

NEWSROOM

[Home](#) / [News](#) / [2025](#) / [January](#) / Holocaust Documentary with CNU Connection Airs on PBSHOLOCAUST DOCUMENTARY WITH CNU CONNECTION
AIRS ON PBS

STUDENT AND FACULTY RESEARCH REACHES GLOBAL AUDIENCE.

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | January 23, 2025*Read time: about 2 min*

A Holocaust documentary based on the work of late CNU professor Dr. Richard Freund and his students will debut Monday on [PBS](#), giving millions of viewers around the world the opportunity to learn from its historical perspective.

“[Resistance: They Fought Back](#)” will air at 10 p.m. EST on Jan. 27, a significant date as it is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The documentary will also continue to be available on PBS.org, the PBS app, and on the PBS Documentaries Prime Video Channel.

The film tells the story of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, a topic that was at the forefront of Freund’s research. Freund came to CNU in 2019 as the first Bertram and Gladys Aaron Endowed Professorship in Jewish Studies. As a member of the [Department of Religion and Philosophy](#), Freund led several archaeological expeditions abroad with Christopher Newport students. He died in 2022.



“The film is the culmination of a lifetime of work on Dr. Freund’s part. He collaborated across boundaries and generations to produce this work of true inspiration,” said Anne Pascucci, Director of [Sponsored Programs](#) at CNU who helped Freund manage grants for his research.

The documentary focuses on the heroic fights Jews waged against the Nazis.

“It’s important that as many people as possible see it and realize that Jews did not go as sheep to slaughter. They fought back in the ghettos, in the forests, and in the death camps. I’m not sure that is widely known,” said Paula Apsell, the film’s director. “Understanding what happened is so important. If we don’t understand history, how do we understand the present and the future?”

Eliane Freund, Dr. Freund’s wife, said the film conveys a timely and critical message.

“As anti-Semitism is on the rise around the world, the message of this film is especially poignant and pertinent. Resistance in the face of religious, ethnic and gender discrimination of any kind is a moral duty that citizens of the world should exercise,” she said.

Freund dedicated his life and his academic career to unearthing artifacts at key sites around the world and then utilizing them to teach about the Holocaust’s atrocities.

Mikaela Martinez Dettinger, ‘22 [Political Science](#), was one of the CNU students who worked closely with Freund. She was interviewed by the film team while conducting research for Freund at archaeological sites in Europe.

“Being interviewed and filmed acted, for me, as an oral diary of my first tangible interaction with the Holocaust and Jewish resistance,” she said. “I learned that small stories are significant. We traveled to places that have been forgotten by mainstream Holocaust history, met people whose stories aren’t written or heard outside of their towns, and searched for evidence of events that have been erased from both memory and landscape. The film pieces together these small stories to reveal a huge side of the Holocaust that has been neglected in most media.”

Freund, she said, was driven by his mission of shedding light on some of history’s darkest chapters to ensure they are never repeated.

“Dr. Freund was passionate about his work, and I think it’s important to remember that his work was not primarily archaeology or history. His work was public education,” Dettinger said. “He always spoke to me about the importance of sharing what was learned as scholars with the public or else, ‘what is it good for?’”

The airing of the documentary to such a potentially huge audience accomplishes Freund’s goal.

“I am overjoyed to know that this movie will be seen by a national TV audience. It achieves Dr. Freund’s desire for public education, and it will be a great resource for starting conversations about the dimensions of the Jewish experience during the Holocaust,” Dettinger said. “It will also serve as an example of how everyday people can work to fight intolerance and injustice.”