



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE

Humanities

DIVISION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the Public Programs application guidelines at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/public/media-projects-development-grants> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Public Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: *Fighting on Two Fronts: Jewish American Soldiers in World War II*

Institution: City Lore: NY Center for Urban Folk Culture

Project Director: Lisa Ades

Grant Program: Media Projects: Development Grants

2. NARRATIVE

A. NATURE OF THE REQUEST:

Fighting on Two Fronts: Jewish American Soldiers in World War II, a feature-length documentary for public television, will tell the story of the 500,000 Jewish American men and women who served in World War II. Combining on-camera interviews, rare archival footage and photographs, letters, and pre-recorded testimonies, the film will be directed by Lisa Ades and written by Maia Harris, acclaimed filmmakers who have been producing and writing documentaries for PBS for more than twenty years.

We are requesting \$75,000 in development funds from the NEH to cover the costs of consultation with humanities advisors, writing a script, textual and archival research, and initial filming to capture some of the incredible stories of the men and women who are still alive to tell them.

B. PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:

The story of Jewish American soldiers during World War II is a profound and unique one, not yet chronicled in a documentary for national television broadcast. Seeking to dispel the myth that the Jewish experience during World War II was one solely of victimization, *Fighting on Two Fronts* will tell the story of the Jewish men and women who fought for their nation and their people, struggled privately with anti-Semitism, and emerged transformed, more powerfully American *and* more deeply Jewish.

While Jewish Americans' relationship to the Holocaust has been covered extensively, few know that more than half a million Jewish Americans served in the U.S. military during World War II. These men and women were religious and secular; Zionists, socialists, even pacifists. Some had been in America for generations; others were recent immigrants, with close family members left behind in Hitler's Europe. Several were even concentration camp survivors themselves.

Jewish men served in the Army, the Navy and the Marines, in the European and Pacific theatres of war. They were killed in action, held as POWS in German labor camps, and awarded Purple Hearts and other honors. Jewish women served as WACs and WAVES and as nurses overseas. All the while, they fought on two fronts: for America and for Jews worldwide, against anti-Semitism at home and abroad.

The film will be told through the eyes of these men and women, interwoven with commentary from scholars and experts. Because the number of living veterans grows smaller every day, we cannot rely on a small handful of characters to tell this history from beginning to end. Instead, each chapter of the film will include multiple voices, which together will illuminate its many facets. We will also include the memories of spouses and children where they deepen the story's impact.

The film will begin in America in the 1930s, as American Jews watch the rise of Hitler and the outbreak of war in Europe. We learn about anti-Nazi protest in America, and Jewish efforts to rescue family members overseas. The film then follows the young men and women as they enter military service and leave home to serve their nation. At first, they are self-conscious about their Judaism, and face anti-Semitism among their fellow soldiers. As the war unfolds and Hitler's persecution of the Jews is revealed, the fighting men learn to embrace religious tolerance as inseparable from democracy, and the Jewish soldiers find a new sense of belonging as Americans. In the end, men of all faiths confront the horrors of the concentration camps together. When the war ends in Europe, most soldiers come home, but a dedicated group of rabbi chaplains stays on to tend to the survivors of the Holocaust. Finally, the film will touch on the transformation of Jewish life in postwar America, as Jews become both more fully integrated Americans and more strongly connected to their Jewish identity.

C. HUMANITIES CONTENT:

Fighting on Two Fronts: Jewish American Soldiers in World War II will tell the story of the American Jewish soldiers who fought in World War II, in the context of 1930s America, a time of great upheaval for Jewish communities. Through the eyes of the soldiers' families, we will see Jewish communities struggling through the Great Depression and facing growing anti-Semitism at home and abroad.

We will learn that many Jewish GIs saw the military as an opportunity to fight Nazism at last, after nearly a decade of fruitless protest. And we will meet Jewish soldiers, both American-born and recent refugees from Europe, who took up arms for democracy and for the liberation of Europe's Jews.

Through the experiences of these young men and women, we will challenge the commonly held belief that American Jews knew about the Holocaust but chose to do nothing. And we will help dispel the pervasive idea that the Jewish experience of World War II was entirely that of victimization, dehumanization and death.

The film will explore the following themes: the uncertain promise of 1930s America, anti-Semitism in the United States, anti-Nazi resistance in America, diversity among Jewish soldiers, the role of the rabbi chaplain and the emergence of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and World War II as a transformative experience for America's ethnic groups. In the end, the story of the Jewish GIs is the story of all soldiers, a truly American story about democracy, religious freedom and tolerance.

The 'uncertain promise' of 1930s America: As Beth Wenger has written about New York Jews during the Great Depression, uncertainty underlies much of Jewish American political and cultural life during this period. In a single generation, Jewish immigrants had made extraordinary progress, moving from poverty into the middle-class, from crowded ghettos to comfortable Jewish neighborhoods. They built synagogues and charitable institutions, establishing themselves as paragons of immigrant success. And they expected their children to rise even higher, to attend college and become

professionals. Seemingly overnight, the Great Depression shattered these dreams, undermining their economic foundation. At the same time, the nation experienced an unprecedented rise in anti-Semitism. Together, these dramatic changes in American life raised profound questions about the future of Jews in America. Against this backdrop of confusion and doubt, we meet the young men and women who head off to war.

Anti-Semitism in America: Anti-Semitism increased steadily in America in the 1930s and 1940s. In surveys taken between 1938 and 1941, 33-50% of Americans felt that Jews “had too much power in the United States.” War made it even worse—by 1945, the percentage was up to 56%.

The notion that Jews dominated the American economy was so pervasive that in 1936, *Fortune* magazine felt compelled to investigate. But its refutation of the charges did little to erase the idea from the American mind.

The 1930s had witnessed a rise of public and vocal anti-Semitism never before seen in America—more than 100 anti-Semitic organizations emerged in a single decade, while until that time, there had been only five in all of American history, writes historian Leonard Dinnerstein. The popular priest Father Coughlin’s radio diatribes about “the Jew Deal” and “President Rosenfeld” reached audiences in the millions. Pro-Nazi German Bundists marched 20,000 strong through the streets of New York. And isolationists like Charles Lindbergh accused the Jews of “pressing this country toward war.” Even congressmen rallied against “the Jews,” and refused to support a bill to admit 10,000 Jewish children fleeing Europe.

Scholars attribute the rise in prejudice to Jewish communities’ relative capacity to weather the Depression and to their visible entry into government employment, local and national. In fact, outside of the government sector, Jews had seen increased job discrimination since the Depression, and most colleges and professional schools had introduced strict Jewish quotas.

Many scholars, such as historian Henry L. Feingold, argue that it was this rising undercurrent of anti-Semitism that kept mainstream Jewish leaders from fighting harder to save their European brethren. Rhetoric about a “Jewish war” made them hold back, thinking that Americans would not willingly go to war to save the Jews. Even Jews inside the Roosevelt administration, including Henry Morgenthau and Felix Frankfurter, hesitated to use their recently acquired political capital to push for lifting immigration restrictions or the rescue of European Jews, especially during an economic crisis at home.

Jewish GIs felt this tide of anti-Semitism personally, in their encounters with soldiers from across America. In the early 1940s, Jews lived largely in major urban areas, so many Americans had literally never seen a Jew before they met one in uniform. They knew only the age-old stereotypes, and the more recent accusations of excessive power. Leaving behind their tight-knit ethnic neighborhoods for the first time, Jewish soldiers were shocked at their comrades’ belief that Jews were draft dodgers, cowards and weaklings. Victor Gotbaum recalled many “statements about our cowardice and Jewish

unwillingness to fight. I was deeply upset by it. Here we were fighting the Nazis, and then this madness in the United States Army!"

Anti-Semitic stereotypes in American culture had traditionally mocked Jewish masculinity, portraying Jewish men as physically weak and verbally skilled. Even the Jewish male body was denigrated, turning the slender, small-boned Torah scholar from an icon of Jewish nobility into a helpless weakling, unable to fight. At the same time, a growing Zionist movement countered these stereotypes by championing Jewish fitness and athleticism. Fighting for their nation, young Jewish men would learn to combat the limited views of many of their comrades, and embrace different, more traditionally American ideals of masculinity—including physical strength, bravery and leadership.

In the field, the soldiers' religious differences no longer mattered. In 1944, a teenage Leon Uris wrote to his father that he "fought beside Catholics, Protestants and Mormons, Indians, Irish, Italians, Poles. They liked me because I was a good man and a regular fellow." After serving in the Marines in the Pacific for two years, the future novelist wrote, "it's not the religion we look at, but the man himself."

Diversity among Jewish soldiers: When the war in Europe began, for some Jewish Americans, it still felt far away, as it did for many non-Jewish Americans. This was especially true for native-born young men and women, the second and third generation of American Jews, with no immediate family remaining in Europe.

By the 1930s, many second-generation Jews had entered the middle class, enrolled in college and were working in white-collar jobs and professions. They lived in two worlds—the immigrant world of their parents and the modern American world all around them. Born and raised in ethnic enclaves, they also frequently stepped outside them, for work, education and entertainment. When these young men fought for their country, they deepened their patriotism, their sense of themselves as Americans. As the war progressed, and more was revealed about Hitler's plans for the Jews, these soldiers reconnected with their partially buried Jewish identities. With the liberation of the camps, and the realization that Hitler had tried to annihilate their entire people, they began to fight for themselves as Jews as well as Americans.

