINORITY.



Yet “Roma history, literature, and culture are not taught in schools,” explains Judit Ignácz, a Roma activist from Hungary. “Roma thematic content is not found in any books. This knowledge is lacking.”

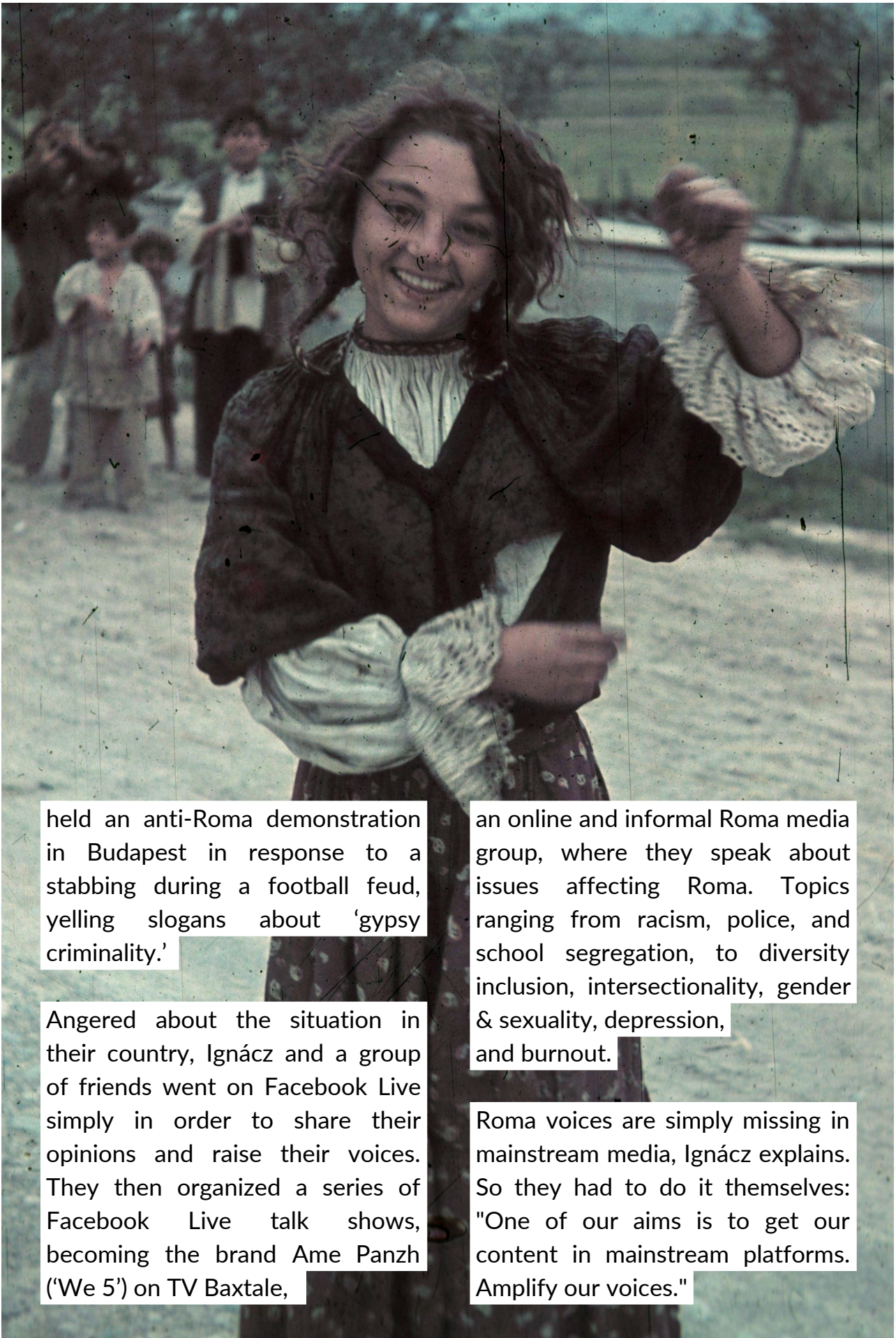
The Uccu Roma Informal Educational Foundation, a civic organization where Ignácz works, is looking to change that. Using tools of nonformal education and workshops, they provide factual knowledge to school students about the Roma community, in an effort to counter negative stereotypes and prejudices.

