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“DEFIANCE” FILMMAKERS COLLABORATE WITH THE JEWISH PARTISAN EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION TO CREATE NEW MOVIE-BASED CURRICULUM

DEFIANCE filmmakers and the Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation announced that they have partnered to create a new educational curriculum based on the movie about the Jewish partisan Bielski brothers in a move that should help address the lack of knowledge and education about armed Jewish resistance to the Nazis.

DEFIANCE, which stars Daniel Craig and depicts the true story of the Bielski Brothers who fought the Nazis and saved 1,200 Jews in the forests of Belarus, opens nationwide Jan. 16. Director Edward Zwick (“Blood Diamond,” “Glory,” “The Last Samurai”) decided to tell the real-life story of the Bielskis because he was outraged when he realized how little awareness and education there was about the Jewish partisans of the Holocaust.

“I wondered why, while growing up, I had never learned about these stories of Jewish partisans fighting the Nazis,” said Zwick. “My fervent hope is that '**DEFIANCE**' will inspire educators to incorporate the history of the Jewish partisans into their Holocaust curricula. In schools across the country and around the world, the images of hollow-eyed survivors in striped pajamas, emaciated Jews being marched into gas chambers and corpses piled high in freshly dug pits should be joined by images of these extraordinary Jewish heroes who fought back against all odds.”

The Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation (JPEF), the only organization solely dedicated to developing and distributing free educational materials about the Jewish partisans and their life lessons, is helping to fulfill Zwick’s hope. JPEF, which served as consultants in the making of the film and provided historical information, videos and photos for the movie’s website, collaborated with **DEFIANCE** co-screenwriter and co-producer Clay Frohman on the new curriculum that is being disseminated at no charge to public, private and Jewish schools throughout the country.

“I hope that this moving and inspirational movie helps to transform people’s perception of the Jewish experience during the Holocaust,” said Mitch Braff, executive director of JPEF and a documentary filmmaker. “Learning about the young partisans, who demonstrated so much courage, strength and humanity in the face of such insurmountable evil, teaches young people today that they too can make a difference. It is critical that as part of our schools’ curricula, we educate our children about the partisans and Jewish resistance.”

A new ethical guide for teachers and parents, written in collaboration with Frohman, tackles the complex issue of the Bielski Brothers resorting to stealing, killing, and revenge. It utilizes text from the Old Testament, the Gospel and the father of murdered Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl. “It’s not black and white,” said Frohman. “It’s not a film in which the Jews are good guys and the Germans are bad guys all of the time. We wanted to portray that in any moment you could be a good guy or a bad guy. We’re all capable of all these things.”

San Francisco-based JPEF also has produced a study guide about Tuvia Bielski – the leader of the partisan group played by Craig who is widely considered one of the greatest Jewish heroes of anti-German resistance during World War II. The guide was written by Peter Duffy, author of the book “The Bielski Brothers.” JPEF has created a special movie-dedicated landing page on its website, www.jewishpartisans.org/defiance, with the new curricula, videos and photos of the Bielskis and other members of their armed resistance group, as well as the movie trailer and images of Craig.

The film and JPEF curricula are already winning accolades from educators around the country. “The stirring story of the Bielski brother partisans should be known in every high school classroom,” said Carolyn Herbst, executive secretary and former president of New York City’s Association of Teachers of Social Studies/United Federation of Teachers. “When I first viewed the film **DEFIANCE** in previews, I immediately knew there were serious controversial ethical issues that needed to be addressed: stealing, killing and revenge. Lo and behold, the Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation study guide for the film targets understanding these issues in war and peace for high school classroom use. Their website, www.jewishpartisans.org, offers much additional material for teaching about the Holocaust.”

Since Braff founded JPEF in 2000, the organization has produced nine short films narrated by Larry King, Ed Asner and Tovah Feldshuh; 200 video clips of surviving Jewish partisans, and over 15 pieces of curricula, all accessible via its website www.jewishpartisans.org. The site also provides access to hundreds of photographs and online Q&A’s with former Jewish partisans. JPEF, which can also arrange speaking engagements by former partisans, serves middle schools, high schools, and colleges around the world with its free educational materials and films. Its teaching materials are currently utilized by thousands of educators in the U.S. alone.

Approximately 20,000 to 30,000 Jews fought back against the Nazis as Jewish partisans, or armed resistance fighters, during World War II. They were responsible for saving thousands of lives and thwarting the Nazi war machine in numerous ways.

DEFIANCE also stars Liev Schreiber, Jamie Bell and Alexa Davalos.

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