But thousands of Jewish soldiers fought for America from a completely different perspective. Despite strict immigration restrictions, between 1933 and 1945, 250,000 European Jews arrived in the U.S., and the young men among them enlisted as soon as they were granted citizenship. These young men spoke Yiddish or German and had left close family behind in Europe. Thousands of them were Jewish refugees from Germany with firsthand experience of the Nazi regime. Remarkably, several soldiers had actually been imprisoned in concentration camps in Germany before coming to America and enlisting in the Army. Still others had been imprisoned in England and Canada as German "enemy-aliens," some even housed together with avowed Nazis and other German prisoners of war.

For these soldiers, there was no rediscovery of themselves as Jews and no surprise in their identification with the victims of the Holocaust in Europe. They had seen Nazi persecution with their own eyes and had lost family members to the concentration camps. For them, the fight against Hitler was personal.

Some soldiers took their Judaism with them into the field. Jack Scharf, who served in Germany, always kept a medicine bottle of wine, a salami and a homemade Shabbat candle in his grenade bag: “you really want to pray, you understand? Because bombs are falling and...you’re alone...I dug in, took a C ration can, put the candle in there, put it like two feet in and lit the candle. I took my salami and had my Shabbat meal on Friday night...in a foxhole.”

Of course, some Jewish soldiers were sent to fight on the Pacific front. There, not facing Hitler’s destruction directly, their Judaism existed in a more private sphere. Sy Kahn remembers unloading ships by day and writing in his journal in the evening, all while under attack by Japanese bombers. Herman Wouk took part in eight invasions of Pacific islands, serving aboard a minesweeper.

In 1943, for the first time in American history, women were granted full military status. Thousands of women joined up, taking on administrative and technical jobs that freed the men to fight. Among them were more than 10,000 Jewish women, disregarding their parents’ warnings that the military “was no life for a nice Jewish girl.” They served in the WACs, the WAVES, the Army Air Corps and as nurses, deployed worldwide: in North Africa, Europe, the South Pacific, China and the Middle East. Some even lost their lives: Frances Slanger, one of four nurses who waded ashore at the Normandy beachhead on D-Day, was killed by a German artillery barrage.

Like their male counterparts, these women took their Judaism with them overseas and practiced it proudly. In 1943, Mildred Scheier, an officer and a nurse, led a Seder for 1000 enlisted men in Bari, Italy. In 1945, Ruth Karesevar, a nurse stationed in Germany, began to see patients from the newly liberated concentration camps—and so realized that her “fellow Jews were massacred.” She confronted the German civilians who worked in the hospital, letting them know she was proud to be an American Jew. She then stayed on voluntarily after the war’s end as part of the American occupation.

These women, with their diverse experiences, personalities and beliefs, will add yet another dimension to the story of the Jewish American fighting force.

Anti-Nazi resistance in America. For some Jewish soldiers, enlisting in the armed forces was the culmination of years of protest. While some mainstream Jewish organizations avoided public protests, other groups fought to publicize Hitler’s campaign against the Jews. In 1933, a coalition of Jewish organizations, spearheaded by the Jewish Veterans of America, launched a boycott of all German goods. In 1934, the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC) was formed to support Jewish labor unions in Europe and combat anti-Semitism at home. After America decided to participate in the 1936 Berlin Olympics

despite angry protests, the JLC organized a counter-Olympics, featuring amateur athletes from across the country.

In 1938, Kristallnacht galvanized even more protest, with huge anti-Hitler rallies in Madison Square Garden. American Labor Zionists took up the fight for a Jewish homeland as a refuge for European Jews, calling for shiploads of immigrants to confront British naval patrols in Palestine. But the protests did nothing to stop Hitler, and the Labor Zionists' idea did not materialize. Jewish Americans felt more and more powerless.

With America's entry into the war in December 1941, American Jews finally had their chance to fight. The war gave a powerless community, paralyzed by anti-Semitism, the opportunity to stand up against the Nazis. Jewish Americans joined up first and foremost to stop Hitler, unlike many of their non-Jewish comrades, who fought primarily to avenge the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. "The primary objective of our war is to defeat the Japs--not Hitler, and certainly not Nazism," reported Ari Lashner, confounded that among his fellow recruits there was "no sympathy for what I presented as the fundamental issue of the war: the defeat of Fascism."

The war against fascism offered an opportunity not only to the fighting men, but also to Jewish communities on the home front. Like the population at large, Jewish Americans worked hard to support the war. They collected scrap metal and rubber, planted Victory gardens, and monitored for air raids and submarine attacks on American shores. They worked in defense production, rolled bandages, ran blood drives for the Red Cross, and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in war bonds.

There was also a uniquely Jewish response to the war. In addition to protests and rallies, there were private efforts to rescue Jews from Europe and lobbying for more government action. On a smaller scale, special prayers were written for D-Day, and Jewish soldiers home on furlough were recognized in synagogue on the holidays. Many communities also kept each other close by sending out regular newsletters on the doings of their soldiers, and the gossip back home.

In order to understand the story of the soldiers, the film will explore the evolution of American knowledge of the Holocaust, both inside and outside its Jewish communities. Through the stories of the families the soldiers left at home, the film will trace the emergence of the knowledge of Hitler's plan to exterminate the Jews—its near invisibility in the mainstream American press and its continued coverage by Jewish publications.

Even after the liberation of the camps, many Americans continued to doubt the horrific reality of the Holocaust—as many scholars have written, it was literally too terrible to believe. American troops who liberated the camps were among the first to see the bodies, the crematoria, the mass graves and the starving survivors. The letters GIs wrote home and the photographs they took are among the first eyewitness accounts. These amateur

snapshots, in some sense more real than the official newsreels, helped many Americans understand, in General Eisenhower's words, "what they had been fighting for."

The rabbi chaplains and the emergence of America's "Judeo-Christian Tradition."

After the discovery of the camps, a new position was invented, "advisor to General Eisenhower on Jewish affairs," held first by Rabbi Judah Nadich, the army's highest-ranking rabbi, and the first Jewish chaplain to be sent overseas.

The rabbi chaplains—more than 300 in all-- played an important role in the lives of Jewish GIs. They brought the soldiers together publicly to recognize their religious beliefs, their humanity and dignity—and privately helped individual soldiers in need. Towards the war's end, they extended themselves to help the survivors of the Holocaust: establishing orphanages for hidden Jewish children, holding Jewish burial services at concentration camps, and gathering food, clothing, medicine and religious articles for survivors. Some, including Nadich, remained in Europe after the war was over to manage treatment of Jews in DP (displaced persons) camps, and even helped smuggle refugees to Palestine.

Jewish chaplains, along with their Protestant and Catholic counterparts, were also responsible for upholding the military's policy of fostering an ecumenical American religion—what would come to be known as the Judeo-Christian tradition.

It is a popular belief that the Judeo-Christian tradition dates back centuries, but in fact, writes historian Deborah Dash Moore, it was largely a creation of the American military during World War II. As one of the "three fighting faiths of democracy," Judaism assumed legitimacy in America unanticipated at the start of the war. Jewish, Catholic and Protestant chaplains were encouraged to improvise observances that included a common framework for all three religions--to incorporate Jewish and Christian practices into ceremonies that celebrated them both.

This idea emerged from a conference held by the president of the Jewish Theological Seminary soon after the war in Europe began. Seventy-nine leading American thinkers and theologians came together to create a framework for the "preservation of democracy and intellectual freedom" to combat the rise of fascism in Europe. The conference concluded that American ideals were rooted in biblical tradition, Jewish and Christian, and that the concept of a Judeo-Christian tradition was needed to counter the term "Christian" as used by American anti-Semitic groups since the 1930s. Writes Moore, "'Judeo-Christian' suggested an antifascist basis for democratic values. The idea "was to invoke a common faith for a united democratic front."

Early in the war, four chaplains—a rabbi, a priest and two ministers—sacrificed their lives for a sinking ship full of sailors, giving up their seats in the lifeboats so that more men could live. Holding hands and praying together, they sank beneath the waves. This powerful image of America's religions united inspired chaplains of all faiths throughout the course of the war—and left a lasting legacy.

“These wartime experiences,” writes historian Jonathan Sarna, “laid the groundwork for postwar religious America which defined itself no longer in restrictively Christian terms, but rather in terms of religious pluralism...as the trinity of ‘Protestant-Catholic-Jew.’”

World War II as a transformative experience for American ethnic groups.

Before the war, America was made up of diverse groups of immigrants, but most lived in communities segregated by ethnicity. World War I had taken place against a backdrop of intense xenophobia, a fear that “foreigners” (i.e. immigrants) could turn out to be loyal to America’s enemies.

World War II would be different. Even before America entered the war, the U.S. government launched a propaganda campaign to build American unity by promoting religious and ethnic tolerance. In 1938-39, a 26-part radio series called “Americans All, Immigrants All” documented the contributions made by the nation’s ethnic groups throughout American history.

Jewish organizations, including the American Jewish Committee, supported this broadcast financially, and organized “listening groups,” encouraging Jewish citizens to invite a non-Jewish friend to hear the broadcast with them. All bigotry, including anti-Semitism, the series implied, was un-American.

