



Muslims Who Saved Jews During The Holocaust

Discovering Albania, Celebrating Albanians

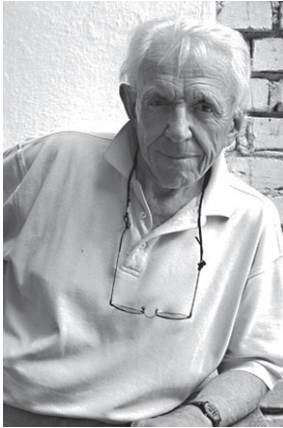
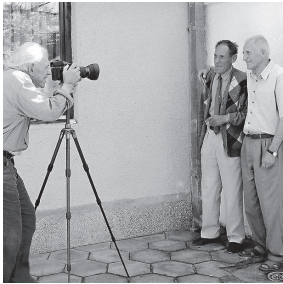
Winter 2025



Cover: Mustafa Rezniki, right, and his son,
holding the Albanian flag.

Besa: Muslims Who Saved Jews During the Holocaust

Learn more about the important stories of Muslims who saved Jews during the Holocaust; and Besa, the code of honor shared by all Albanians, that instructs that a stranger in need who knocks on your door is your brother, and you shall serve and protect him, even at the risk to your own life.



PHOTOGRAPHER
NORMAN H. GERSHMAN

PHOTO EXHIBIT

Besa: Muslims Who Saved Jews During the Holocaust

The Photography of Norman H. Gershman

January 2, 2025 through March 31, 2025
Main Library Second Floor Gallery

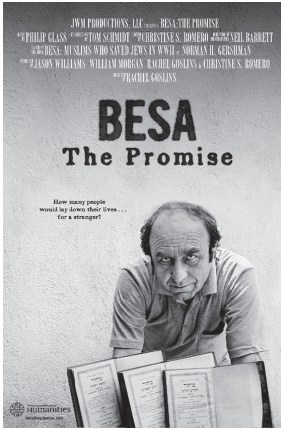
Norman H. Gershman, the acclaimed Jewish American photographer, studied with and was influenced by the works of the photographers Ansel Adams, Roman Vishniac, Arnold Newman and Cornell Capa. Ultimately, Gershman developed a personal style focusing on portraiture in which he lent a personal touch emphasizing the special personality of each subject. His approach was not taking pictures but capturing stories. Each of his photos reveals the soul of the subject.

Upon first learning of the stories of Muslims saving Jews during the Holocaust, Gershman was captivated. Over a five-year period, Gershman travelled to Albania and sought out, photographed and collected these powerful and moving stories of righteous Muslims and their heroism. He published these photographs in his book, *Besa: Muslims Who Saved Jews in World War II*.

The Lakewood Public Library is honored to exhibit a selection of Norman H. Gershman's photographs in the Main Library Second Floor Gallery. These photographs, curated by Yad Vashem-The World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, are on loan from the Dr. Bernard Heller Museum at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City.



BESA: MUSLIMS WHO SAVED JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST



PRESENTATION AND DOCUMENTARY

***Besa: The Promise* (2012)**

Presented by Professor Mehnaz M. Afridi

author of *Shoah Through Muslim Eyes*

Directed by Stuart Huck

Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

(86 minutes)

Main Library Auditorium

This film follows the important stories and moving photographs contained in Neil H. Gershan's critically acclaimed book, *Besa: Muslims who Saved Jews During World War II*. A selection of original Gershan photographs is on display at the Main Library Gallery and this documentary provides context to the exhibition.

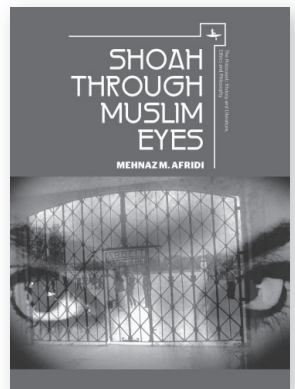
Join Dr. Afridi for an introduction of this documentary, and a discussion of her work to combat prejudice, genocidal ideologies, apathy and Holocaust denial.