Uccu runs its programs in four cities, connecting Roma and non-Roma youth to simply meet, talk, and get to know each other. “In theory, everyone knows that having prejudices against oppressed groups is not good. Some kids know because they learn that from their parents. But in practice they don’t really understand the concept,” Ignácz says.

Uccu is also assisting a future generation of Roma leaders. With 40-45 young Roma volunteers visiting schools, they are strengthening their Romani identity and creating a community and sense of belonging. In addition, the NGO organizes walking tours in Budapest’s “District 8,” commonly known as a ‘no-go-zone’ due to misconceptions about its inhabitants, partly consisting of Roma. Uccu is bringing people there to expose them to the real neighborhood and cut down the stereotyping.

It’s not an easy project. Hungary’s marginalized Roma have been exposed to the violence of far-right groups. Uccu was founded in response to the 2008-2009 attacks on Roma settlements by neo-Nazis who killed six Roma people, among them a 5-year-old boy.

More recently, during the early days of the coronavirus pandemic in spring 2020, hundreds of far-right extremists



held an anti-Roma demonstration in Budapest in response to a stabbing during a football feud, yelling slogans about 'gypsy criminality.'

Angered about the situation in their country, Ignác and a group of friends went on Facebook Live simply in order to share their opinions and raise their voices. They then organized a series of Facebook Live talk shows, becoming the brand Ame Panzh ('We 5') on TV Baxtale,

an online and informal Roma media group, where they speak about issues affecting Roma. Topics ranging from racism, police, and school segregation, to diversity inclusion, intersectionality, gender & sexuality, depression, and burnout.

Roma voices are simply missing in mainstream media, Ignác explains. So they had to do it themselves: "One of our aims is to get our content in mainstream platforms. Amplify our voices."

THE TRAINERS TEACHING HOW TO MONITOR HATE SPEECH

Photo © CEJI

With the coronavirus pandemic, hate incidents and hate speech have intensified, both online and offline. Online tools to counter hate are needed more than ever. This is where Facing Facts comes in.

Facing Facts is a unique European project working to counter hate speech and hate crime. It was started in 2011 by the Brussels-based organization CEJI - A Jewish contribution to an inclusive Europe. At the time, LGBTQ+ and Jewish groups joined forces on monitoring hate crime and sharing their know-how and experience with each other. "We were committed to creating an on-going platform for communities to connect and learn from each other - and about each other - in fighting hate," explains Melissa Sonnino, Facing Facts' Coordinator at CEJI (pictured).



Today, the project brings together civil society, law enforcement, policymakers, universities, and activists. The platform, Facing Facts Online, provides trainings and online courses that focus on hate crime recognition and monitoring, as well as understanding and countering hate speech. More than 3,000 participants across Europe have taken part.





