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Jackie Gmach and the Sephardic Experience

Between Two Worlds

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1 hour, 04 minutes, 02 seconds

Speakers: Rabbi Laurie Coskey and Jacki Gmach

Transcribed by: Rachel E Lieu

[Holocaust Living History Workshop](#)

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Jackie Gmach and the Sephardic Experience: Between Two Worlds (2013)
Holocaust Living History Workshop

- Time Transcription
- 00:00 [The Library UC San Diego]
- 00:04 [Jackie Gmach and the Sephardic Experience: Between Two Worlds]
- 00:07 [The Sephardi Experience / Between Two Worlds / The Holocaust Living History Workshop is an education outreach program sponsored by the UCSD Library and the Judaic Studies Program]
- 00:08 Susanne Hillman: This is a special event involving Jackie Gmach, somebody who has been called or has been designated, a local hero. So, we're very honored to have her here. Uh, I'm not gonna say a lot of words, um, apart from I'm really pleased to see so many of you. This is wonderful and I know Jackie has very important story to tell - but first, it is also a pleasure to introduce Rabbi Laurie Coskey who has generously volunteered to come and do an introduction for Jackie. Please help me welcome both Rabbi Laurie and Jackie Gmach, who's sitting over there.
- 00:47 Rabbi Laurie Coskey: Welcome everybody. I am so happy to be here and I spent the early part of this morning at USD [University of San Diego] at a civility conference there. And of course, the ordeal and on USD is always getting parking, right? And then I spent the last part of my day here at UCSD [University of California at San Diego] and believe me finding parking and I definitely need a drink. So, where is this cocktail hour? But in the meantime, I have a great task today, I have to do two things and I'm supposed to do them in about seven minutes. I'm a rabbi, so you know seven minutes could be stretched a tiny bit, but it won't be too long. We're going to stay really structured. I have to do two things that give me a lot of honor, one is to tell you a little bit about my own family that are Turkish Jews, I'm half Turkish. My grandfather was born in Constantinople. Which is?
- 01:39 Audience: Istanbul.
- 01:42 Rabbi Laurie Coskey: And my grandmother was born on the Island of Rhodes which you all think of as Greek, and before it was Greek it was Italian, but before it was Italian and for many, many centuries it was Turkish. And unfortunately during, um, unfortunately during the Holocaust it was no longer Turkish, but it was Italian. So that is how it had the tragic end to the Jewish community of Rhodes there. So I want to talk to you first about, just a few minutes, about somebody who I remember as a young mother sort of in charge at the JCC [Jewish Community Center] the place where I entrusted my children. And although Jackie had not very much to do with the preschool, she was in that building every day making things work as the program director. And I remember saying, that woman is a tour de force. She is really, really somebody who gets things done. And I knew that even before I read her resume, which I hope she'll send to all of you because I can't

read it today, and her bio. But Jackie describes herself just as a - and these are her words - a simple mashugana lady. Those are her words. She's grateful for having the opportunity to work with a lot of people who understood the importance of education and who made the success of what they are living and doing together. She says I am a symbol of a person who worked very hard. Her mantra is, and you know I've been practicing it for a week, but I'm going to make her say it because it is so beautiful. Your mantra?

- 03:20 Jacki Gmach: Si tu veux, tu peux.
- 03:22 Rabbi Laurie Coskey: Say it. Stand up and say it so everybody hears you.
- 03:24 Jacki Gmach: Si tu veux, tu peux.
- 03:26 Rabbi Laurie Coskey: Please repeat.
- 03:29 Audience: Si tu veux, tu peux.
- 03:31 Rabbi Laurie Coskey: Which means?
- 03:33 Jacki Gmach: You have to say, Si tu veux, tu peux.
- 03:34 Rabbi Laurie Coskey: Let's do it again.
- 03:35 Audience: Si tu veux, tu peux.
- 03:37 Rabbi Laurie Coskey: And what does that mean?
- 03:39 Jacki Gmach: If you want, you can.
- 03:40 Rabbi Laurie Coskey: If you want, you can. That is truly her mantra and she believes with good determination, if you want to do it, you can do it and the you is capital Y-O-U, all of us. And how she acquired this mantra is actually quite a nice story, and I hope she will share it with you tonight. I also hope that she spends a few minutes telling us that in Tunisia when girls were born, parents were making the prayer that their daughters would not be like Jackie Nataf. So that's a very good story and I hope that you get to it tonight. Having earned a doctorate in physics and chemistry at, in the Sorbonne, France, I ca, in Paris, I can't imagine why parents, Jackie, wouldn't pray that their daughters all grow up to be just like Jackie Nataf Gmach. Today Jackie is the community outreach coordinator for San Diego State University's initial, Initiative for Moral Courage. If you have not attended their conference yearly, I hope that you make a pledge to yourself to do so. It is well worth your effort to try to find parking at SDSU. The new interdisciplin, it's a new interdisciplinary think tank and it focuses on critical study, promotion, and the recognition of moral courage through a mentoring project that brings

together academics, world leaders, and students. And they have quite an important conference once a year.