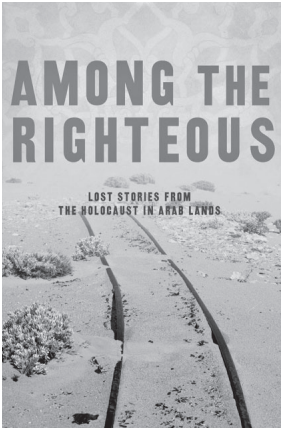
She will also discuss her book, *Shoah Through Muslim Eyes* (Academic Studies Press, 2017); the stories of heroic Muslims and righteous Albanians who risked their lives to protect and shelter Jews during the Holocaust; and the relevance these important stories of heroism and humanity have today.

Dr. Mehnaz M. Afridi is a Holocaust scholar and the Director of the Holocaust, Genocide and Interfaith Education Center at Manhattan College. As a Muslim, Dr. Afridi brings an important perspective to remembering the Holocaust.



DR. MEHNAZ M. AFRIDI





PRESENTATION AND DOCUMENTARY

Among the Righteous: Lost Stories from the Holocaust in Arab Lands (2010)

Presented by Dr. Ori Soltes and Dr. Zeki Saritoprak

Directed by William Cran

Saturday, February 1, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

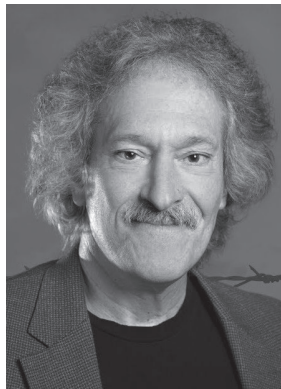
(60 minutes)

Main Library Auditorium

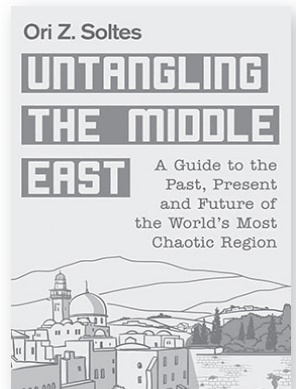
Did any Arabs save Jews during the Holocaust? That's the question author Robert Satloff had in mind when he set out to discover the lost, true stories of survival, courage and betrayal in Arab lands during World War II.

The truth is remarkable: not only did Jews in Arab lands suffer many of same elements of persecution as Jews in Europe—arrests, deportations, confiscations and forced labor—but there were also hopeful stories of righteous Arabs reaching out to protect them.

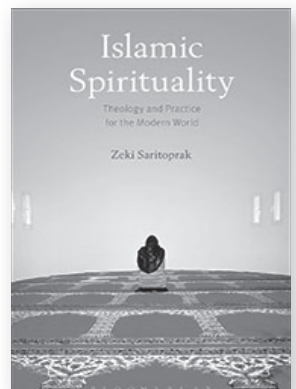
Join Dr. Ori Soltes, Professor at the Center of Jewish Civilization at Georgetown University, and Dr. Zeki Saritoprak, the Beddiuzzaman Said Nursi Chair in Islamic Studies at John Carroll University, for an introduction of the documentary, a discussion of Muslim-Jewish relations, and their answers to the compelling question: What relevance do the important stories of Muslims saving Jews during the Holocaust have today?