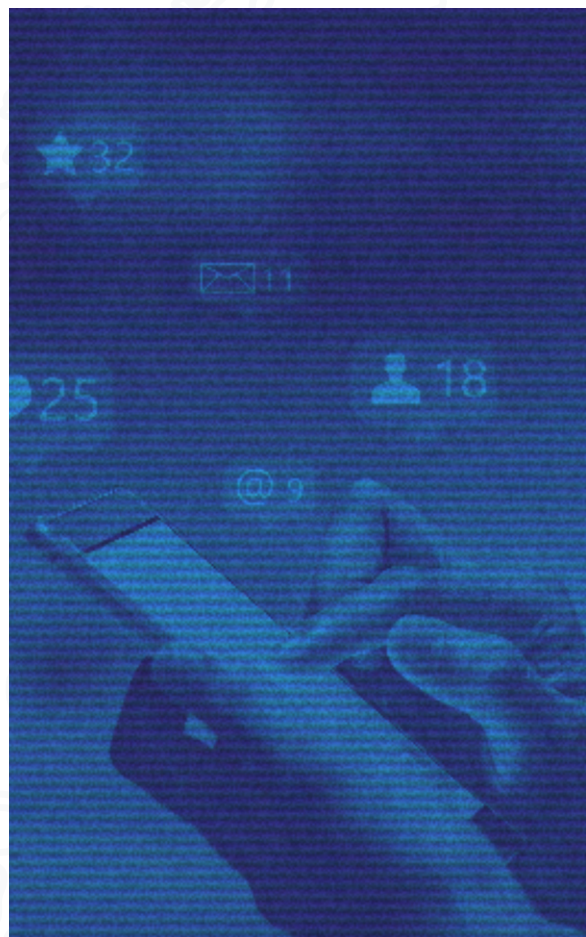
INACH: ONE OF EUROPE'S FIRST ORGANIZATIONS TO TACKLE ONLINE HATE

Suzette Bronkhorst founded INACH (International Network Against Cyber-Hate) together with her late partner Ronald Eissens back in 2002. **They were pioneers in responding to the problem of the internet as a breeding ground for spreading discrimination and antisemitism – and its ability to influence young people.**

Before INACH intervened, only law enforcement in the US could contact Twitter about dubious content,” Suzette highlights regarding the challenges they had when they got started. “So we brought hate on the internet as an issue to the UN, the OSCE, and the EU.”

Beginning with the duo of dedicated volunteers in the Netherlands, the project grew into a European, and now, a truly international project. INACH unites and empowers organizations that are already active in advocating for human rights on the internet and are countering cyber hate, extremism, and incitement to violence. Its member organizations deal with hate speech affecting all groups, including antisemitism, anti-Roma and anti-LGBTQ+ hate speech, and beyond. INACH recently led the coordination of EU-level hate speech monitoring exercises that provide data on whether social media companies remove illegal hate speech in a timely manner. This is crucial in ensuring that illegal incitement to hatred or violence does not stay online.

The importance of countering online hate was made all too clear yet again in 2020. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the online phenomena of hate speech, fake news, and conspiracy theories increased dramatically almost everywhere. INACH continues to work on all these



topics and connects organizations from across Europe and beyond, most recently expanding their work into Africa by onboarding the organization Africa Sans Haine, ‘Africa Without Hate.’

For Suzette and her late partner Ronald, both children of Holocaust survivors, it has been their life’s mission to stop hatred and discrimination from spreading online. In Suzette’s view, the current situation can be summed up relatively easily: “The beauty of the internet is that it’s the biggest information source in the world. The problem of Internet is that it’s the biggest information source in the world.”

GERMANY'S JEWS SPEAK UP, ONE MEETING AT A TIME



Jews make up only 0.2% of the population in Germany. Since most people in Germany don't have personal interactions with Jews as a result, their knowledge about modern Jewish life is not based on real-life experiences.

"Meet a Jew" is a project of the Central Council of Jews in Germany under the patronage of the Federal President of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier and supported by the "Live Democracy!" program of the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. Launched in 2020, the initiative travels throughout the country to introduce Jews and Judaism to non-Jewish people. Over 450 volunteers regularly visit schools, universities, sports clubs, and other groups to talk about their daily life, their Jewish identity, and answer questions about Jewish life in Germany today. By meeting people face-to-face, they aim

to debunk stereotypes about Jews, replacing them with actual experiences. During the pandemic, many of the encounters occurred online.

