

# Teaching the Shoah: High Schoolers Take Virtual Tour of Yad Vashem

By Danny Schwartz - 06/30/2021 11:00 AM



*Ruth Daniels, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, addresses the students along with Shoah Ambassadors Hailey Callahan, 23, and Curtis Bates, 20. (Courtesy of Keith Famie)*

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Production on Keith Famie's Shoah Ambassadors Holocaust documentary film continued on June 23, as high school students, guests and the two young Shoah Ambassadors themselves took part in a virtual Yad Vashem experience.

At the Emagine Theatre in Novi, ambassadors Hailey Callahan, 23, and Curtis Bates, 20, sat in the theater with a camera crew filming their experience while designated hosts at Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, virtually walked them through the museum and the events of the Holocaust. A portion of the event will be featured in Famie's film.

Along with the ambassadors viewing the presentation, 32 students from two nearby high schools, Novi High and Walled Lake Northern, were able to sit in the theater and experience the tour as well. The [documentary film is focused on educating the youth on the horrors and atrocities of the Holocaust.](#)

The students were able to interact with Yad Vashem and ask the tour guides questions during the presentation. When the tour was over, the students took part in a Q&A with Callahan and Bates to learn more about their experience with the film.

Also at the end, Ruth Daniels, managing partner of the Maple Theater, spoke to the students about her father who was a Holocaust survivor, and was able to stand as a personal testimony for the students to ask questions about his experience.

Film director Famie believes that while COVID created havoc in everyone's lives, there are silver linings to the pandemic.

“It taught us about Zoom and how to use it,” he said. “Utilizing Zoom to create this dialogue and narrative, and at the same time having high-quality production cameras on both sides, we were able to introduce Yad Vashem in the film and, of course, having Hailey and Curtis there as ambassadors and the students as well was icing on the cake.”

## Students' Reactions

The students were listening to the subject matter closely and asking insightful questions. There seemed to be a consensus at the event that the film's approach, telling the story of the Holocaust through youth and the ambassadors' artistic talents, is one that may indeed resonate with the younger generation.

"It's a much better way, it might be the only way," said Kevin Wang, a 16-year-old Novi High School student. "Especially Curtis, I loved his song and would definitely listen to it outside of this event, at home while I'm studying or something. The way his lyrics are worded gives an accurate depiction of what actually happened, and it's not just random words thrown together, so it's really cool."

Paul Glantz, founder and chairman of Emagine Novi, believes being able to serve the community with important cultural opportunities such as this one is critically important to their mission.

"That's what I think this event represents, it's a way to become more familiar with the Holocaust as well as a way to bring in students to share knowledge," Glantz said. "Knowledge will guide behavior going forward and it's important we learn from the past and, if we do that, then hopefully we will avoid such tragedies in the future."

## Support for Film

In attendance was Frances Rose, daughter of local businessman Warren Rose, who along with her family is helping finance the film and serve as executive producers. Rose's confidence in the project began when hearing what would set the film apart.

"There are Holocaust documentaries all over the place now, but I thought, OK, maybe Keith Famie can bring something different to the table and take a different approach — and he is," Rose said.

Hearing statistics of how many young people didn't know about the Holocaust, Rose said it was eye-opening, which is why supporting the film was so important to her.

“What I want these kids to learn is this is what a genocide looks like, and I don’t want them to just learn about the Holocaust on its own, I want them to be able to recognize the warning signs of a genocide, that it can take many forms,” Rose said.

“I want them to be trained to have a good eye and an ear that will let them know if something like this is going to happen again, you have to do something to stop it and step up.”

Rose believes the topic is personal for her family, having lost family in the Holocaust with no survivors, and not knowing exactly where or how they died.

“We don’t have a lot of closure, but one thing I can take solace in is doing things like this and saying, ‘okay, I’m not going to let what happened to my family happen again, not just to other Jewish people, but to other marginalized or persecuted groups around the world.’”

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