05:03 Rabbi Laurie Coskey: Jackie is from Tunisia and there exists a trend and I don't know how many of you know a lot about Tunisian Jewish history, so I'm going to give you just a little taste of it. There exists a tradition among the descendants of the first Jewish settlers that their ancestors settled in that part of North Africa long before the destruction of the first temple, in the 6th century BCE [before the common era]. There is a long history of Jews living in Tunisia and being an integral part of Arab culture there. The Jews of North Africa, I learned, were relatively fortunate during the Holocaust because their distance from the German occupation and concentration camps in Central and Eastern Europe permitted them to avoid the fate of their co-religionists in Europe. Tunisia was the only Arab country to come under direct Nazi occupation during World War II and when the Nazis arrived in Tunisia in November of 1942 - so relatively late - the nation was home to some - this is staggering - 100,000 Jews. How many Jews in San Diego County? Not quite a hundred. So about the same as San Diego County.

06:23 Rabbi Laurie Coskey: According to Yad Vashem, the Nazis imposed antisemitic policies, including forcing Jews to wear the star of, the yellow star of David, fines, and confiscation of property. More than 5,000 of the Jews were sent to forced labor camps, and 46 are known to have died. Sadly, an additional 160 Tunisian Jews in France, who were at that time in France, were sent to European death camps. That story, that Holocaust story is very different from my own family's experience in Turkey and I'm going to spend just about three or four minutes sharing with you an experience of my personal family when we did a roots trip. We went to Greece and Turkey. My mother took our whole nuclear family to see the cities where her mother and my, her mother - my grandmother - and her father - my grandfather - were born. And have any of you been in the on the island of Rhodes? Because if you have, you will probably remember that there is a tablet there that lists the name. It's actually in French, and it lists the names of the Jewish families that were annihilated during the war. At the very end of the war, the Nazis marched into Rhodes and the Jews there were sent to Auschwitz, and most of them perished there. Those are all names that my mother would say are our cousins, or somehow kissing cousins, but related to us. And so, we were, as a family, traveling in that part of the world and we took one day to go through Athens and to the Jewish museum there. And I would like to share with you a poem that I wrote called *The Photograph* and it is about my family's experience at the, in the Jewish museum in Athens. Are you ready? I also need you to tell you that I, when I spoke to my mother and said I was reading this she told me I needed to read it to you slowly and well. So, if you think I was neither slow enough nor did I read it well enough - please do not report this to my mother next time she's here.

8:28

Rabbi Laurie Coskey: [reading her poem] There hangs a photograph in the Jewish Museum of Athens of four women having tea one afternoon, each with cup in hand and relaxed poses, sitting cross-legged in knee-length skirts, limbs intertwined enjoying their moment away from their children, chatting about their women's lives in the 1940s. The photo captured a moment of leisure, a moment that women can create together with a cup in their hand, a story on their lips, knowing how much they shared. Just women drinking their tea. Maybe their ages were 25, or maybe they were 30, those four women drinking their tea. Surely they would have been photographed by one of their husbands, presumably the husband of the hostess, who upon hearing the women's chatter, their lifted voices, their laughter, couldn't have helped himself on that afternoon but to come into the yard where they were sitting close and casually and tell them to hold still. Surely they would have shooed him away. No, no. We aren't ready. We don't have on our lipstick. No, no. Don't take that photo now. Later. We'll take it later. There hangs that photograph in a gallery on the third floor of the Jewish Museum in Athens. My son found it on the wall. Look, Nana. It's a photograph of women drinking tea in Rhodes. Look, Nana, he called. They could be your cousins. Look, Nana. Come up here and look. And look she did. My mother looked at the photo of her cousins, for surely they were her cousins, drinking their afternoon tea as she had drunk coffee with her sisters, and her mother, and her cousins, and her aunts in the afternoon in Los Angeles in the yard, while the kids were playing before the husbands returned home from their days at the office. She looked. She stepped before the photo, a few feet away. She leaned her head close to theirs. They could have been any of her aunts drinking tea on that warm afternoon on the island of Rhodes in the 1940s. She leaned closer to the photo trying to figure out who they may be, and to whom they were related, those four women drinking tea in the afternoon. Touriel. Benveniste. Capeluto. Who were they? Alhadeff. Halfon. Soriano. Whose sons had they married? Mizrahi. Levy. Angel. Who were their children? Saul. [unclear]. Piha. How could she explain to us their connection, to us her daughters and grandchildren, standing beside her in Athens on a warm July afternoon in 2010, waiting for her to tell us who they were and how we, living in Los Angeles, Seattle, and San Diego might be related to those women holding teacups and wearing silk stockings. And only for a moment, we could read the horror in her eyes. Only for a moment, we could see the realization in my mother's expression that her cousins had not been so lucky as the other side of their families. The photo sits on the wall of the third floor of the Jewish Museum, in the shadow of the Acropolis, home to the Temple of Athena, winged goddess. Perhaps they flew to heaven on the wings of their shekhinah, those four women, the cousins of my grandmother, the cousins of my mother, the cousins of my sisters, the cousins of mine. Perhaps they were whisked to the heaven on Nike wings or to Los Angeles or to New York or to Seattle or to Buenos Aires - anywhere, anywhere at all but to the inferno that they didn't know awaited them on the afternoon when they drank their tea in the yard with only the cares, concerns, and joys of being women.