During the war as well, multi-ethnic festivals were cultivated at home. In 1942, the “Festival of Nations” in St. Paul, Minnesota lasted three days and included 32 nationalities. And popular songs, like Earl Robinson’s “The House I Live In,” celebrated the contributions of diverse ethnic groups.

This new national discourse about ethnicity and religion permeated the journalism and film of the time. Reporters made a conscious effort to identify soldiers by their surnames and where they came from, to reflect the ethnic mixing taking place among America’s fighting men—even as the troops continued to be segregated by race. Hollywood movies, such as *Guadalcanal Diary*, *Air Force*, *Naked and the Dead*, and *From Here to Eternity*, also portrayed American fighting units as multi-cultural, deliberately including a soldier from each white ethnic group.

Ecumenical moments, like the drowning death of the four chaplains, were widely celebrated—in newsreels and later, on a postage stamp. World War II came to be seen as the great incorporation experience, when the white Protestant majority realized that white ethnics really had to be accepted as Americans. White ethnic groups such as Jews and Italians earned their citizenship by shedding blood, and left their outsider status behind.

With 13 million Americans taking up arms in a fight for democracy and against intolerance, these populations intermingled, opening up America as a society for generations to come. As Richard Alba has written, “this period was critical for the subsequent mainstream integration of Jews and other previously marginalized immigrant-origin groups.” The stories of Jewish American soldiers and their families will shed light on this experience for other white ethnic groups as well, as they began to leave their

enclaves for the suburbs, attend college on the GI Bill and integrate themselves ever more deeply into American society.

Many Jewish servicemen, for example, made their way back to the sunbelt states, mainly Florida and southern California, where they had trained, attracted by the climate and economic possibilities. They became the vanguard of a great migration and a new pattern of Jewish cultural and religious life outside the traditional East Coast and Midwest ethnic enclaves. In 1940, Miami was home to 8,000 Jews, and by 1955, the Jewish population had climbed to 100,000. By 1950, Los Angeles became the third largest Jewish city in the world, with 300,000 Jews.

America's Jewish community was now the largest in the world – the six million murdered during the war constituted nearly two-thirds of Europe's Jews. "Our tiny people has sacrificed twenty-five times more lives in this war than Great Britain on all her battlefields, on the sea, under the sea, in the air and throughout the years of bombings. This is in absolute figures," wrote an anguished editorialist.

With their new responsibility as international Jewish leaders, American Jews would not only become more integrated as Americans but also more empowered as Jews. Many became agents of change for America's Jewish communities, and joined the fight for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. In the next decades, they would become visible participants in postwar America's culture and politics, fighting for social change.

The job discrimination Jewish Americans had endured before the war was no longer acceptable, and neither was housing discrimination, against any ethnic or racial group. While the integration of white ethnic groups like Italian and Jewish Americans was accelerated during and after the war, African American GIs, who had served in segregated combat units, came home to find that they were no more welcome in white American society than they had been before the war.

Even as Jewish Americans "savored the novel experience of their integration into new neighborhoods," writes Moore, "their anger at prejudice survived." In the postwar years, Jewish clergy and lay leaders would join with African Americans to fight housing discrimination, setting important legal precedents for civil rights battles to come. And in the 1950s and '60s, Jewish Americans would maintain their dedication to racial and religious tolerance for all, joining the civil rights movement in large numbers.

In August 1945, the American Jewish Congress called for "full equality in a free society," committing itself to a broader civil rights struggle, applying what Jewish veterans had learned in uniform to the expression of Jewish life in America.

The postwar era saw a marked decline in anti-Semitism in America. Ethnic Americans no longer self-segregated, and no longer defined themselves by their ethnicity or religion. Instead, writes Moore, they had become "men that belonged to the same generation who shared a powerful experience that produced common values."

As part of the development process, we will conduct further research, identify more characters, and work closely with our advisory team to expand upon and integrate the themes more fully with the storytelling and historical context. We will also invite more advisors to join our panel as needed.

D. PROJECT FORMAT:

In the style of the filmmakers' previous work, *Fighting on Two Fronts* will weave together on-camera interviews, archival stills and footage, newspapers, letters and live footage, with an original soundtrack and a strong third-person narrator.

There is obviously a wealth of material to tell the story of World War II – from numerous still photographs to dramatic archival footage to rare personal memorabilia to interviews with the men and women who are still able to tell their stories. The development grant would allow us to begin to identify and gather the vast resources available to this project.

Interviews: We seek to interview a variety of Jewish men and women who served in the armed forces, representing all corners of the nation and of every background. During the grant period, we will locate and pre-interview our on-camera interviews, as well as filming a selected few.

While millions of World War II veterans have already passed away, our goal is to capture the stories of some of the remaining men and women, who are now in their 80s and 90s. According to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 270,000 World War II veterans died in 2011, at a rate of approximately 700 a day, and less than 1/10 of the veterans of the War are alive today. We wish to spend several days filming some of these key interviews, before they are lost forever. They will be incorporated into the production script, and then the final documentary. For example, Herman Wouk, author of acclaimed historical fiction about World War II, is 97 and in good health. Max Fuchs, who served as cantor at the first service in liberated Germany in 1944, broadcast on NBC, is 92, and Henry Kissinger, a German refugee who served in military intelligence, is 89. Other well-known surviving veterans include former New York mayor Ed Koch (88), and the actors Eli Wallach (97), Mel Brooks (86) and Carl Reiner (90), along with Congressman Benjamin Gilman (90) and Artist Si Lewen (93).

Our original interviews with numerous unknown soldiers and ordinary citizens as well as the better-known Jewish personalities mentioned above will be interwoven with pre-recorded testimonies available in archival collections. Some of these include columnist Art Buchwald, baseball star Hank Greenberg, Rabbi Judah Nadich, the Senior Jewish Chaplain in Europe, and architect Max Abramovitz.

To enlarge upon the themes of the film, we will also incorporate on-camera interviews with historians, writers and other scholars, including some of our advisors. All of the on-camera interviews will help to enhance the historical material, provide a framework for social context, and relate anecdotal and firsthand experience of the War.

Archival materials: Drawing upon numerous archival collections (see list of collections, section M) including private collections, news archives, museums, libraries, and historical societies, the War can be visually depicted in every detail and facet of its history.

But little known personal archives from the Jewish soldiers themselves will also be featured in our film – photographs, v-mail letters, diaries, memorabilia etc. Some of these personal collections have never been published and will contribute to the human story behind the war –providing a rare glimpse into the lives of our participants.

In addition, rare objects and War memorabilia will be included from collections such as The National Museum of American Jewish Military History. We will show never before broadcast objects including a religious ark constructed by POWs for Rabbi Benjamin Gorrelick for conducting services in Europe; a Torah scroll used by Chaplain Morris Gordon for services on the Burma Trail; and a Waffen SS uniform jacket taken from a prisoner.

Soundtrack: A rich soundtrack of original music along with pre-recorded popular music and sound effects, newsreels, voice-over testimonies etc. will be woven together to create a lively and comprehensive audio experience. Numerous archival interviews with World War II veterans can be found in archival collections, many of them in the public domain.

Existing work on the subject: The story of Jewish soldiers has been touched on in larger series such as David Grubin’s *The Jewish-Americans*, and some aspects of it have been captured on film before: *Berga: Soldiers of Another War* by Charles Guggenheim; *About Face: The Story of the Jewish Refugee Soldiers of World War II* by Steven Karras, about German-Jewish soldiers; *From Philadelphia to the Front*, by Judy Gelles and Marianne Bernstein, about six Jewish veterans from Philadelphia, and several films about the liberators of the concentration camps. But as advisor Jonathan Sarna writes, “The story of America’s ‘Greatest Generation’ has received considerable attention...but... the important Jewish aspects of the story have largely been ignored.” *Fighting on Two Fronts* will bring together all of these elements and more for the first time, uniting the Jewish experience in the military and on the home front, the trajectory of Jewish anti-Nazi protest and the story of the rabbi chaplains, placing all of it in the context of American Jewish life before, during, and after the war.

E. AUDIENCE AND DISTRIBUTION

The film is intended for broadcast on national public television, where the filmmakers have shown their work for more than 20 years. In addition, we feel confident that this story will have a strong appeal in international markets, as well as home video and educational domestic sales. Once a production script and teaser is completed, we will partner with a PBS station (the filmmakers have long-standing relationships with WGBH/Boston, WNET/New York, and WETA/Washington, D.C.) and begin distribution plans in earnest.

F. RIGHTS AND PERMISSIONS

In our search for archival materials, we will begin with public archives whose authors and donors have already given permission for their images, documents and other materials to be used by the public. Large amounts of World War II materials are in the public domain, created and owned by the United States government, but for those that are not, we will address each interview, memoir and artifact on a case-by-case basis.

For example, our advisor Jonathan Sarna has directed us to the daughters of Rabbi Judah Nadich, whose papers and unpublished memoir are kept at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. During the development phase, we will contact them and discuss use of their father's materials before further incorporating him into the script as a character.

The production team has more than twenty years of experience with the intricacies of obtaining rights and releases for a wide range of source materials, for use in all types of media. At this stage in the process, we are not yet able to estimate the costs, but we will clear all materials used and keep costs and availability of permissions in mind as the research process unfolds.