The initiative comes at a sensitive time, as antisemitic incidents have been increasing across Germany over the last years. In 2019, a far-right shooter tried to break into the Halle synagogue on Yom Kippur while worshippers were inside. During the coronavirus pandemic, anti-vaccine and other conspiracy myths often intertwined with anti-Jewish stereotypes.

"Being a minority in Europe and having the awareness of the Shoah, Jews understand and value the importance of fundamental democratic rights such as freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and the protection of minorities," Dr. Josef Schuster, President of the Central



Council of Jews in Germany and Vice-President of the World Jewish Congress, explained to the NOA project.

“Jewish volunteers with Meet a Jew therefore see their involvement not only as a service to the Jewish community, but as a contribution to Germany’s and Europe’s societies as a whole. They are sensitive to antidemocratic developments, which try to attack the core values of free societies and often come along with conspiracy theories and antisemitic tropes.”

Jewish volunteers with Meet a Jew

encourage dialogue, introduce Jewish people as individuals in contrast to abstract and generalizing representations of Jews as a presumably homogenous group, and help debunk stereotypes. They also strive toward building allyships between different minority groups and encourage young people to speak up. “My motivation [is] that we can finally start focusing on what unites us,” Alexandra, one of the young volunteers relates. “Instead of frantically searching for what makes us different.”

For more information please visit www.meetajew.de.



THE TRAINER OPENING DOORS FOR COOPERATION

Stéphanie Lecesne, based in Brussels, is a dedicated advocate for intercultural understanding and cooperation among diverse communities. With a fervent passion for fostering inclusivity, she has channelled her expertise in education and training to bridge cultural divides and promote dialogue across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

Originally from France, Stéphanie's professional journey began at Caen University, where she pursued a Master's degree in 'European Local Development Projects Expertise,' and also completed an internship at CEJI.

Over the years, she honed her skills in designing and developing courses centred on intercultural learning, integrating innovative non-formal education techniques.

Stéphanie rejoined CEJI in 2011 as a Training Coordinator. She has reached thousands of teachers, youth, and social workers through her trainings, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to drive positive change. Moreover, Stéphanie co-constructed and continues to deliver CEJI's award-winning Belieforama™ trainings on religion and belief diversity.

A EUROPEAN JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER LINKS DIVERSE GROUPS TOGETHER

The European Jewish Community Centre (EJCC), based in Brussels, is a hub for Jewish events, services, and resources, working to enrich the quality of Jewish life in the EU.

The centre offers an array of conferences and courses, covering topics on Judaism and Hebrew language classes, and which caters to both children and adults.

