

# Sending teachers to Yad Vashem shapes minds of future leaders

As acts of intolerance and anti-Semitism continue to taint our society, it was most refreshing to attend a gathering at the Montreal home of Thomas and Riva Hecht last week for a look at what their marvelous program with educators is doing to shape the minds of our leaders of tomorrow.



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The Hechts have been spearheading the Teaching of the Holocaust for Educators ([www.t-h-e-program.org](http://www.t-h-e-program.org)) in Israel for almost a decade, sponsoring scholarships so that teachers can take part each summer in a professional development program under the direction of the Faculty of the Yad Vashem Seminars for Educators from Abroad, International School for Holocaust Studies. The goal is to provide professional development activities to teachers for teaching about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism to students in the youth sectors. Each recipient is asked to create at least one teaching unit or module developed within the context learned.



Three of this year's teachers who received scholarships to the Teaching of the Holocaust for Educators program in Israel from Thomas and Riva Hecht (second and third from the left) surrounded by teachers Richard Owendyk (left), Jeffrey Pinsky (second from right) and Pierre Picard (right). (Photo: Mike Cohen)

This is the ninth year for the program, with 29 teachers having gone through it with full scholarships.

Not only do the Hechts personally sponsor at least three teachers a year, they have also brought other community leaders into the fold to fund an additional six individuals. With the exception of West Island Montreal Drama Teacher Jeffrey Pinsky and Trafalgar School for Girls Teacher Libby Fainsilber, the other recipients this year are not Jewish. That has mostly been the case since the program's inception. It is

the perfect formula for a teacher to come up with new and creative ways to work Holocaust education into their curricula. Vincent Gagnon is an arts and French teacher in an East End public school in Montreal called Vincent Massey Collegiate. He was so driven by his 2013 visit to Israel that he has come up with a wide array of activities to inspire his students to better understand the Holocaust and why such a tragedy should never occur again.

Richard Owendyk teaches the history of Quebec and Canada, as well as the contemporary

world, at Marymount Academy International in Montreal. This is a school with students of all religions, with some from other countries.

"At a diversely populated high school like Marymount Academy International I am in a unique position to further integrate teaching of the Holocaust into my classroom," he said. "Our school is a member of the International Baccalaureate Organization and the philosophy of global citizenship is already a central theme for both our students and teachers."

Pinsky, whose late grandfather was a Holocaust survivor, has few Jewish students in his classes.

"My aim is to use what would be learned at Yad Vashem to create units of study with my Secondary 1 class through five drama classes that focus on the themes of survival, persecution and freedom."

Six of this year's participants are French speaking from heavily francophone educational institutions. There are no Jewish students in their classes. In a province still reeling from an intolerant former Parti Québécois government, which divided the population with its controversial Charter of Values, the more youngsters who learn about the evils of the Nazis the more understanding they will become.

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## JERUSALEM

# Yad Vashem recognizes first Righteous Among the Nations from Peru: Jose Maria Barreto

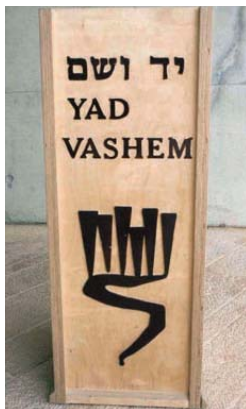
Yad Vashem has posthumously recognized Jose Maria Barreto of Peru as Righteous Among the Nations. This is the first Peruvian to be so recognized.

Barreto served as a diplomat in Switzerland and used his position to attempt to rescue Jews during the Holocaust. A ceremony honouring Barreto will be held at a later date.

By 1938, the government of Peru had given instructions to all of its consulates in Europe not to issue visas to foreign immigrants, with an emphasis on barring Jews in particular.

Abraham Silberschein, the head of RELICO, a Jewish relief organization in Switzerland funded by the World Jewish Congress, originally approached Barreto, the consul general of Peru in Geneva, asking him to issue Peruvian passports for Jews under German occupation.

The Swiss police asked for clarifications from the Peruvian embassy in summer 1943



to explain the issuing of a Peruvian passport to a German Jew by the name of Gunther Frank.

Barreto responded in a letter to the Peruvian ambassador that he had issued 27 Peruvian passports to 58 Jews (including 14 children) at the request of the 'Intellectual Refugee Protection Committee' to save the lives of people in German

concentration camps expected to be sent to death.

After the incident came to the attention of the Peruvian foreign minister, the ministry ordered the cancellation of the passports issued and closed the Peruvian consulate in Geneva. In addition, Barreto was fired from his position and dismissed from Peru's foreign ministry.

In a letter written on August 27, 1943, Silberschein described Barreto's noble efforts: "Mr. Barreto, deeply moved by the suffering of millions of human beings in the occupied countries, wished to participate in helping to alleviate the plight of these innocent people and decided to agree and provide us with a certain number of passports so that we could send them to different persons in the countries under German control. Mr. Barreto was convinced that by this highly humane deed he would save a number of people."

# Palestinian envoy to Britain: PA should recognize Jewish state

(JNS.org) – The Palestinian envoy to Great Britain has partnered with an Israeli professor to argue that the Palestinian Authority (PA) must recognize Israel as a Jewish state in exchange for Israel recognizing a Palestinian state.

Envoy Manuel Hassassian and Prof. Raphael Cohen-Almagor wrote an article for the quarterly publication Fathom in which they propose, "Israel shall recognize the State of Palestine. Palestine shall recognize the Jewish State of Israel."

The authors also argue that Israel should be entitled to annex parts of the West Bank as part of a mutually agreed land swap deal.

"The major settlement blocs – Maaleh Adumim, Givat Zeev, Gush Etzion, Modiin Illit and Ariel – which account for approximately 70 per cent of the Jewish population in the West Bank and for less than four per cent of its territory, may be annexed to Israel upon reaching an agreement with the PA as part of the land swap equal in size and quality. Border adjustment



A Palestinian envoy to Britain wrote that the PA should recognize Israel as a Jewish state, in contrast with recent statements of PA President Mahmoud Abbas (above). (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

must be kept to the necessary minimum and must be reciprocal," they wrote.

The argument is a departure from the recent statements of PA President Mahmoud Abbas, who has said "there is no way" that the Palestinians would accept a Jewish state.

# Nazi seizure of stores garners Jewish family \$68 million judgment

(JNS.org) – A court in Berlin ordered Germany to compensate the descendants of the Jewish owners of a department store chain that was seized by Nazis with an additional 50 million euros (\$68 million), The Associated Press reported.

The Schocken's chain of stores in the Saxony region was seized by the Nazis in the 1930s.

The descendants, who reside in Israel and the US, were already paid 15 million euros for one of the seized buildings in the 1990s.

One of the buildings that held one of the family's stores, built in the city of Chemnitz by architect Erich Mendelsohn in 1930, now houses the German State Museum of Archaeology.