



Contact: Josh Grossberg 213-740-6065
josh.grossberg@usc.edu
Rob Kuznia 213-740-0965
rkuznia@usc.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USC Shoah Foundation and National Jewish Theater Foundation Collaborate to Launch ‘This is What I’ve Scene,’ First Ever Theater-Related Activity To Be Provided to Students Worldwide Via IWitness Website

Los Angeles, Dec. 8, 2015 – USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education and the National Jewish Theater Foundation and its Holocaust Theater International Initiative have developed a new theater-based activity for the Institute’s IWitness website that guides secondary students to develop historical narrative monologues using testimonies of Holocaust survivors, witnesses and liberators.

Called “This is what I’ve ‘Scene’: Theatrical Depictions of Survivor Stories,” the activity was authored by the National Jewish Theater Foundation, which celebrates creativity and preserves Jewish culture in the performing arts.

Using the activity, students will construct a monologue, and learn how to dramatically enhance their presentation by creating and staging tableaux, which give the monologue added visual interest and help to illuminate the stories.

Arnold Mittelman, the National Jewish Theater Foundation’s producing artistic director, (and [NJTF consultant](#) Mira Hirsch, artistic associate and director of education for Theatrical Outfit, [Atlanta](#)) worked

with USC Shoah Foundation's Education Department to create the new activity. Mittelman, a director, producer and educator who has created almost 300 diverse plays, musicals and special events, helped found or lead five major nonprofit theaters. In 2007, he was named president and producing artistic director of the National Jewish Theater Foundation, which celebrates and preserves Jewish culture in the performing arts.

"The National Jewish Theater Foundation through its Holocaust Theater International Initiative remembers and teaches the lessons of the Holocaust using theater related research, education and production," Mittelman said. "Theater in all its manifestations can and must provide a moral compass for future generations. We are proud to provide to IWitness the creative resource 'This is What I've Scene' and other future activities that have the capability of achieving that goal."

Now used in all 50 states and 60 countries, IWitness was developed by USC Shoah Foundation to connect secondary school students with the audio-visual testimonies of survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides in its Visual History Archive to motivate them to do their part to build a better world.

According to research, students' interest in helping others increased by up to 28 percent after they engaged with IWitness. According to research, students reported up to a 28 percent increase in an interest in helping others after they engaged with IWitness. They also reported a 30 percent improvement in their critical thinking skills. In all, 72 percent of students surveyed said they benefitted from using IWitness.

IWitness, which is a free program, provides teachers with an array of student-centered activities designed to engage multiple literacies, across disciplines from civics, government and history to poetry, art and ethics. Educators can tailor lessons appropriate for their classrooms.

IWitness aligns with Common Core standards and was named as one of the "Top 25 Websites for Teaching and Learning" by the American Association of School Librarians in 2012.

"We're excited about working with the National Jewish Theater Foundation on this new activity," said USC Shoah Foundation Executive Director Kori Street. "They bring an expertise in the performing arts that matches perfectly with our work in educating young people about being responsible citizens."

###

About USC Shoah Foundation

USC Shoah Foundation — The Institute for Visual History and Education is dedicated to making audio-visual interviews with survivors and other witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides, a compelling voice for education and action. The Institute's current collection of more than 53,000 eyewitness testimonies contained within its Visual History Archive preserves history as told by the people who lived it, and lived through it. Housed at the University of Southern California, within the Dana and David

Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, the Institute works with partners around the world to advance scholarship and research, to provide resources and online tools for educators, and to disseminate the testimonies for educational purposes.

About IWitness

IWitness, which the American Association of School Librarians has named as a top website for teaching and learning, provides students with guided exploration to full-life histories and testimonies of nearly 1,300 survivors and other witnesses to the Holocaust and other genocides. Students watch testimonies and use them in individual or group multimedia projects; teachers can assign activities as classwork or homework, and can even custom-build their own lessons and activities. The testimonies are searchable by more than 9,000 keywords, enabling students to pinpoint exact moments of interest within each testimony. The built-in IWitness video editor gives students the ability to construct video essays and edit testimony as well as integrate footage and other materials from outside sources such as photos, maps, voiceover audio, music and text.

About National Jewish Theater Foundation

Since 2007, the National Jewish Theater Foundation /National Jewish Theater (NJTF) has presented theatrical works that celebrate the richness of Jewish heritage and culture. Under the leadership of its founder and President, Arnold Mittelman, the NJTF promotes the appreciation and preservation of Jewish musical and dramatic theatrical artists and their work.

As one of the foremost performing arts organization to focus exclusively on Jewish theater, NJTF is committed to educating the public on Jewish content and themes. NJTF productions are presented to diverse audiences across America and throughout the world.

Recent productions have included the NYC critically-acclaimed production of *The Soap Myth* by Jeff Cohen produced live and on film, [the L.A premiere of](#) *Words By Ira Gershwin*, by Joseph Vass, and proudly [a critically acclaimed NYC production of](#) the new *Rothschilds & Sons*, music and lyrics by Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick with book by Sherman Yellen.

Celebrating Jewish history and artistry inspired the leaders of NJTF to launch the Holocaust Theater International Initiative (HTII) and create the first ever Holocaust Theater Catalog (HTC) [housed at University of Miami Miller Center](#) www.htc.miami.edu. NJTF/HTII examines through research, education, and production how one of the greatest catastrophes in Jewish and World history has been made more understandable through the insights, creativity, and courage of Jewish theater artists and others of differing backgrounds. The HT catalog now has over 650 titles with 3000 related entries. Its information is accessible to theater artists, scholars, educators and the general public. Pioneering efforts in education with the USC Shoah Foundation and its IWitness platform has led to the creation of "This Is What I've Scene". A first in a series of activities that combines survivor testimony with theater techniques to increases Holocaust understanding through role-playing and physical tableaux. Additionally the NJTF has created a national Holocaust Remembrance Day play Reading series held on the Monday before Yom HaShoah that involves theaters, memorial museums, Jewish centers and universities reading and discussing Holocaust plays with their audiences. www.njtfoundation.org.