G. HUMANITIES ADVISORS

Deborah Dash Moore: the senior advisor to the project, Deborah Dash Moore is a leading authority on Jewish Americans in World War II. Her book *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (2004), which received the Saul Viener Prize for Best Book in American Jewish History, 2003–2004, explores the wartime experiences of American Jews and how it changed them as both Jews and Americans. She is currently the Frederick C. L. Huetwell Professor of History at the University of Michigan, where she also directs the Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. Her work also examines the social history of American Jews in the 20th century, including *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (1981) and *American Jewish Identity Politics* (2008). And her groundbreaking work on gender and Judaism, as co-editor of *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* (1997), and *Gender and Jewish History* (2010), will guide us as we shape the perspective of women in this film, those who joined the military and those who stayed home.

Richard Alba is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. His books include *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (1990); *Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity* (1985); and the award-winning *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (2003). Professor Alba's expertise on ethnicity in general will offer a helpful comparative perspective and widen our focus beyond Jewish Americans to include other ethnic groups who fought in World War II.

Thomas Doherty is Chairman of the American Studies Program at Brandeis University, where he specializes in American cinema and media culture. He is the author of several

books on film history and media studies including *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture and World War II* (1993), and *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism and American Culture* (2003). His most recent book is *Hollywood and Hitler, 1933-1939* (2013). Doherty will lend his expertise on World War II and the mass media, including Hollywood's portrayal of ethnicity in the armed forces, press accounts of diversity in the military and Hollywood's role in communicating the dangers of Nazism and Hitler to Americans.

Deborah E. Lipstadt is Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish History and Holocaust Studies at Emory University, where she founded the Institute for Jewish Studies and served as its chair. A leading authority on the American response to the Holocaust and Holocaust denial, she is the author of *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust* (1986, 1993), *Denying the Holocaust* (1993), and *The Eichmann Trial* (2011). Her expertise will help shape our film's portrayal of what America, and Jewish Americans knew about Hitler and the Holocaust and when they knew it, an important thread underlying the Jewish soldiers' experience. In addition, her most current work, a book in progress about the impact of the American experience on the values of ethnic and religious groups, will guide our understanding of our characters' Jewish-American identity and values in the context of their times.

Allan R. Millett is Stephen E. Ambrose Professor of History and Director of the Eisenhower Center for American Studies at the University of New Orleans. A retired colonel of the Marine Corps Reserve, Dr. Millett is a specialist in the history of American military policy and 20th century wars and military institutions. He was one of the founders of the internationally renowned military history program at The Ohio State University, where he is the Raymond E. Mason, Jr. Professor Emeritus of Military History. He also serves as senior military advisor at The National World War II Museum. He is the author of 7 books and co-author of *A War To Be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (2000) and *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States, 1607-1983* (1984; rev.1994). His areas of interest and research are: American Armed Forces, Military Policy, Military Innovation, and America's 20th century wars. Professor Millett will offer us a valuable perspective as to where Jewish soldiers fit into the larger history of the U.S. military.

Jonathan D. Sarna is the Joseph H. & Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University and Chief Historian of the new National Museum of American Jewish History. He was named by the *Forward* as one of America's fifty most influential American Jews, and is one of the nation's leading commentators on American Jewish history, religion and life. He has written, edited, or co-edited more than thirty books, including *When General Grant Expelled the Jews* (2012) and *Jews and The Civil War: A Reader* (2010). His award-winning *American Judaism: A History* (2004), was called "the single best description of American Judaism during its 350 years on American soil." Dr. Sarna will bring his breadth of knowledge about Jews and the military, World War II, and every aspect of American Jewish life and history to this project.

Beth S. Wenger is Professor of History and Director of the Jewish Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise* (1996), which explored ethnicity, class and gender during the 1930s and *The Jewish Americans: Three Centuries of Jewish Voices in America* (2007), the companion volume to the six-hour PBS documentary, for which she served as writer and a humanities adviser. Her most recent work, *History Lessons: The Creation of American Jewish Heritage* (2010), has helped shape our ideas about the development of Jewish patriotism in America, and the phenomenon of remembering Jewish war veterans. Her perspective as a social and cultural historian gives us insight onto the daily lives of Jewish Americans during the 1930s and 1940s, whose husbands, sons and brothers had gone off to war.

James E. Young is Distinguished University Professor of English and Judaic Studies, and Director of the Institute for Holocaust Genocide, and Memory Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He is the author of *At Memory's Edge: After-images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (Yale University Press, 2000), *The Texture of Memory* (Yale University Press, 1993), which won the National Jewish Book Award in 1994, and *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* (Indiana University Press, 1988). He is currently the Editor-in-Chief of *the Posen Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization*, a ten-volume anthology published by Yale University Press. Professor Young has written widely on the Holocaust, memorials, and national memory, and will contribute his expertise on World War II, and how Americans began to understand the Holocaust, and its impact on Jews in American society.

H. MEDIA TEAM

Producer/Director: Lisa Ades is a documentary filmmaker who has produced and directed films for PBS and cable television for more than 20 years. Her acclaimed film, *Miss America*, was funded by the NEH and was broadcast on the PBS series, *The American Experience*, in 2002. Her previous work includes producing with Ric Burns *New York*, a five part, ten-hour series (PBS, 1999), *The Way West*, a four-part, six-hour series, which received an Alfred I. DuPont Columbia University Award (PBS, 1995), and *The Donner Party*, which received a George Foster Peabody Award (PBS, 1992). At Orchard Films in New York, she produced numerous films for television including *Beauty in a Jar* (A&E, 2003), *In the Company of Women* (IFC, 2004) and *Fabulous! The Story of Queer Cinema* (IFC, 2006). Her most recent work includes producing and directing a seven part series on the history of the Jews of Syria for The Sephardic Heritage Museum in Brooklyn, NY.

Writer: Maia Harris has written and produced documentaries for national PBS broadcast for more than 20 years, received two Emmy nominations and two Emmy awards. Her previous work includes the NEH-supported series *The Italian Americans*, directed by John Maggio and Barak Goodman (PBS 2013), *Banished* (PBS 2008) directed by Marco Williams, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, and *No Job for a Woman*, also funded by the NEH. Other credits include *The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo* (PBS 2005); *Beyond Tara: The Extraordinary Life of Hattie McDaniel* (AMC

2001); *Storyville: The Naked Dance* (PBS 1998) and *Listening to Children: A Moral Journey with Robert Coles* (PBS 1995). Harris began her career on the civil rights television history, *Eyes on the Prize*. Her most recent work includes writing a seven-part series on the history of the Jews of Syria for The Sephardic Heritage Museum in Brooklyn, NY.

Producer: Amanda Bonavita has worked in documentary film and commercial television for the past decade. She began working with Lisa Ades as Coordinating Producer of the *Indie Sex* series (IFC, 2007). Currently, she is a producer of the *Syrian Jewish Community*, a seven-part documentary series on the history of the Jews of Syria. Bonavita oversaw the vast research, acquisition and filming for this project, which spans 700 years of history, and includes over 35,000 still photographs, thousands of hours of archival footage, and more than 300 on-camera interviews. She was responsible for locating and gathering the materials for the fourth episode of the series, about the Syrian American Jewish community's participation in World War II, which has afforded her a great understanding of the archival sources that are available for *Fighting on Two Fronts*.

Editor: Hope Litoff has edited award-winning documentaries for PBS, HBO, A&E and other broadcast television. She has a strong background in historical documentaries, beginning on Ken Burns's *The West* and was associate editor of the acclaimed documentary, *Blue Vinyl*. She has worked with director Lisa Ades for ten years on films including *Miss America*, *Beauty in a Jar* and *Indie Sex*. She most recently edited a documentary series on the Jews of Syria including an episode on Syrian American Jews in World War II, *The Syrian Jewish Community: The War Years 1939-1945*.

Cinematographer: Andrew Young is an award winning cinematographer with honors that include an Emmy Award for Outstanding Cinematography and three Excellence in Cinematography Awards at the Sundance Film Festival. He was director and cinematographer on the Academy Award nominated and Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner, *Children of Fate*. His innovative and beautiful cinematography has been featured in theatrical releases and on broadcast television, including Nature, National Geographic, Nova, The American Experience, the Discovery Channel and the BBC. He has worked with producers Lisa Ades and Amanda Bonavita on several projects, including the documentary series, *The Syrian Jewish Community*.

I. PROGRESS

The idea for this project began in the fall of 2011, while filmmakers Lisa Ades, Maia Harris and Amanda Bonavita were working on another documentary, *The Syrian Jewish Community: The War Years 1939-1945*, a history of the Syrian Jewish community of Brooklyn during World War II. Researching the history of this single community, we recognized that the stories of the men and women we had captured on film offered a new window on the Jewish American experience and a perspective on World War II that had not been heard before, and that it was time to tell the story of the half million Jewish Americans who served.

We contacted Deborah Dash Moore, author of *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation*, who confirmed that this subject had not yet been treated in a documentary film. We enlisted Moore as our chief humanities adviser, and began to conduct further research, expanding the proposed film to include the stories of women, Jewish activity on the home front, the response to the Holocaust, the liberation of the camps, the role of Jewish Chaplains, and more, placing the stories of the individual soldiers and their families in a rich historical context. Humanities advisors were enlisted throughout 2012, and a panel of scholars was assembled in the summer of 2012. Drawing on the textual and archival research already assembled for *The Syrian Jewish Community*, as well as identifying new interviews and research material, a treatment for the film was completed in December 2012.