DR. ORI SOLTES

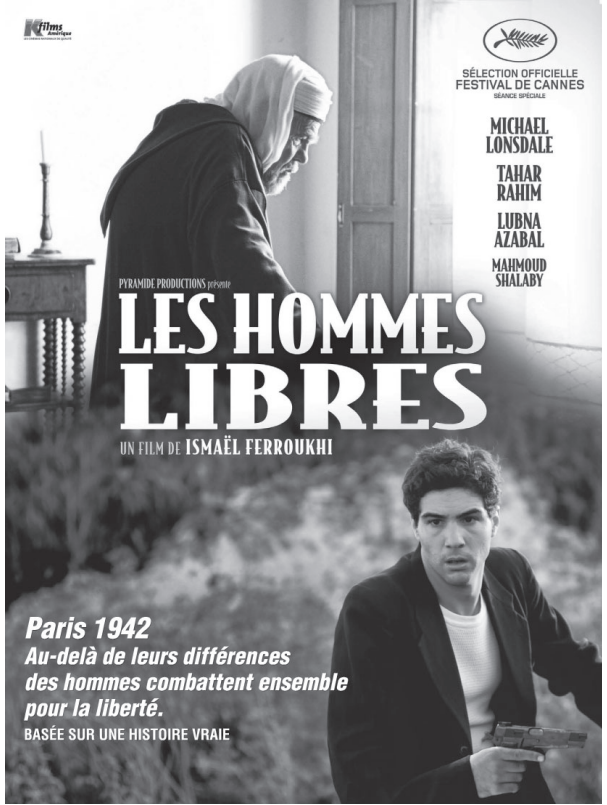
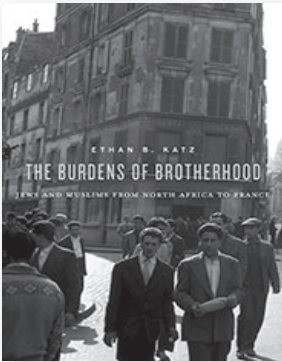


DR. ZEKI SARITOPRAK





DR. ETHAN KATZ



PRESENTATION AND FILM

Les Hommes Libres/The Free Men (2011)

Presented by Dr. Ethan Katz

Directed by Ismaël Ferroukhi

Sunday, February 16, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. (99 minutes)

Main Library Auditorium

This French war drama recounts the largely untold story about the role that Algerian and other Muslims in Paris played in the French Resistance and as rescuers of Jews during the German occupation (1940–1944).

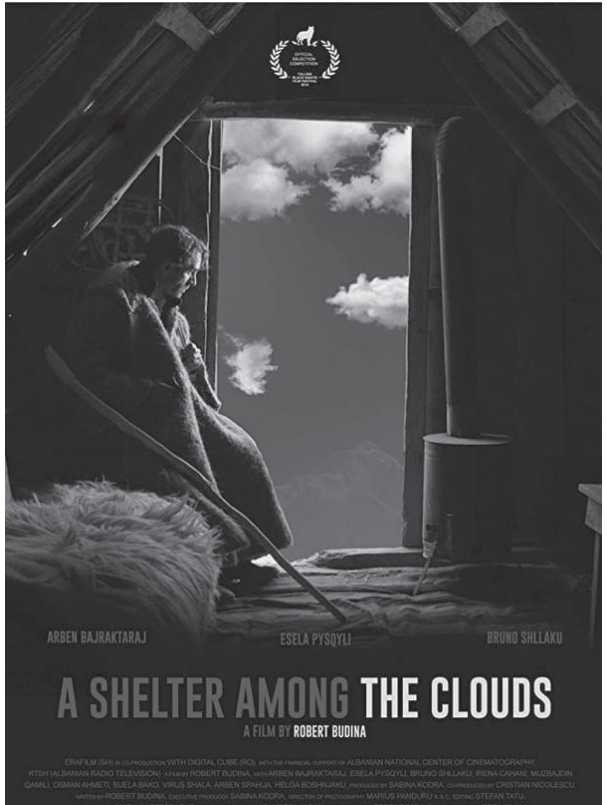
The film features two historic figures: Si Kaddour Benghabrit, rector of the Grand Mosque of Paris, and Salim Halali, an Algerian Jewish singer. Tahar Rahim stars as a young Algerian and Michael Lonsdale as the rector.

French with English subtitles.

Join Dr. Ethan Katz, Professor in the Department of History at the University of California, Berkeley and the author of *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Harvard University Press, 2015), for an introduction of the film and a discussion of Muslim-Jewish relations in North Africa and France and the stories of Muslims saving Jews during the Holocaust.