- 12:55 Audience: [applause]
- 13:00 Rabbi Laurie Coskey: Oh, thank you. Thank God. We'll send it right to her. She's in Los Angeles, not up there. From mother on high. But with that, I give to you Jackie Gmach, a true leader in our community.
- 13:12 Jackie Gmach: Can I speak after a rabbi and poet? I think I'll let's go for a cruise we were in Rhodes. Let's try to move to Tunisia and eventually to some other part of the world. Thank you Laurie very much. Thank you all of you for being here. I have to tell you, there are some people that I'm not going to mention who helped me tremendously in this presentation. As you know, I was the San Diego Jewish Book Fair director for many, many years. I recruited, I tried to count them, more than 600 speakers and authors and I was so demanding with them: you cannot read, you cannot do that, you cannot do that. And this is almost my first presentation, and let me tell you, it's not easy to do. So [unclear] that means, my mother is not alive anymore but if you think of her, just tell her that I was excellent. Okay? Just to, to, and, and I want to say thank you to Susan Friedman who helped me very much into my presentation and said, you should almost locate where are Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia. You can see, and I, and you can probably see Israel, somewhere over there in the pink. I wish we could have a little light, but this is where finally I grew up, the right portion of Tunisia, and you have the identity of Tunis. That's in another map you will see where Tunis and a number of cities were of importance in my life.
- 15:11 Jackie Gmach: This is an artwork by Maurice Bismuth. He was a painter in Tunisia from 1891 to 1965 and I wanted to see how, by then, at that time - or in between that time - the Jews of Tunisia are like, and how, what was their costume. I'm, my father owned this painting and I have it today in my home. It was rabbis praying in one of the synagogues called La Griba in Djerba. Djerba being an island in the south of Tunisia and you mentioned sometimes about the life or, Laurie, of the Jews of Tunisia and in fact, effectively we have 2,300 years present in Tunis and Tunisia. The interesting part of that is there are two synagogues in the world where Jews were permanently present after after the destruction of the temple. It was La Griba in Djerba and another synagogue Peki'in. Peki'in being a small village next to Jerusalem and they are the two most ancient synagogue, and again, where Jews were permanently present. I should try to go back in fact to, I hope I'm going to do it right. [noise] I did something wrong. Susanne?
- 16:54 Jackie Gmach: Oh, okay, too bad. I don't know how to go back but you saw the image of the musician on the slide? The point is, even today Jews - primarily from France and because a lot of immigrants from Tunisia and, went to France - are going back to La Griba every year for the commemoration of the rabbi Meir Baal HaNess, which is the rabbi of the miracles. And the little musician that you saw in the previous slide - I'm sorry I went too fast - was one of the musicians in the year 2011, in this oldest synagogue. And again you have here a vision of the costumes

and the way we wear in Tunis. There is a word probably that you are familiar with, which is the chéchia, which is the heart wear by the men. But this woman over there was present and it's a photograph which was taken again inside the Griba at the commemoration of the rabbi that I mentioned, only in 2007. This is where I was born. It's Avenue De Paris in Tunis. I was, that the arrow indicates my apartment and it was - I, my father was born in Tunis, my mother in Constantine, Algeria. And I had two brothers and we grew up, the three of us, in this magnificent three-bedroom apartment, where we had only one bathroom. I mean imagine the surprise of, so far, did you moving to America and finding four, five, six bathrooms into a home.

18:54 Jackie Gmach: This is, I take you now in 1942. Uh my, as I say my mother was born in Algeria. My grandmother was in Algeria in 1942 but this is a Sauf-Conduit, a permit for her to travel from Constantine to Tunis and stay with her, with us. And the request was made by my mother. You can see her photograph on the left side. I mean, we are in fact approaching the Holocaust. And I have to say that I wanted to thank, rabbi, Mr. Dr. Mark Moss the publisher of the *San Diego Jewish Journal* because, at the Yom Hashoah of last year, he published a story called *The Bird*. And *The Bird* is the story of my father who was, um, the dentist. And it was on a Sunday, and he was in his office trying to clean up his files. Suddenly he hear the loud noise at the door. Open the door of his office and find two German officers and one of them had obviously a problem with one of his tooth. He was extremely swollen. His a, cheek, cheek - thank you, Susanne - was, was huge and he asked my father to be taken care of. My father refuses, being a Jew. The Nazi, the Germans were in Tunisia and were in Tunis, and refuses. I mean, the healthy German officer - if I can qualify him as such - take his gun and put it on my father's head, who obviously panics and doesn't know what to do. Take the two, the two men to his office, and open mouth of the patient, and realize that effectively the tooth needs to be extracted.