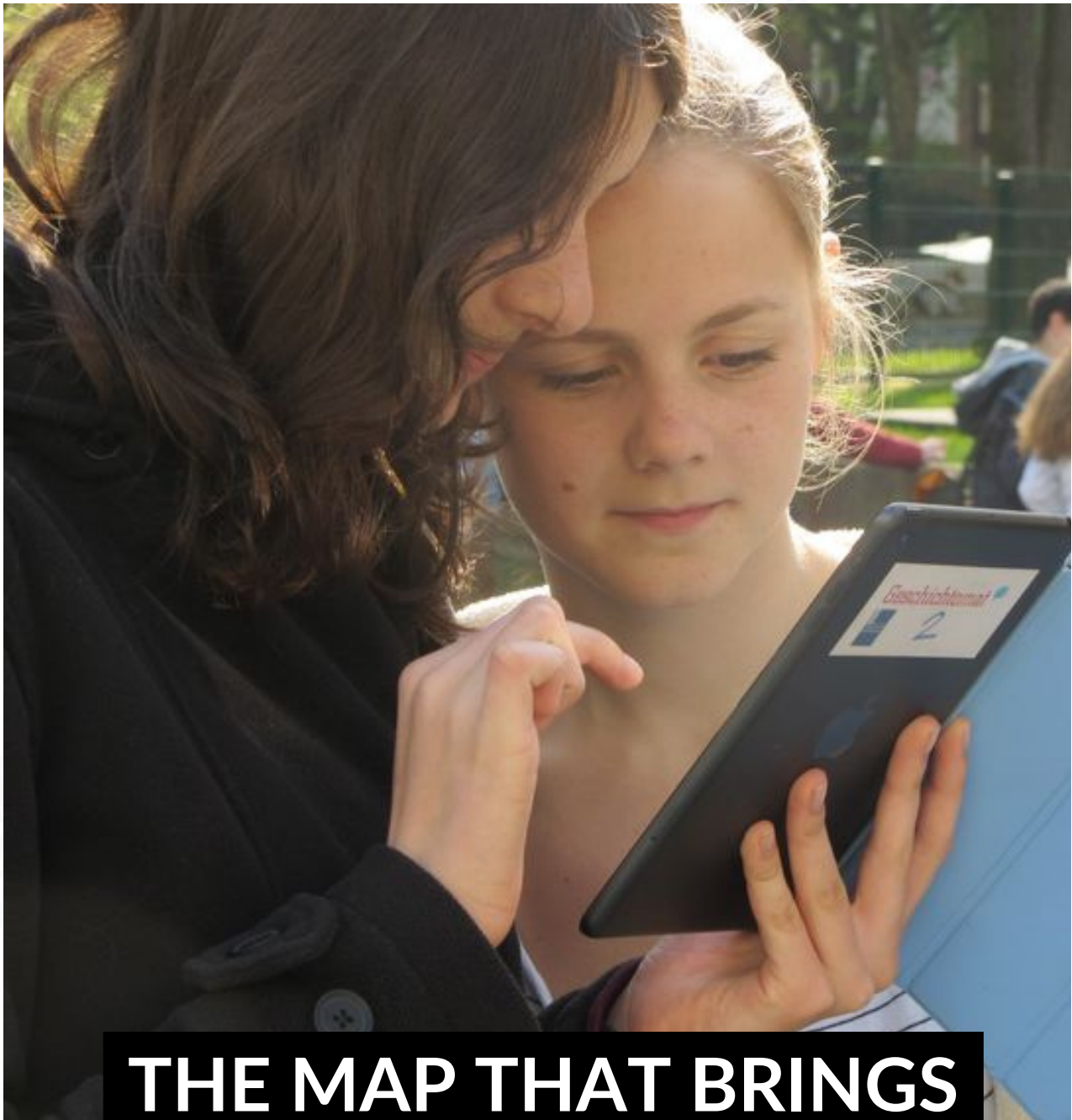
One of its main goals is to cultivate harmony between groups, so that all peoples can thrive in safety. The EJCC's Dialogue and Diversity project aims to foster intercultural dialogue among people of different religious and cultural backgrounds, bringing together Jews, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, and non-confessional individuals to promote understanding and reducing stereotyping and prejudices. They host workshops, trainings, and public events.



Photo © EJCC

The EJCC's solidarity program, called Yachad-Together, aims to create interpersonal relationships between people from different age groups, backgrounds, and religions. Volunteers and participants gather for weekly visits and for special holidays, creating community and belonging.

Since the start of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, they extended the program to create network of homes to welcome refugees in Brussels, integrating and including them into their community.



THE MAP THAT BRINGS OLD JEWISH HAMBURG BACK TO LIFE

2021 marked 1,700 years of Jewish life in Germany. A good opportunity to discover the Jewish history of the city of Hamburg – **perhaps with the help of a digital map created by German high school students?**

The organization Geschichtomat, meaning “history machine,” is giving high school students independent access to the Jewish history of their city through methods far beyond the classroom.

According to Geschichtomat, teaching Jewish history in Germany is almost always linked to the Holocaust and a narrative of persecution. They wanted to add a different layer that narrative.

Within the frame of the weeks-long project, students get familiar with historical figures and places around the city. They visit synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, kosher factories, the state archives, museums and galleries, and conduct interviews. At the end they write articles or record videos about their research, which are then uploaded onto a digital map of the city. It becomes a digital map of Jewish Hamburg through the experiences of Hamburg students. More than 800 school students have participated so far.