DR. CHRISTOPHER KINLEY



PRESENTATION AND FILM

A Shelter Among the Clouds (2018)

Presented by Dr. Christopher Kinley

Directed by Robert Budina

Saturday, February 22, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. (85 minutes)

Main Library Auditorium

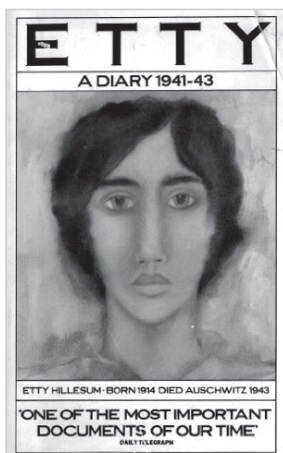
Encore Screenings:

Wednesday, March 5, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, March 23, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

This film follows Besnik, a lonely shepherd and devoted Muslim, haunted by unfulfilled love. He is the son of a Catholic mother and formerly Communist father whom he takes care of in an Albanian village in the mountains where Christians and Muslims have found a way to co-exist peacefully. This film, which captures the beauty of Albania and Albanians, is based on events that occurred in 1470 in Shkodra, Albania, when the Muslim vizier granted Catholics permission to share and use a mosque as their church once a week, because the closest church was too distant.

Join Albanian studies scholar Christopher Kinley, Ph.D. for an exploration of Albania—a small, beautiful and mountainous country in Europe—and a celebration of its multi-religious people.



SUSAN STEIN



THEATER/ENGAGING FAMILIES

***Etty: If I Should Not Survive,
A One Woman Play***

Performed by Susan Stein

Directed by Austin Pendleton

Sunday, March 9, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. (55 minutes)

Main Library Auditorium

This stage production tells the story of Ety Hillesum and her struggle to sustain humanity in the face of unspeakable brutality and inhumanity. With her writing and a wry sense of humor, Ety tells of the life she is living—her loves, her work, her life lived in the moment.

Adapted and performed by Susan Stein and directed by the acclaimed actor, director and playwright Austin Pendleton. *Etty* challenges us to rethink questions of resistance, responsibility and humanity.



PRESENTATION AND DOCUMENTARY

***Enemy of the Reich: The Noor Inayat Khan Story* (2014)**

Presented by Dr. Shrabani Basu

Directed by Robert H. Gardner

Saturday, March 22, 2025 at 2:00 p.m. (55 minutes)

Main Library Auditorium

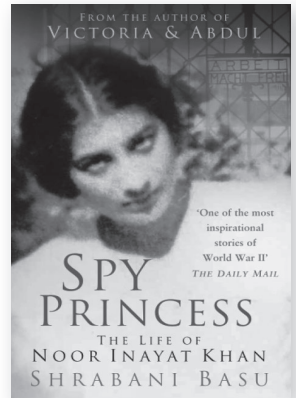
This docu-drama brings to life the story of a young Muslim woman's extraordinary courage tested in the crucible of Nazi-occupied Paris.

Noor Inayat Khan, a Sorbonne-educated musician and author, joined Britain's Women's Auxiliary Air Force and trained as a wireless operator. In early 1943, she began her assignment as a covert agent with the Special Operations Executive (SOE) working with the French Resistance. Betrayed by a French collaborator, Khan resisted brutal interrogation by the Gestapo, escaping twice, only to be recaptured and sent to Germany where she was executed at infamous Dachau concentration camp.

Join Dr. Shrabani Basu, author of *Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan* (The History Press, 2006) and principal of the Noor Inayat Khan Memorial Trust, for an introduction of the documentary, a discussion of the life and legacy of Noor Inayat Khan, and questions and answers. Dr. Basu will be joining us live from London, England.



DR. SHRABANI BASU





DOCUMENTARY

Rescue in Albania (2012)

Directed by Alush Gashi

**Continuous Screening January 1, 2025 through
March 30, 2025 (27 minutes)**

Main Library Second Floor Gallery

This short documentary film explores the rescue of Jews in Albania during World War II. Jewish survivors of the Holocaust speak about the nobility of the Albanian people who put their own lives in danger to save those of their visitors.

A Jewish Survivor's Praise of Albania

Fairwell Albania. You have given me so much: hospitality, refuge, friends, and adventure.

Farewell, Albania. One day I will tell the world how brave, fearless, strong, and faithful your sons are; how death and the devil can't frighten them. If necessary, I'll tell how they protected a refugee and wouldn't allow her to be harmed even if it meant losing their lives.

The gates of your small country remained opened, Albania. Your authorities closed both eyes, when necessary, to give poor, persecuted people another chance to survive the most horrible of wars.