21:17 Jackie Gmach: He starts asking some questions to the general officer who notify him that he's hemophiliac. That means the fear gets into my dad. He doesn't know what to do. He tries to get out of this situation, unsuccessfully, but finally calls some of his friends over the phone and, who were dentists also from the faculty of Paris, that means people who could have helped him and refused to do so due to their Jewish identity. My father doesn't know what to do. Suddenly the phone rings. It's his mother. He picks up the phone - and I have to define for you, my grandmother. She was an illiterate person. She never went to school. She only spoke Arabic and my father expressed the situation by saying, you know, I cannot stay on the phone because I am in this terrible situation. And she said, don't worry. It's very easy. See what you have to do. You see, take the little kid - you know, in Tunisia we always had in the family somebody to do the errands and, you know, the schlepper - and he calls and then says, send him to the shouk [marketplace]. Tell him to buy your little bird. When he brings you back the bird - and do it as

soon as possible - cut off the leg of the bird, remove the feathers and apply the hot muscle on the opening of the gum. And my father said, mom! I suppose he would say, mom, probably said, umiy, which is mom - my mother - in Arabic. Say, what are you talking about? Say, look do that. That means effectively my father follow the directions extract the tooth and immediately put the muscle of the leg of the bird, very hot, and place it on the gum. There is no blood running. The gentleman, the two German officer, eave and my father leave his office and stay in hiding for a period of three months not knowing what could have happened to this gentleman.

23:48 Jackie Gmach: The point that I wanted to make here, it's one of our Holocaust stories, of the Holocaust stories of my family, we have many more, but I wanted to relate that to the presentation I was asked to do today. Laurie told you very well about the life of the Jews. We'll, we'll talk about the presence of the Germans. We have to know that effectively 5,000 people were touched in Tunisia. We wore the yellow star. We have to say that we didn't have still the traumatic experiences of the people in Europe, including Ashkenazi and Sephardic. To introduce myself, uh, I need to present to you this slide. It's, uh, I am now in 1947. I'm seven years old and this is another session from the Bey du Kram. The Bey du Kram being the Arab representative of all the civics, laws, implementation in Tunisia. He was a patient of my father but this, the image that you have on the right, is not from La Maison du Kram, which is our beach house and I grew up over there. But the attestation says that as a Bey du Kram and basically also as a kind of friend of my father and artist, he decided to size the home for a certain time. Seize, thank you, seize. You see, how can I talk after a rabbi and an English speaker? Usually, you say, I always was surprised with, can you hear me well? But can you understand me well? This is another question.

25:59 Jackie Gmach: Okay, anyway, now I am seven years old. I am in Tunisia with, this is a photograph with my dad, I go to the Ecole des Soeurs de Sion, which is a Catholic school. And as a Catholic school, you know, and as Catholicism, there is a part of their faith which drives them to have non-Catholic people being converted to Catholicism. That means I was walking with my dad. I saw the big Cathedral of Tunis. I bent down and started doing the sign of the cross, and my father said, what are you doing? And I say the sign of the cross. That's what the nun said. And he say, okay you are out of this. And that's where the problems begins, of your hero of San Diego. And my father put me in another school and I'm expelled from the school, put me at another school - private school - public school - trade schools, I end up by being expelled from all the school. I was really a misfit, thank you. A misfit of a little girl. And my father didn't know what to do with me. And one day, when I was 14 years old he had the opportunity to have again the Bey du Kram that I mentioned previously, in the previous slide, as one of his patients sitting on his, up on his chair. And he said, Dr. Nataf, you don't look very happy today. He says I have a problem with my daughter. I don't know what to do with her. He said, well what's her problem? She's expelled at this point from all schools.

She's only 14 years old. She cannot write, she cannot read, what are we going to do with her? Easy, he says. I will tell you that the solutions are always easy when you are in Tunisia. They become difficult in France, and they become difficult, very difficult, in America.