During the NEH development period we intend to identify, pre-interview and conduct on-camera interviews with a select group of elderly men and women; expand and refine the humanities themes with the guidance of our advisors; add humanities advisors as needed to round out the panel; continue to amass textual and archival research, including archival stills and footage, personal memorabilia, oral histories, pre-recorded testimonies, newspaper accounts, diaries and letters; and create a film script for shooting, in collaboration with our advisors.

J. WORK PLAN

August 2013

- Enlistment of remaining humanities advisors
- Advisors review treatment, consult on themes, stories and potential interviews
- Research potential interviewees
- Continue visual and textual research, and data-basing materials
- Begin drafting script
- Fundraising for the film's production continues

September 2013

- Work on script continues
- Conduct telephone pre-interviews with GIs
- Conduct telephone interviews with advisors to incorporate into script
- Plan research trip to Washington, DC [National Museum of American Jewish History and Jewish War Veterans of the USA, and other archives]
- Continue visual and textual research, and data-basing materials
- Fundraising for the film's production continues

October 2013

- Conduct on camera interviews (GIs, interviewees of advanced age)
- Log and transcribe interviews
- Compile interviewee visual materials into database
- Work on script continues

- Research trip to locate archival materials: Washington, D.C. and additional travel
- Continue visual and textual research, and data-basing materials
- Fundraising for the film's production continues.

November 2013

- Draft script completed, submit to advisors for review
- Revise script based on advisors' input
- Continue visual and textual research, and data-basing materials
- Fundraising for the film's production continues

December 2013

- Complete film script
- Complete list of potential interviewees
- Complete visual and textual research, and data-basing materials
- Complete accounting for grant period
- Submit all deliverables to NEH

K. FUNDRAISING PLAN

This project is in its infancy, and as such, we are seeking initial funds from the NEH to develop the project. Additional fundraising will take place in 2013, and we intend to approach individuals, foundations and organizations in order to raise the \$700,000 required for the production of a feature-length documentary. Jewish foundations we will approach include the Skirball Foundation, the Lynn and Jules Kroll Fund for Jewish Documentary Film, The Posen Foundation, the Jewish Endowment Foundation, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, the Los Angeles Jewish Community Foundation, the Greenberg Philanthropic Fund, and others. Once the development/scripting phase is completed, we will work with PBS to continue to raise funds and secure advances on sales for video release and foreign broadcast. We intend to submit a proposal for production funding to the NEH in January, 2014.

L. ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Applicant organization: CITY LORE: The New York Center for Urban Folk Culture is a cultural center for the arts and humanities dedicated to the documentation, preservation and presentation of New York City and America's living cultural heritage. Founded in 1986, the City Lore staff includes folklorists, historians, anthropologists, and ethnomusicologists. In addition to staff projects, affiliated individuals and organizations work through City Lore to produce independent films, exhibits, and other media programs. City Lore has been the fiscal sponsor of numerous NEH projects, including *New York: A Documentary Film*. City Lore's projects encompass both the arts and humanities, and rest on a foundation of original research.

Production organization: TURQUOISE FILMS is the production company of filmmaker Lisa Ades (formerly of Orchard Films and Steeplechase Films), and is dedicated to producing high quality documentary films for broadcast on PBS and cable

television, as well as for international distribution. Ades has produced 20 hours of humanities based programming for public television and has received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities for projects including *Miss America, New York*, and *The Donner Party*. Turquoise Films is currently producing a 10-hour documentary history on the Jews of Syria for the Sephardic Heritage Museum in Brooklyn, New York.

M. LIST OF COLLECTIONS OF MATERIALS TO BE USED BY THE PROJECT

Interviews:

Contemporary interviews: in order to capture the stories of the remaining Jewish World War II veterans, we will utilize the vast resources of *The National Museum of American Jewish Military History* along with the *Jewish War Veterans of the USA* in Washington, D.C., who have access to all veterans' organizations and participating veterans and have agreed to help us contact their members as possible interview subjects.

Pre-recorded audio and video interviews: numerous Jewish American WWII testimonies exist at: *The Veterans History Project at the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress* (Washington, D.C.), *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (Washington, D.C.) [includes international database of oral testimonies], *USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education* (Los Angeles) [transcripts available at Columbia, NYU, and Mus. Of Jewish Heritage], *Museum of Jewish Heritage* (New York), *American Jewish Committee Oral History Library at the New York Public Library*, *Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University*, *The Betty H. Carter Women Veterans Historical Project* (Greensboro, NC), *John J. Mames Oral History Department at the Holocaust Memorial Center* (Farmington Hills, MI), *The Pritzker Military Library Stories of Service: Oral History Project* (Chicago) and *Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford* (Conn.). These collections also include personal films, photographs, memoirs, and artifacts specific to the Jewish experience in the U.S. military.

Archival stills and footage:

U.S. government records: every aspect of military life, from training to combat and post-war activity, as well as the occupation of the Axis countries and the DP camps was recorded by the U.S. government. This includes military religious services held around the world, such as the NBC broadcast of first Jewish service held in Germany since 1933. This material, recorded by the U.S. Army Signal Corps, as well as military records, maps and photographs, can be found at the *U.S. National Archives and Records Administration*, and is in the public domain. The *National Archives*, along with the *Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower Presidential Libraries*, also have materials on non-military government activities during the war, including the War Refugee Board.

U.S. military: general U.S. war materials can be found at *The Center for Military History*, *The National World War II Museum* (New Orleans), *National Museum of the*

U.S. Air Force (Washington, D.C.), *U.S. Naval Historical Center* (Washington, D.C.), *National Museum of the U.S. Navy* (Washington, D.C), and others. International sources include: *BundesArchiv* (German Federal Archive, which includes films & photos of Nazi atrocities taken by regime), *Imperial War Museum* (UK), *National Army Museum* (UK), *Archives Nationales* (France), *State Archives, Poland*, *Austrian State Archives*, *Archivio Centrale Dello Stato* (Italy) and others.

Jewish life in America: archival materials on anti-Semitism in the U.S. in the 1930s and Jewish civilian participation in World War II are located at the *American Jewish Historical Society* [which houses the archives of the UJA Federation, the Jewish Welfare Board and the American Jewish Congress], *National Museum of American Jewish History* (Philadelphia), *American Jewish Archives* (Cincinnati), *American Sephardi Federation* (NYC), *Brandeis University*, including *The National Center for Jewish Film* and the *Archives and Special Collections* (Waltham, MA), *Skirball Cultural Center* (LA), *Spertus* (Chicago), *Yeshiva University Museum* (NYC), and the *YIVO Institute* (NYC). As our characters emerge, we will also investigate local institutions to which their families belonged, such as synagogues and community centers. Archival photographs of Jewish communities on the home front can be found at the *Library of Congress* and the *Smithsonian Institution*, *Brooklyn Historical Society*, the *Brooklyn Public Library*, *The Bronx County Historical Society*, *The Museum of the City of New York*, *New York Public Library*, and the *New York Historical Society*, as well as local and state historical societies relevant to our characters.

Finally, the many Jewish organizations active in the period—lobbying for rescue and immigration reform--have their own archives, including the *American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives*, *Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society*, and *The Jewish Federations of North America*, along with the *Quakers' American Friends Service Committee* and the *International Red Cross*.

U.S. Rabbi Chaplains will be illustrated with the materials of the *Chaplain Regimental Museum Association*, *U.S. Army Chaplain Corps* and the *U.S. Army Chaplain Museum* (Fort Jackson, S.C.), and the *Immortal Chaplains Foundation*. Some chaplains' personal papers are held by the *Jewish Theological Seminary* (New York) and the *American Jewish Archives* (Cincinnati), and several of the institutions mentioned above include rabbi chaplains in their oral history collections.

The Jewish press: We will utilize headlines, articles and illustrations to tell the story of what Jewish Americans knew about Hitler's atrocities before and during the war. Some newspapers include *The Jewish Daily Forward*, *The Jewish Advocate*, *The Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin*, *The Day*, *Morning Journal*, *The Freiheit*, *The Chicago Jewish Chronicle*, *Jewish Exponent* and others. In addition, we will include community newsletters such as *The Community Bulletin* of the Syrian Jewish community in Brooklyn, who recorded their activities at home and abroad during the War.

The Holocaust and European Jewish communities: archival collections include: the *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (Washington, D.C.); *Yad Vashem Holocaust*

Memorial Museum, Central Zionist Archive, and Beit Hatfutsot (Israel); Leo Baeck Institute (New York); Jewish Museum Berlin, Munich Jewish Museum, Local Municipal Archives in Germany, such as StadtArchiv Euskirchen, and StadtArchiv Pforzheim; Museum of the History of Polish Jews; Auschwitz Foundation and Musée Juif de Belgique (Belgium); Jüdisches Museum der Stadt Wien and Arbeitskreis für Heimat-, Denkmal- und Geschichtspflege (Austria); Jewish Historical Museum (Netherlands); The Jewish Museum, Manchester Jewish Museum (UK); The Jewish Museum and Archives of Hungary; Dansk Jodisk Museum (Denmark); Jewish Museum Rome and Jewish Museum Venice (Italy); The Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum (Lithuania); Jewish Museum of Switzerland; Tuerk Musevileri Muzesi (Turkey); Chernivtsi Museum of Jewish History and Culture in Bukovina (Ukraine).