Albania, we survived the siege because of your humanity. We thank you.

Irene Grunbaum, *Escape through the Balkans: The Autobiography of Irene Grunbaum* (University of Nebraska Press, 1996)

Discovering Albania, Celebrating Albanians.

In today's diverse world, understanding and appreciating different cultures is more important than ever. Join us as Albanian culture, folklore and tradition come to life with programs, stories, crafts and activities.



BESA

A CODE OF HONOR



ALBANIA PROGRAM

Learn About Albania Scavenger Hunt for Youth of All Ages

Saturday, February 1, 2025 through
Monday, March 31, 2025
Main Library and Madison Branch

Discover many different aspects of everyday life in Albania by hunting for signs throughout the children's area of the Library. Enter your scavenger hunt sheet into a drawing to win a prize.

No registration required.



ALBANIA PROGRAM

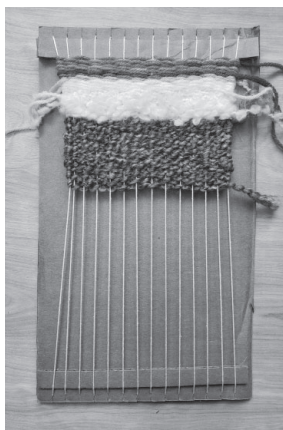
Davul Drums and Albanian Music for Students in Second through Eighth Grade

Monday, January 27, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
Main Library Activity Room

Thursday, January 30, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
Madison Branch Youth Program Room

Davul drums are instruments played in the Balkans region during traditional folk songs and dances. Listen to traditional Albanian songs while making your own colorful drum inspired by those used in Albania and create music of your own.

No registration required.



ALBANIA PROGRAM

Albanian Folk Weaving for Students in Second through Eighth Grade

Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
Main Library Activity Room

Thursday, February 6, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
Madison Branch Youth Program Room

In Albanian culture, fabrics are traditionally made by weaving clothes using looms. Albanian folk dress is often decorated with symbolic elements of Illyrian antique pagan origin, like suns, eagles, moons, stars and snakes. Students will have fun creating a unique woven piece and learning about Albania.

No registration required.



ALBANIA PROGRAM

Albanian Dordolec Dolls for Students in Second through Eighth Grade

Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
Main Library Activity Room

Wednesday, February 12, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
Madison Branch Youth Program Room

Discover the unique tradition behind Albanian Dordolec dolls, designed to ward off the “evil eye” from new homes. After learning about this fascinating custom, students will get creative and make their own unique Dordolec dolls.

No registration required.



ALBANIA PROGRAM

Albanian Costume Masks for Students in Second through Eighth Grade

Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
Main Library Activity Room

Wednesday, February 19, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
Madison Branch Youth Program Room

In Albanian culture, costume masks are traditionally used during festive events and celebrations, particularly in the annual Carnival held in Shkodra, where they symbolize freedom of expression and cultural heritage. Students will create their own masks using different textures and vibrant colors, to showcase their own artistic expression.

No registration required.



ALBANIA PROGRAM

“Growing” Red Poppies for Students in Second through Eighth Grade

**Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
Main Library Activity Room**

**Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
Madison Branch Youth Program Room**

The red poppy, *Papaver rhoeas*, is the unofficial national flower of Albania. Red poppies symbolize resilience, remembrance, and the beauty of the natural landscape. Students will learn how to create red poppies and other beautiful flowers from various materials.

No registration required.



ALBANIA PROGRAM

Make Your Own Qeleshe for Students in Second through Eighth Grade

**Tuesday, March 4, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
Main Library Activity Room**

**Wednesday, March 5, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.
Madison Branch Youth Program Room**

The Qeleshe, also known as the plis or qylaf, is a traditional white brimless felt cap that holds a special place in Albanian culture. This distinctive headwear is a symbol of national identity, heritage and pride. Students will learn the history of the Qeleshe while constructing their own.

No registration required.

Main Library

15425 Detroit Avenue
Lakewood, Ohio 44107-3829
(216) 226-8275

Hours

Monday through Saturday

9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Sunday

1:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.