- 28:17 Jackie Gmach: That means to say, don't worry. Tomorrow I'm going to send you my chauffeur. He is going to make the girl look nice, give her a beautiful dress. He will take her and he will take her to the principal of the school and I am responsible and in charge of all civic matters, one of them being education. I'm going to write that he has to take her in the classroom. My father says, are you serious? He says yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, it's going to be like that. The next day, effectively the next morning, they take me they take me to the Ecole de L'Alliance Israelite Universelle. The Alliance decided, okay, come on tell us Deborah tell us your words.
- 29:02 Speaker 1: Founded in 1860 by French Jews to help the poor, suffering, blighted, uncivilized Jews. [crosstalk]
- 29:19 Jackie Gmach: Okay it was an incredible institution and it saved the life of many, many of the young people, and the young Jews, primarily in Arab countries. That means I go sit at the front, at the front desk and the first desk of the row and the teacher by the name of Madame Sabban says, okay we are going to do a dictation. Take your pencil. Dictation, who cares? I didn't take my pencil and she said, what are you doing? I said, you know, but my mind was - how am I going to get expelled from this school? That means, my mind was I'm not going to do it. And she looked at me, and she said Jacqueline, Si tu veux, tu peux. If you want, you can. And I took my pencil, and from that day my life changed. And from that day I become, still a misfit, but, but doing a little bit better. That means the si tu veux, tu peux has been really something inside me, and I can tell you that even today - prior to this presentation, it is my first one - prior to this presentation, I saw Mrs. Sabban and I heard her voice. And every time I had difficulties, I did that, and I do that. And if any of your children, and I know you all - and thank you for the students who are here present today - the si tu veux, tu peux works. There is no question in my mind. It does work. If you have the difficulty say, I can do it, and I will do it.
- 31:11 Jackie Gmach: Now here is La Grande Synagogue de Tunis where, in 1955 when I was 15 years old I loved to go on Friday night dinner, which was another problem because girls don't go to shul in Tunisia on a Friday night. Only men go there, and I was used to sit by myself at the balcony because it was a Sephardic shul - men and women are not sitting together. And when I was entering the synagogue, I can tell you, that all those fathers and grandfathers were really unhappy with me. And what Laurie told you, that they were making a prayer when the little girl was born by saying hopefully she would not be like Jacqueline Nataf is a true story. [19]58, [19]61 it's the time for me, I left Tunisia. I love this photograph because I show you

Israel for its flowers. And also what I love in here, it's the Kova Tembel that you are all familiar with, but I don't know if you are familiar with the camel purse. In 1961 it was something which was sold all over Israel. There was the camel muselier, what you put on the hair on the face. Yeah, and it was lined with fabric and all the girls had the pleasure to use those as, uh, purses. I became a French citizen and that was facilitated by the fact that [Habib] Bourguiba was married then to a French woman and having a son had accepted that any child born from a French citizen - from one of the parents being a French citizen was allowed to become, and to request, the French citizenship. And my mother, of course, from Algeria, was French.

33:18 Jackie Gmach: I show you what happened in 1942 in Tunis. So very fast, and here we are in 1939, and it is a way for me to introduce you the story of David, my husband, as part of the Holocaust in France in 1942. Here is David with his father, his mother, and him as a little boy of one year old. And this is the the card that you see here, his father Markus was arrested by the French police in 1941, taken to the prefecture. He went over there with his son and with his own sister and never came back. In 1941, the 28th of September, he was given that piece of paper and they promised him that they will send it to his family. And you can see, I show it to you - not for you to read it of course - but to show you how many words he tried to include in this small card. I'm pleased to say that, if you want to read the translation of that card, I have some printout for you. It was a love story to his wife, to his child, and to his friends. In 1942 his wife tried to apply to the Kommandant of Paris, to the Germans, asking them to liberate the husband and that was on March 17, 1942, and this paper shows that it is rejected and that the Kommandat can't do anything but that he will stay in the camps [unclear].

35:29 Jackie Gmach: That means David's father is gone and David and his mother are in Noisy-le-Grand in the surrounding of Paris, where they were living. One night in 1943, David is very sick. The mother doesn't know what to do, that means she decided to try to go to Paris. By going to Paris she gets into a bus in Noisy-le-Grand and fortunately in front of her is sitting the cousin of Léon Blum who was président de [unclear] and ask her, where are you going? And she said, to Paris. The kid is sick; I have to find a doctor. He refuses to let her go, and get her that same night into a car and drive with her to Grenoble, in the free zone, where finally David was saved by Marie Louise Bernard, what we call today a righteous, and decided to take care of David. I think here I would like to go a little bit more precisely if I can, is David's mom living in Grenoble was used for almost two to three weeks to take David and go up the mountain and try to find a Christian family who will accept to take care of David. But unfortunately, she was not successful and our last chance - living totally at the top of the mountain - was Marie Louise. David's mom and Marie Louise were sitting in the kitchen and she was begging her to save David but we know what it means today, and she refused. But suddenly, Marie Louise get up, leaves the room and comes back with David, and tells Bronia,

David's mom, I will take care of him. What happened? She said, when we were in the kitchen talking to each other, I saw him climbing up a pile of hay, for very high. And he could have fallen and hurt himself, and I was so concerned that he could be in danger. Now I understand the concept of what you mean. And she saved David's life. We stayed very close to Marie Louise. She came to my house. She plays with my children.