International Jewish military collections: materials about Jewish fighting men in other Allied forces include: the *Jewish Military Museum (UK), Jewish Canadian Military Museum, L'Union des Engages Volontaires Anciens Combatants Juifs (France).*

3. TREATMENT

Fighting on Two Fronts will unfold in chronological order, but will not attempt to retell the story of World War II. The film will follow the transformation of the soldiers and their Jewish American identity as they leave home and enter the war. Interwoven with their stories will be a picture of Jewish Americans back home, as they struggle to do what they can to fight Hitler from the home front. The film will not follow a small number of characters, but will create a more collective portrait, incorporating many different voices. The characters that follow are examples of the kinds of voices we will hear – to be further solidified as research and development continues.

Introduction: On September 1, 1939, the day that Hitler invaded Poland, a young American rabbi named Harold Saperstein returned home from a trip through the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. He had witnessed Nazi destruction firsthand, seen storm troopers swarming the streets of Prague, and wept at a ruined synagogue in Danzig. To Saperstein, as to everyone on the continent, it was clear that war was inevitable.

The film begins in a still isolationist United States, as World War II breaks out in Europe. We meet the young men who will soon become soldiers, against the backdrop of Jewish America in the 1930s. Through their eyes, the film will reveal the diversity of America's Jews at the start of the war – their varied political opinions, range of religious observance and their different degrees of understanding of the persecution of European Jews.

For 24-year-old Akiva Skidell, the invasion of Poland was a direct and personal threat. He had emigrated from Grodno as a teenager, leaving close family behind, including his widowed father. As the leader of a Labor Zionist Youth movement, he was also committed politically to Jews worldwide, and believed that American Jews should be responsible for their brethren overseas. On September 2, Skidell, his wife and their friends huddled around the radio, debating whether they should take part in this “war for Jewish survival.”

By 1939, Jews in America were better informed than most Americans about Hitler and his rabidly anti-Semitic agenda. Many received dire reports from family members in Europe. And the Jewish press, both English- and Yiddish-language, published articles about the persecution in Europe nearly every day, urging American Jews to take action.

Many Jews did protest. In 1933, when Hitler came to power, a coalition of organizations led by the Jewish War Veterans of America, launched a boycott of all German goods. The Jewish Labor Committee raised funds to bring more than 1000 refugees to America, mostly intellectuals, socialists and labor leaders from Germany and Eastern Europe. And in 1936, they staged a counter-Olympics, called the World Labor Athletic Carnival, to protest America's participation in Nazi Germany's Berlin Olympics.

Kurt Klein, age 19, had emigrated from Germany in 1937. Desperate to raise the funds to bring his parents to America, he worked two jobs, day and night. A year later, his parents' home was vandalized on Kristallnacht, when hundreds of Jewish stores and synagogues were looted and burned throughout Germany. Tens of thousands turned out in New York City to rally against the atrocities. Young men like Klein and Skidell took part in every protest, but could not help but wonder how they could combat such a powerful force so far away.

For Jews in America with close ties to Europe, the war loomed large. But for many American Jews, a generation or two removed from their homelands, the fighting seemed far away. These young men and women were “a cultural generation,” writes historian Beth Wenger, “born out of the process of scurrying between two worlds—the confined immigrant environment and the increasingly familiar American society.”

Nearly half of America’s Jews, more than two million, lived in New York City--more precisely, in Brooklyn or the Bronx. Martin Dash, age 19, lived in Brooklyn, “a world far removed from the violence in Europe,” writes historian Deborah Dash Moore, (the daughter of Martin Dash), in an enclave where everyone ate Jewish food and studied Hebrew after school, even if they did not keep kosher or consider themselves religious. But despite the fact that Jews were a majority in their neighborhoods, they remained a minority in America.

World War II, writes Moore, would make young men like her father “proud Americans, deepening their identification with the democratic ideals of the United States and strengthening their opposition to fascism.”

America Enters the War: On December 7, 1941, Victor Geller, a 16-year-old yeshiva student, was listening to the football game on the radio at Harry’s Luncheonette in Upper Manhattan, when the game was interrupted by a news flash: the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. In that moment, as he wrote later in his memoir, he realized that war was “no longer a spectator sport for Americans.” For Jewish Americans, we will learn in this chapter, their opportunity to fight Hitler had arrived. Through the eyes of characters like those described below, we will explore Jewish soldiers’ particular motivations and what distinguished them from their comrades in arms.

On the morning of December 8th, a young lawyer named Herbert Walters watched with envy as thousands of young men lined up outside the Federal Building, waiting to enlist. He wanted nothing more than to fight the Nazis, but he knew it would devastate his immigrant parents. For many Russian-Jewish immigrants, military service meant nothing but misfortune. In Russia, the tsar’s army would take Jewish boys for 25-year terms and do their best to convert them to Christianity. More than 200,000 Jewish men never returned home to their families, and many, like Walters’ parents, had fled to America to avoid conscription. After much soul-searching, Walters wrote to the draft board, asking to be called up. They complied, and Walters entered the army, serving in an anti-aircraft artillery unit.

Martin Dash felt no such conflict and so enlisted almost immediately, signing up for the Navy’s midshipman’s program. But the New York draft board rejected him as officer material, because, he suspected, they pegged him as a Jew. He managed to enroll in another program by traveling to Baltimore, and signing up there, where his swarthy (i.e., ethnic) features could have meant Cuban or Italian instead.

17-year-old Art Buchwald wanted desperately to enlist, but he was too young to do so without parental permission. He had grown up in foster homes, and had no parents – so he bribed a vagrant to forge his father’s signature, and became a Marine.

Hank Greenberg had been the first Major League player to be drafted, in 1940, during the peacetime draft. He was honorably discharged two days before Pearl Harbor, when all men over the age of 28 were released from service. But he voluntarily re-enlisted with the U.S.

Army Air Corps, declaring, “all of us are confronted with a terrible task – the defense of our country and the fight for our lives.”

Robert Weil, a recent German immigrant, also enlisted in the Army soon after the Pearl Harbor attack. On Kristallnacht in November 1938, he was thrown in jail by the Gestapo and sent to Dachau in a cattle car, but released because he already had immigration papers for the U.S. Three years later, he got his chance to fight. For him, the war was urgent and personal.

Henry Kissinger had fled the Nazis with his family in 1938, as a young teenager. In 1943, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and assigned to the infantry. But the military soon realized that German-Jewish refugees, with their language fluency and knowledge of the country, were a uniquely valuable resource. Kissinger, and thousands like him, were transferred to military intelligence.

Mollie Weinstein signed up later in the war, joining the brand-new Women’s Army Corps along with two of her best girlfriends. In the spring of 1944, she was sent to England to serve as a medical secretary, one of hundreds of women relieving soldiers from office work for combat duty on D-Day. In the next two years, Weinstein wrote more than 350 letters to her sister, who carefully saved them all.

More than half a million Jewish Americans fought in World War II. 11% of the U.S. Jewish population, or half of the Jewish men between the ages of 18 and 44 served in the war. More than 10,000 Jewish women served as well – signing up for the WACs, the WAVES and the Army Air Corps, as well as serving as nurses. These men and women stepped up to serve their country, their patriotism honed by their feelings as Jews. This war was a just war, a good fight, and most importantly—it was their war. Their uniquely Jewish commitment would shape their experience from the first days of training through the end of the war.

Training: For everyone, the first taste of military life was in training camps, scattered across America. For many young men and women, this was their first time leaving home.

For Jewish Americans, it was the first time they would realize that being Jewish meant being different. Their comfortable ethnic neighborhoods had shielded them, for the most part, from the rising tide of anti-Semitism in America. But in the military, as many soldiers found out the hard way, overt signs of Judaism were likely to provoke a fight. Through interviews with men and women like those below, we will understand the shock of their first encounters with prejudice and hate.

Jerome Minkow wore a Jewish star around his neck, a parting gift from his family, and he found himself in a brawl nearly every week. He was baffled at being singled out—he thought of himself as an American, but now he was an oddity and a target.

Ed Koch, former mayor of New York, sparred with a fellow soldier who called him a Yid. Koch was knocked down in each of three rounds, he remembers, “there’s no question that he won the fight. But the moral of the story is, there were two further weeks of basic training and there was never in the course of those two weeks an anti-Semitic slur.”

Paul Steinfeld was shaving one day next to a fellow GI from Pennsylvania, when the GI said to him: “Steiney, how come you’re in the infantry? I thought all of your race were in the

Quartermaster.” Since the Quartermaster supplied the troops with provisions, it was stereotypically identified with Jews, the closest thing to a peddler in the U.S. military. Steinfeld cocked his fists, ready to fight. The other GI backed off, saying, “How do I know? I never saw a Jew in my life ‘til I met you.”

For other ethnic groups, outside their own enclaves for the first time as well, the military was often their first exposure to American prejudice. Ed Imperato, an Italian-American soldier, remembers being called Dago and Wop, and feeling belittled by his Protestant comrades. And Judith Weiss Cohen, who enlisted in the Army and was stationed in Georgia, remembered “the blatant racism I saw in the South – the ‘Whites Only’ signs on water fountains, the Blacks moving to the backs of buses – was another shocking view of America. And, while serving my country in the Army I heard my first blatant nasty remarks about Jews.”

