AMONG THE RIGHTEOUS

Film Screening of Persona Non-Grata

Yad Vashem - The World Holocaust Remembrance Center recognizes and memorializes non-Jewish individuals who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. Collectively, they are known as “The Righteous Among the Nations.” Among these individuals was Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese Consul stationed in Lithuania during World War II.

Against the direct orders of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, Sugihara, known to refugees as “Sempo,” issued thousands of visas to Polish and Lithuanian Jews so that they could escape the Nazis. He purportedly spent 18-20 hours a day hand-writing visas for asylum seekers until he had to leave the area. When questioned about his motives in the 1980s, he stated, “I knew that somebody would surely complain about me in the future. But, I myself thought this

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would be the right thing to do. There is nothing wrong in saving many people’s lives...The spirit of humanity, philanthropy...neighborly friendship...with this spirit, I ventured to do what I did, confronting this most difficult situation — and because of this reason, I went ahead with redoubled courage."

His efforts and experiences are represented in the 2015 Japanese film, *Persona Non-Grata: The Chiune Sugihara Story*, directed by Cellin Gluck. In conjunction with AJC Dallas and the Japan-America Society, the Ackerman Center kicked off the Dallas Jewish Film Festival on August 28th, 2019 with a screening of Gluck’s film. The biopic traces Sugihara’s life from his days as a student in Japan to his life following the War’s conclusion.

Accompanying the screening was a special appearance by the Honorable Hideo Fukushima (right), the Consul-General of Japan in Houston, who introduced the film and heralded it as a monument to the relationship between Japanese-American and Jewish communities and Japan’s commitment to human rights. He emphasized the film’s importance in promoting the much-needed dialogue to combat persecution and racism. *Continued on page 3*
Dr. Dennis Kratz (top right) introduced the event, announcing the opening of the new Center for Asian Studies at UT Dallas. Dr. Kratz, who is the founding director of the new Center, believes that it “will be a substantial academic institute devoted to the study of Asian culture, economics and history, and the interaction of Asia with America.”

Over 700 guests (bottom right) attended the film screening and accompanying talk. The event was held in the Lecture Hall in the Edith O’Donnell Arts, Technology and Emerging Communications (ATEC) building on campus. The evening also included a private reception where invited guests met with the Consul-General directly.

*From the left: Japanese Consul-General Hideo Fukushima, Dr. David Patterson and Dr. Sarah R. Valente attend the private reception. Dr. Valente is a visiting assistant professor who teaches courses on the Holocaust and human rights.*