38:00 Jackie Gmach: And I was telling you that my father was in his office when the those German officer came, right? My father was very, very organized and he, due to my many moves - we live in Montreal, we live in many homes, we live in San Diego - my father was able to get a number of family archives and put them together. And this is the most interesting, and I would say even disturbing, paper that he found and that I found just five-six years ago. And this paper is from the Ministre de la Drancy du Combattant from the the - how do you call that - the veterans from the military governments, giving us a totally new story about David's father's life. And we got this paper just only as I say five years ago, and this paper said that in fact David's father was arrested three times. He was arrested November 16, [19]40 sent to La Caserne De Tourelles. Liberated January 16, [19]41. Arrested again to Drancy, you can see the dates, was liberated among 800 Jews, due to the lack of food in Drancy and was arrested again in [19]42 and killed at Suresnes on the Seine in 1942. This is a story that the survivors of David's family did not know, and it is just due to the skills of my dad that this paper was again identified. That means now I told you a little bit about the life of the Sephardi [unclear] of the Sephardi family and of an Ashkenazi family.

40:12 Jackie Gmach: And here you have the Synagogue de La Rue Des Tournelles which is on your left which is a big synagogue with built-in [18]61 [18]63 and when all the Sephardim started moved to Paris - a lot of them from Algeria, Indonesia, Americans, a lot of them went to Canada - the back room of the Synagogue de La Rue Des Tournelles became the Synagogue de la Place Des Voges. The Ashkenazi were sent out of their synagogue went to la Place Des Voges. The Sephardi, being in larger number, occupied the Synagogue de La Rue Des Tournelles. This is a point where, visually and religiously, you can see how the immigration of Sephardim have brought life, Jewish life, back to France where, after a while, the where, where a lot of the um, Ashkenazim from France became assimilated. That means now I'm, I don't know if you follow me in terms of the time, but I was trying to do it chronologically and now we are in 1965. We are back in Tunisia when my father received a phone call due to, from the Chumash of our temple saying that there is destruction over there, and he has to come and save a number of ritual objects and a number of books. Then we rush over there. Our books were printed, these books were printed in Djerba, that doesn't mention, and you know they were written in the Gutenberg method. You know, when you have those little pieces letter by letter of rubber and you put them on a piece of wood

and you put your ink. That means you have, I brought you one of them. This is in Italiano. This is another book and he was also able to save another ritual object.

42:24 Jackie Gmach: What is amazing to me, we are here in [19]65, is how you discover things in your life that you didn't expect because this Tzedakah box wasn't in synagogue was identified in 1965 by my father came to San Diego and it's only five-six years ago that I realized that it was my grandmother's Tzedakah box, Semha Nataf, in dedication to the rabbi of la Griba that I mentioned before, Rabbi Meir Baal HaNess. My father saved those [Torah] rimonims and he saved also this this is one of the rimon that he was able to save. I have two or three of them but they are, as you can see, they have been destroyed, damaged when the Arabs enter the temples. This is something else, which I think it's interesting, people who are used to put l'eau de rose, rose water, in here and when you had the bat mitzvah, or, or a wedding, uh you were always sprinkling this water on people's head in sign of protection and well-being and love. And this is another one where - What's my name? My middle name? Remember or no? You didn't read the flyer, right. It's Nataf, and Nataf means incense, and it's the composition of the four or five different perfumes that you put in this element and makes it, you burn it. And I don't want to say that it's like a in the zen, but was used in the temples to take kind of the evil eye out of the temple. It was as a protection.

44:31 Jackie Gmach: That means why did I present to you la Place Des Voges? It's because I got married there and this is my ketubah. And only signed by my husband, women don't sign the ketubah. And, I can tell you, it's the contract of marriage, and I can tell you that even today, we don't have those colorful artistic ketubahs in Paris. In France, it's still exactly the same form that people are filling in with their names and signed only by the husband. And here is my first contact with America. I get married. The lady smiling over there is my mother, with the hat on, on the right. And that was my wedding car. It was a schnitzel scene all covered with lace. And when we were leaving an American, a bus of American tourists was driving back and they all went out, rushed to us, and said, can we take photographs? Is that really a wedding car? I said, yes this is my wedding car. And David had a very small red carpet when I got out of the car, for me. And it was my first contact with America. Who knows? How did I know about America in Tunisia? Nothing. I didn't know anything about Jamaica either but this is one of the oldest temple in Kingston, in Jamaica. It's a Sephardic temple and you know I want to mention that over there the ground is just made, covered with sand because it's in, in, - Susanne - in, in, in memory in the commemoration of the life of the Sephardi during the inquisitions who as Jews had to pray in silence and not make noises walking, walking in the temple to be heard as the [unclear] to be heard by the spanish inquisitors. That mean this is a beautiful synagogue as I heard and who knew about Jamaica?