When America entered the war, public hate speech such as Father Coughlin’s radio show was banned as supporting the enemy. But the shadow of anti-Semitism, with its seeds of doubt and its capacity to divide and alienate, would follow the Jewish soldiers overseas.

Overseas: Jewish soldiers fought on every front. They held every rank and served in every role from behind the lines to the thick of battle. As our research continues, we will identify characters who represent this range of experiences, and how their Jewishness played a role in their daily life as soldiers, in their relationship to the enemy, and in their capacity and commitment to fight.

On March 1, 1943, Victor Geller joined the Army Reserves. Just 17 years old, he gave up the 4-D (minister of religion) deferment available to yeshiva students, and persuaded his mother to sign the necessary permission form. The next day, he read a front-page story in the *New York Times* about a huge rally to save Europe’s Jews—two million of whom, the *Times* reported, were already dead. This shocking news only deepened Geller’s commitment to fight—and he was thrilled and frightened to hear he had been assigned to the European theater. A sensitive young man devoted to Torah study, Geller would be transformed by his military service, learning a new, American masculinity: physical strength, courage and leadership.

In fact, many Jewish enlistees served as bomber pilots, one of the most dangerous jobs in the war. We will follow the story of Abe Abadi, a rabbi’s son from Brooklyn, as he decides to become a pilot, then flies 50 missions, twice the number required to get him back home. His missions included the bombing of German airfields, and he was awarded a Purple Heart. He recalls in an interview that every time he went up in an airplane, he would say a prayer.

Miranda Bloch, an aircraft radio mechanic, was one of only a few women Marines to be issued flight orders. Trained to fix radios midflight, she flew with the pilots during practice sessions before they left for combat.

Harold Freeman was inducted into the service in December 1943 and trained as a rifleman. Six months later, he embarked on his Atlantic crossing. “Last night, lying on my bunk, I pondered my fate,” he wrote to his wife, Bea. “I found myself considering this trip as a return to Europe. I considered how narrow the margin was between my being born in Pietrakov rather than in N.Y. and how tenuous the hold of the 2nd generation in the adopted fatherland.”

As the young men arrived in Europe, they had no choice but to acknowledge that they were Jews. Their religion, like that of all soldiers, was stamped on their dogtags – ‘H’ for Hebrew—so that they could receive the appropriate last rites, if needed. It also meant that if they were captured, the Nazis could identify them as Jews. This posed a terrifying dilemma: would they deny their Judaism to save their lives? If captured, would they throw away their dogtags or lie about their names?

At several German POW camps, known as Stalags, American Jewish soldiers were singled out and beaten. At Stalag VII-A, Jewish prisoners were segregated. At Stalag XIII-C, some were separated from the others and never seen again. But the worst circumstances were found at a camp called Berga, where 80 of the 350 American POWs were Jews.

In violation of the Geneva Convention, which prohibits POW labor from advancing the enemy war effort, the prisoners at Berga were forced to dig tunnels for an underground armaments factory, 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. Alfred Feldman, a POW at Berga, remembers: "We said, ‘This is against the Geneva Convention’. Well, the result of that was I think one of the guys got a bayonet through his side or something. They said, ‘This is our Geneva Convention, so you're going to work’. That's when we found out that we didn't have much choice." Feldman survived to tell his story, but at least 70 American POWs died at Berga from hard labor and unbearable conditions.

When Jewish soldiers captured Germans, they wondered how to treat them. When Paul Steinfeld took German prisoners, his gunner wanted to shoot them immediately, but Steinfeld stopped him. Later, however, he found out that these prisoners were members of the Waffen SS, some of the worst killers of Jews, and he could not help thinking that he should have shot them after all.

By this time in his service, Steinfeld felt he had come a long way, as a soldier and an American. After he was wounded in a tank attack, his comrades congratulated him, saying it was like “David and Goliath.” He was deeply moved that his fellow soldiers had come to accept him not only as a courageous fighting man, but also as a Jew. Fighting together, facing Hitler’s army together, the Americans had begun to overcome their own prejudices.

While serving in Guadalcanal, former boxer Barney Ross befriended a Catholic chaplain, who asked him on Christmas Eve, to play Christmas songs for the troops before they went into battle. After Ross played “Silent Night,” the men asked him for a Jewish song. He played “My Yiddishe Momma,” his theme music from the boxing ring. Newspapers reported that he had all the Marines in tears.

Many veterans recall that humor was the only way they could survive the terrors of war. Jerry Seinfeld’s father, Kalman, kept a box of jokes he heard while he was stationed in the Pacific. “In the army, that’s kind of how you got through it,” Seinfeld says. “People would tell jokes by the score, because what else are you going to do to maintain sanity?”

Actor Eli Wallach, a medic, helped write a comic play called *Is This the Army?* with the men playing various dictators. Wallach took a starring role, as Adolf Hitler. Mel Brooks (then Melvin Kaminsky), a combat engineer whose job was defusing landmines, became known as his barracks’ comedian, writing funny songs, like “When We Clean the Latrine” to the tune

of Cole Porter's 'Begin the Beguine.' Years later, Brooks would reach millions with his dark wartime humor, in skits like "Springtime for Hitler," in his blockbuster film, *The Producers*.

Others would record their war stories in journals, memoirs and fiction. One of the most successful was Herman Wouk, who served on a minesweeper in the Pacific, and transformed his experiences into the best-selling novels, *War and Remembrance* and *The Caine Mutiny*. As advisor Allan R. Millett writes, "the literati among the GI Jews (Norman Mailer, Irwin Shaw, Joseph Heller, and Herman Wouk) used their wartime experience as an instrument to critique the armed forces, the conduct of the war, and American society."

Observing Religion in the Military: In the face of constant death and destruction, the soldiers also often needed spiritual sustenance—and for that, they turned to the rabbi chaplains. The story of the rabbis who enlisted to serve their nation has rarely been told, and it will add an unusual spiritual dimension to the picture of war. Some left behind vivid memoirs and interview material – as the project develops, we will identify the most compelling of these remarkable individuals.

Nearly half of all American rabbis offered to fight in World War II – and 311 of them were accepted as chaplains. They ranged in religious observance from orthodox to reform, and like all other soldiers, they represented a diversity of backgrounds.

Perhaps the most famous was Rabbi Alexander Goode, one of four chaplains on a troopship called the *Dorchester* torpedoed by a German U-boat during an Atlantic crossing in February 1943. The explosion had smashed two lifeboats, so there were not enough left to rescue everyone. The chaplains agreed to give up their spots, and as the ship sank, they linked arms and offered up their prayers – in Latin, English and Hebrew. The chaplains received posthumous honors for bravery, and their memory was preserved on a postage stamp. The deaths of these four men—two ministers, a priest and a rabbi—would come to symbolize America's religious ecumenicism.

To build unity among the soldiers, to raise morale and temper divisiveness, the U.S. military deliberately introduced a policy of religious tolerance. It was the chaplains' responsibility to promote ecumenical worship, incorporating Jewish, Catholic and Protestant practices. Every chaplain was required to serve all faiths, and to create ceremonies that included both Jewish and Christian soldiers. From this newly integrated religion would emerge what is now known as "the Judeo-Christian tradition," a civil religion for all Americans, "emphasizing the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man," writes Moore.

Rabbi Judah Nadich, who enlisted soon after Pearl Harbor, was the first Jewish chaplain to be sent overseas, where he was put in charge of all religious supplies for the American army in Europe. In his memoir, he writes that he was "the world's largest distributor of rosary beads, mass wine, [and] New Testaments," as well as Jewish religious supplies. This "made an enormously important symbolic statement," writes historian Jonathan Sarna. "At a time when Jews throughout Europe faced persecution...America demonstrated its commitment to religious liberty by placing a rabbi in a position of high responsibility."

Harold Saperstein, a Reform rabbi from Long Island, had enlisted only after a long debate with himself, finally deciding that this fight was worth putting aside his pacifism. At first, he

was concerned that serving all faiths might limit his effectiveness as a rabbi, but he later came to appreciate the power of the military's official inclusion of Judaism.

Rabbi Chaplain W. Gunther Plaut had fled Germany for the United States in 1935. The day after he received his U.S. citizenship in 1943, he enlisted in the Army, and served as a frontlines chaplain in Belgium and Germany.

In addition to their ecumenical duties, rabbi chaplains encouraged expressions of Judaism, from private prayer to holiday services, sometimes driving thousands of miles to offer the comfort of a Sabbath ritual. The Jewish Welfare Board provided Hebrew prayer books, candles for Shabbat and matzos for Passover. Jewish GIs valued this explicit acknowledgement that they were accepted by the military as Americans and as Jews.

Some soldiers left the base to share Sabbath dinner or holidays with local Jewish communities. Meyer Cohen remembers taking part in familiar services in Teheran, where he felt honored to be invited to the Torah to say a prayer. And David Macarov was welcomed to the holiday table of a Jewish family in India, where he was amazed and pleased to realize that there were any Jews at all. These experiences stretched Americans' idea of what Judaism was and made them feel connected to Jews around the world.

As officers in uniform, rabbi chaplains offered many soldiers a new ideal of what a Jewish man could be. Harry Gersh recalls: "most of the boys had never seen a real live rabbi before. Most of them had never thought of one. If they had run across the word it evoked a mental picture of some anti-Semitic stereotype...[and] here was a man, an officer...whom the chief made way for and said 'sir' to, a man who calmly walked forward and said 'I am a rabbi.'"