“At the end of each project week, the young people have gained a small insight into the Jewish history of their city,” says Dr. Carmen Bisotti, Geschichtomat project manager.



“Jewish people are no longer seen as just an unknown minority, but suddenly part of their own history and everyday life.”

Geschichtomat won the 2020 Obermayer Awards in Berlin, honoring people who are committed to remembering Jewish life in Germany.



JEWISH COMMUNITIES GO GREEN

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step," a proverb says. For countering climate change, every step can help.

In the UK, EcoSynagogue and the Board of Deputies of British Jews are supporting Jewish places of worship with the tools to help combat the climate crisis. Their initiative was launched ahead of the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference which took place in Glasgow in October – November 2021.

The world is currently not on track to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees. If temperatures will carry on rising, it would bring even more catastrophic flooding, bush fires, extreme weather, and destruction of species. Strong and sustained

reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) and other greenhouse gases would limit climate change.

EcoSynagogue is helping synagogues assess how they can be more eco-friendly. By forming Environmental Impact Teams and creating a synagogue eco-policy – such as recycling, reducing packaging, using energy-efficient lightbulbs, composting, planting a community garden. By talking about environmentalism in sermons and in 'shiurim.' By hosting environment-centered programs and discussions for congregants and youths. Their EcoShabbat program in November 2021 hosted a range of events, such as an alternative vegan Friday night dinner, with vegan recipes for traditional Jewish meals.

The background of the page is a light gray with faint, white, stylized outlines of leaves and branches. The main visual element is a large, vibrant green leafy branch that starts from the bottom left and extends towards the top right, partially obscured by text boxes.

Every community is different: Some operate in rural areas; some urban; some in old buildings; and some in new buildings. But every community can play a part in reducing their carbon footprint.

"Judaism teaches that every species matters," Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, a co-founder of EcoSynagogue, says regarding the initiative. "And that we are responsible not only for other human beings, but for the rich biodiversity of our planet."



A LYON SYNAGOGUE FIGHTS CLIMATE CHANGE

When Rabbi Daniela Touati finished her studies and assumed leadership in France, she formed a group to create an eco-synagogue – and invited local Muslim and Christian groups to participate. On June 20, 2021, the garden of Lyon’s Progressive Keren Or synagogue (www.kerenor.fr) was inaugurated.

In Jewish belief, the Creator loved all his creations: Plants, animals, and humans. The Bible tells us that the earth is given to humankind “to use and protect.” In this era of climate change, more and more Jewish communities realize that they must play their part.

The Lyon synagogue partnered with a local NGO called “The Green Hands” and began gardening. Fruit, vegetables, and herbs are planted.

The plan is to have two growing seasons, spring and fall.

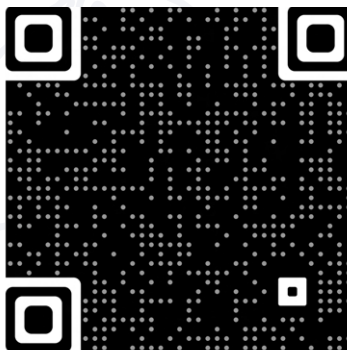
Each month, a dozen participants from the synagogue, church, and mosque meet to work on the garden. Although most of the products will be donated to charities, the synagogue plans to consume some for interfaith picnics.

Keren Or aims to become a full-fledged “eco synagogue.” In addition to the garden, it has held conferences on subjects such as digital pollution to inform the community about the challenges of tackling climate change. Rabbi Touati plans to use the synagogue for much more than food production. In this era of lockdown restrictions which limit synagogue participation inside, she is using the garden to lead services for the cheder, hold kiddushim, and other synagogue events. “All religions can share this green faith,” she says. Her community’s garden is living proof.

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