46:57 Jackie Gmach: I knew about Tunisia, Algeria, France, Poland, Israel, Belgium. You can ask me what will happen in Belgium after, if you want. Canada. The world. And now it's the United States, and it's Jamaica, and it's United Kingdom when my granddaughter was born, and it's Australia. I mean, we have been a family of the world, in between two worlds - between Sephardi and Ashkenazi. My grands, my son-in-law who is unfortunately divorced but he's still my son-in-law, uh, was born in Jamaica. And when my daughter announced to me that she was going to marry him I said, is he Jewish? Over the phone she said, yeah, yeah Simon is Jewish. I said, perfect, that's fine by me. Good luck. I love you. Mazel Tov, whatever you could say to a child. But I said, please do me a favor send me some photographs. Promise mommy, I will. A week, two weeks, three weeks, no. Finally, I decided to go to a bookstore, open a book about Jamaica. And I realize that the first person is black, second is black, the third one is black, and the fourth one is black. And I say, Simon is black. That's the reason she doesn't send me the photograph. I mean, I call her back and I say, you know Bronia, he's Jewish. If Simon is black I have no problem. He's welcome. He's my son, and I love him already, even if I never met him. And she starts laughing. I said, why are you laughing? She said, because when Simon went to his mom and told her that he was marrying a girl from North Africa, the only question she asked was is Bronia black? And you can see Simon here. This is the Gmach family, the Jenkins family, the Ballantyne family.

49:05 Jackie Gmach: And the si tu veux, tu peux again, is something which motivated me to do whatever I could. There are two ladies in my life to whom I owe my knowledge. They were my mentors. Ildah Ifrah, from Morocco that I met in Montreal, who raised three generations of Jews, three. She was acting as a teacher and as a principal of her school for 60 years. The other one you know, is Zelda Goodman and I sent this slide projection to my daughter Rebecca, and she said, you have to write when Zelda passed away, but I don't think I will. Back again to Tunisia. Am I too long? Should I stop? Go? Yeah? No, yes, yes, say the truth. We are in Tunisia. Okay, this is 1992 and this is, uh, when you are raised as a girl in Tunisia you don't go to shul, as I say, but you go to the symphony. You go to the opera. You go to the theater. You go to music classes. You go to the conservatory, and things like that. That means in 1992 my father decided to move all his furniture, because he was settling in France, and he wanted to take this magnificent piano. It's really a beautiful piano, a player, that I have in my house in San Diego. I am a bad pianist but I am a pianist. And when he wanted to take his furniture out, the custom and the government - Tunisian government or representatives - told him, you cannot do that. Why can't I do that? They said because the piano belongs to the country. It's Tunisian patrimony. And my father said, no. I bought it for my wife when you just got married. It was a wedding present. Say no no, you cannot take it. Argument keeps going, like in Tunisia, for 45 minutes. And finally, the guy said, okay you can take it if you show me the receipt. And my father said, what do you mean if I show you the receipt? Said

yeah, if you show me the receipt that you bought this piano in 1938, you can have it. And my father said, okay, open his drawer, show the piano receipt and the piano left. And again, it's my father who, five years ago, by finding all this paperwork was able to show that.

52:00 Jackie Gmach: This is a story that I want to say, but please don't take it too, in a political way. It's not. It's 2000, I am on vacation in London and suddenly I wake up and I tell my daughter Bronia, I'm going to Tunis. What do you mean, I'm going to Tunis? You just came on vacation here. Say, I need to go to Tunis, and finally I took a plane from London to Tunis and I spent three or four days in Tunis and visiting a little bit around. And this is a story that I would like to share with you. My father - in Tunisia, like in France in fact - on the building you have a large copper plate which usually identify the professionals practicing in this building. I don't, you don't do that in America. But it's a, it's a large plaque and on on the building outside that... you do? [crosstalk] Okay, not in San Diego at least. That means, there is the plaque with [unclear], Faculty de Paris, and the name of my father is covered by another plaque, the name of let's say Mr. Muhammad Hasid, or whatever. I mean I'm very surprised the plaque was the original plaque, covered my father. I go upstairs and knock at the door and the gentleman opened the door in a white blouse and I introduce myself. I say, I am the daughter of Eduard Nataf. Who? I say, Eduard Nataf and immediately this man, who was Arab of course, apologized. And he said, you know I am really sorry. I said. Why are you sorry? He say, you know, when your father left, I just had to break the lock of the office, come in and take possession of everything. And effectively, everything which was in this office were all the tools that my father used for 40 years - to the exception of the x-rays, because of the electricity. I told him that I was in America. That it was difficult. That they worked very hard. That he is probably working very hard. I wish him good luck. He wished me good luck. We hug, and I left. And I think respect of each other, understanding of each other - which is not always very easy to do sometimes - is a way to solve the number of issues.