The military's overt recognition and encouragement of Judaism eased the sting of individual soldiers' anti-Semitism and made the Jewish soldiers feel like they belonged.

Continued Protest in America: Meanwhile, back home, Hitler's plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe had made it into the mainstream media, and Jewish groups increased their efforts to persuade the U.S. government to intervene. In March 1943, Peter Bergson, a Zionist from Palestine, put on a dramatic production called "We Will Never Die," which played to large audiences in six cities, including Washington DC, where it was seen by some 300 members of Congress.

Hundreds of orthodox rabbis marched on Washington and Rabbi Stephen Wise of the American Jewish Congress (AJC) urged Roosevelt's Jewish cabinet members to pressure the President to help.

Finally, in January 1944, President Roosevelt established the War Refugee Board (WRB), charged with rescuing Jews from the Nazis. Scholars estimate that 200,000 lives were saved by the WRB, but it was tragically too little, too late.

The question of what Americans knew about the Holocaust has been covered extensively and we will not explore its intricacies here. But it will be woven throughout this story as an underlying thread, reminding us of the urgency of the young men and women's fight.

Liberation and War's End: Throughout 1944, as the Allies continued their march through Europe, more and more Jewish refugees came out of hiding. Rabbi chaplains went out of their way to help, establishing an ongoing relationship between Jewish Americans and the victims of Nazi persecution. Chaplain Abraham Haselkorn established an orphanage for French Jewish children hidden on farms since the deportations of 1942, raising \$5000 from Jewish soldiers at High Holiday services.

Chaplain Herman Dicker enlisted Jewish soldiers to clean up a synagogue in Metz, France that the Nazis had used as a brothel. And Mollie Weinstein helped re-dedicate the only synagogue left in Frankfurt. As research continues, we will further explore stories like these: how Jewish Americans helped restore devastated Jewish communities, adding a spiritual richness to the story of the liberation of Europe.

On October 29, 1944, Americans listening to NBC radio heard an announcer introduce "a special broadcast of historic significance: The first Jewish religious service broadcast from Germany since the advent of Hitler." 50 Jewish soldiers had gathered at the site of a destroyed synagogue in Aachen. Max Fuchs, who had emigrated from Poland to the U.S. at age 12, led the men in singing, and the sound of artillery shells could be heard exploding in the background. Now 92 and living in Manhattan, Fuchs remembers that as the service came to an end, he looked out at the 50 Jewish American soldiers bowed in prayer, and realized that every single one of them had lost family to the Nazis.

In a show of brotherhood, the service was followed by comments from Catholic and Protestant chaplains. "One of the great fruits born of this war," said Father Edward J. Waters, "is religious freedom for all men."

By late 1944, rumors of Hitler's system of concentration camps were circulating everywhere. Soviet troops had discovered the first Nazi death camps in Poland, but the Germans had cleaned them up before the Allies arrived, so the Soviet reports were met with skepticism.

In the spring of 1945, American troops stumbled upon Ohrdruf, the first camp that still contained prisoners and corpses. Despite ongoing news reports of Hitler's atrocities, the soldiers were completely unprepared for what they found.

A few days before the Americans arrived, the Nazis had rounded up all the able-bodied prisoners and marched them off to Buchenwald, leaving the rest to die of starvation. Those who were still alive were shot in the back moments before the Allies opened the gates.

Private Sol Tannenbaum remembered: "I was one of the first people into the camp. I heard the sound of shots, which we thought might have been enemy resistance but turned out to be guards shooting the inmates. We captured the guards. They never had a chance to kill again. All I can remember is the total shock and revulsion at what I saw."

On April 4, 1945, American forces, led by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, arrived at Buchenwald, the largest concentration camp on German soil. Horrified beyond description at what he saw, he ordered all troops in the area to come and see it for themselves. "We are told that the American soldier does not know what he is fighting for," he said. "Now at least, he will know what he is fighting against." He also required that all military camera units and all civilian news media visit as well and record what they saw.

Many of the liberating soldiers took their own amateur photographs of the camps. Some posed with guns, in front of unidentifiable buildings. Some photographed the piles of bodies and emaciated survivors. These straightforward snapshots will be interwoven with the more familiar, professionally recorded footage, allowing us to see the horrors directly through the soldiers' eyes.

Some American soldiers who had been imprisoned in concentration camps themselves were also, remarkably, part of their liberation. Willy Herbst, a German-born American GI, remembers entering Dachau: "When I arrived, bodies were still lying around; the sight was horrible. Even though I had been in a concentration camp before, I never realized what might have been in store for me...My sister and everyone on my father's side was killed at Dachau."

Robert Weil, who had been imprisoned in Dachau, was part of the liberation of Woebbelin, where he "found 1500 walking skeletons and thousands of emaciated bodies."

But in the midst of the horror, the Jewish soldiers were not alone. Radio operator David Cohen remembers "a camaraderie in our division that didn't know from Jew or Christian...the Catholic chaplain was crying [and] said the Kaddish in Hebrew" and the "officers and men had the same feeling."

Rabbi chaplains began to arrive at the camps soon after liberation, sent by their commanders because they could speak to the survivors in Yiddish. Three rabbis arrived at Dachau within days of its liberation. Immediately, Rabbi Eli Bohnen entered the barracks and announced in Yiddish, "I am an American rabbi..." The survivors began to wail and cry, to reach out and kiss the chaplains' hands, as if now, they could finally believe they were free. Bohnen listened to the inmates' stories, wrote letters to relatives in the United States, and chanted Hebrew memorial prayers.

A few days later, Chaplain David Eichhorn arrived, bringing with him a Torah scroll for the survivors—hidden by an official in Munich during Kristallnacht. His plan was to hold services the following day, but word got out that the Polish inmates planned to disrupt them. Horrified, Lieutenant Colonel George Stevens, a Hollywood director in charge of the Signal Corps unit at Dachau, complained to an Army officer. The service was held—and photographed—as planned, under the protection of American soldiers.

Chaplain Abraham Klausner entered Dachau several weeks later, and quickly realized how crucial it was to locate the relatives of those who survived. He decided to publish a list of all of the survivors and distribute it throughout the world. In late June 1945, the first volume of *Shearith Hapletah (Saving of the Remnants)* was published, to enormous demand.

DP Camps, or the chaplains stay on: For most Jewish soldiers, their duties were over with the end of the war in Europe. But a dedicated group of rabbi chaplains would stay on through the Allied occupation of Germany and Austria to fight for the lives and the rights of the Jewish survivors now living in displaced persons camps.

Most of the Jews liberated from concentration returned to their countries to look for their families and reclaim their possessions. But more than 100,000 refused to go home. With

nowhere to go, they were provided with temporary shelter at Displaced Persons camps set up by the Allied occupying army.

Food was scarce, medical care was lacking, and for fear of maintaining Hitler's racial policies, the American military deliberately chose not to separate out Jewish survivors. And so Jews recently freed from concentration camps were imprisoned again--under guard, behind barbed wire, crowded in alongside anti-Semitic Gentiles, subject to slurs and violence. One report declared: "We appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except that we do not exterminate them."

Risking court-martial, the chaplains managed to gather food and supplies, often with the help of Jewish soldiers in the occupying army. They solicited food and religious articles from their congregations back home in America, receiving as many as five tons of packages in a single day. They stole from warehouses filled with confiscated German goods, and even forced German farmers at gunpoint to give up their livestock and vegetables. And they lobbied the U.S. government for change.

In August 1945, President Truman, shocked and angry to hear of the inhuman conditions, appointed Rabbi Judah Nadich to advise General Eisenhower how to improve the situation. Among other things, Nadich made sure that former Nazis were removed from among the Jewish DPs, and that the barbed wire was taken down.

Eventually, the military agreed to set up separate camps and hospitals for Jews. There, the chaplains led Torah classes and services, and encouraged the DPs to fight for their right to settle in Palestine. They gathered weapons from Jewish GIs for the Palmach, the underground Jewish army in Palestine, and helped them smuggle the survivors across the Mediterranean Sea. Slowly, in the words of Chaplain Abraham Klausner, "a new faith was born. We shall live again, and that life will be of our own making."

Coming Home: Jewish soldiers would return home with a newfound confidence, and make their way into the institutions of mainstream American life. They would attend college on the GI Bill, they would move their families to the suburbs and the Sunbelt, leaving their ethnic enclaves behind. After the war, Jews finally had the standing they always wanted. As Deborah Dash Moore has written "recognition and implementation of the Judeo-Christian tradition by the military assured Judaism a place in the religious life of American democracy." Fighting as Americans and as Jews had infused them with a new sense of belonging, their national and religious identities melded into one. As our characters emerge, we will hear individual voices here too, of personal transformations after the war.

These young men and women had fought both to preserve democracy and for the liberation of European Jews—and now they would fight for the rights of Jews at home, and for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. In the decades to come, they would take a stand against bigotry in all its forms, holding America to its promise of tolerance for all religions, races and creeds, fighting alongside African Americans against job and housing discrimination and for civil rights. In August 1945, the American Jewish Congress called for "full equality in a free society," committing itself to a broader civil rights struggle, applying what Jewish veterans had learned in uniform to the expression of Jewish life in America. The transformation of Jews from immigrants to Americans was finally complete.