54:58 Jackie Gmach: Now I am really American. I am the Sephardi, and I'm the Ashkenazi, and I'm so happy to let you know that I finished my memoir. Hillary Lieber, that you see here oh, I could have done that. Yeah um, Hillary Lieber has rewritten, uh, stories that I wrote from the age of 14 to of probably 2010. I wrote them in English, in Hebrew, in Italiano, in French and with Hillary, we spent three and a half years where she rewrote these stories using my voice. I can tell you that Rabbi Joseph Telushkin read them and say the English is superb, which I'm very very pleased with. I say, what about the stories Rabbi Teushkin? And he answered, the English is superb. This is hopefully going to be the cover of the book. I'm pleased also to let you know that I found a publisher, and uh, maybe I will be at some book fairs. We also very often say as well, the Ashkenazi, world of Mizrahi, world of Sephardi - and I think this chart, and you can find it on internet - very easily shows you that. Yad Vashem has recognized among the valley of the

communities to many, many communities one of them here is Warsaw and the other one is Tunisia. I have to say Laurie that I'm not anymore at San Diego State University, but that's fine. But I was very pleased to develop this program over there. I am now working at the USC Shoah Foundation, where we are doing a Sephardi and Mizrahi testimonies, the Jews in our countries during the Shoah.

57:01 Jackie Gmach: There is a number of Sephardim already interviewed by the Shoah foundation that they were in Europe, but here we want to do the people who were in the Arab countries. And she mentioned also, you talk about that right? About, uh, Hitler and his presence with the [unclear] who was very present in Berlin too. I mean this is my new project, I'm very excited about it. I think it's time not to forget the Jews from the Sephardi, the Sephardi from the Arab countries, and we had our Holocaust. We had another story starting in 1948, and those three facts are really my motivator for this project. Eight hundred thousand to a million Jews left, were expelled from their homes in Arab countries. We estimate that 300 billion has been lost in Jewish assets and probably close to four times the size of the state of Israel was lost by Jewish owners. This is inside of the [unclear] temple El Shaddai ,which is the God of the mountains referring to the Mesopotamian divine mountain.

58:19 [music]

58:27 Jackie Gmach: You can join me if you want. Who knows this song?

58:35 [music]

59:15 Jackie Gmach: No questions. Don't scare me.

59:19 Susanne Hillman: No, no, no. It's not a question, it's a request. Could you tell the story of the nutcracker.

59:23 Jackie Gmach: The nutcracker is here.

59:26 Susanne Hillman: The one that you dropped form the balcony?

59:32 Jackie Gmach: But, but because I am not, because I am [unclear] hero, I'm not going to tell you the story of the nutcracker you will have to go and read it in the book. Should I do that, or should I say it? You decide.

59:46 Susanne Hillman: Please tell us.

59:51 Jackie Gmach: Okay, it's 1942 and I show you. You remember the balcony? My a - how do I do that? I don't know how. The balcony, right, I was two years old and I was standing on this balcony holding this nutcracker and I was playing and suddenly, I dropped the nutcracker. And from the second floor, the nutcracker falls on the head of a German officer, who starts wailing. We have to say that we have to be careful because we didn't have Nazis really in Tunisia. We have German officers. I mean they were the soldiers they were not as bad as the Nazis but that

mean I dropped that on the head of a German officer and my grandmother realized that. That means she goes to the bathroom. She takes me in and realized that the German officer is entering the villa, and she knows that he's going to come to the apartment. And he knocks at the door and as soon as she opens the doors she holds me in the air like that, and slapped, to the point that this German soldier was sorry, and took me into pity, and said, please, please stop. I'm making it very short, because I want you to read it in the book. He said, please, please, please stop. This is just a little kid. She didn't know what she was doing, and he left, and we stayed in the, in the, in the apartment for two or three days with everything closed, pretending that nobody was inside.

101:40 Jackie Gmach: But the interesting part is, I told this story to Serge Klarsfeld. You all know who is Serge Klarsfeld, the Nazi hunter? Uh, the Serge Klarsfeld is a Nazi hunter and I said, you know if I was in France and I had dropped this nutcracker on [unclear] German officer probably no more of the Nataf family and the Gmach family. And he said, no. I said, are you serious? Yes, in Paris and in France you would probably have been safe. But in Poland, forget it. But it is really this nutcracker. And this is the amazing part of my father, I don't know how he was able to save all those artifacts. Okay.

1:02:31 [audience applause]

1:02:36 Jackie Gmach: Laurie told you a lot and I am just going to recommend for you to look at it. There is, go to youtube and [unclear] the *Silent Exodus*. We have a six-minute here, but I'm sure you have enough already. But when you have a six minute video but the *Silent Exodus*. It's a movie *Silent Exodus*. Okay, say it in English.

1:03:03 Audience: *The Silent Exodus*.

1:03:09 Jackie Gmach: When am I going to learn? Never, thank you. That means, please put it on Youtube. Watch it it's the story of the Jews, the Sephardi during World War II. It's a beautiful document. I tried many, many years to have it, to have it as a community-wide event, but never was successful at it. But watch it.

1:03:38 Susanne Hillman: Would you just like to mingle with people?

1:03:40 Jackie Gmach: Sure

1:03:41 Susanne Hillman: Well I think, uh, Jackie will have -

1:03:43 Jackie Gmach: If you have questions, but it was just a personal story.

1:03:50 Susanne Hillman: Why don't people who are interested come up and talk to her personally I want to thank everybody for coming and than Jackie for a wonderful talk.

1:03:57 Jackie Gmach: Thank you.