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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**USC Shoah Foundation Announces 2015 IWitness Video Challenge**

***Contest challenges students to honor the legacy of* Schindler’s List *by engaging in community service inspired by survivors’ testimonies and showcasing their action in an IWitness video essay.***

Los Angeles, Sept. 10, 2014 -- Secondary school students have the chance to win a trip to Los Angeles by entering the second annual IWitness Video Challenge hosted by USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education.

The contest challenges students to act on the legacy of the Oscar-winning film *Schindler’s List* and do something positive in their community that exemplifies the movie’s message that one person can make a difference. It is open to all secondary school students in the United States and Canada who attend public, private or home schools.

Participants will be guided in the IWitness Video Challenge activity to build a community service project through the examples they learn from engaging with testimonies in IWitness, the Institute’s free educational website. IWitness (iwitness.usc.edu) brings the human stories the Institute’s Visual History Archive to teachers and their students via engaging multimedia learning activities.

Students are then tasked with creating a one- ­to four-­minute video essay with an intuitive video-­editing tool on the IWitness website, allowing them to link their voices to those in the archive who inspired them to act.

The winning student, along with their teacher and parent/guardian, will be flown to Los Angeles to screen their film at USC Shoah Foundation. The 2014 winner, 14-year-old Ruth Hernandez from Philadelphia, was inspired by watching the testimony of Holocaust survivors who had to leave their homes to construct *Voices of Our Journey*, a video about modern-day immigrants.

USC Shoah Foundation founder Steven Spielberg helped launch the inaugural IWitness Video Challenge in February 2013. The challenge was designed around the same premise as the movie *Schindler’s List*, that one person can make a difference. As Spielberg said at the time of the inaugural launch, “We can use IWitness to show the power of random acts of kindness, the significance of contribution to community and the very idea that the best way to teach empathy is with examples of it so that maybe someday kindness will be a natural reflex.”

Evaluation of IWitness over the past year has resulted in research that shows up to a 28 percent increase in an interest in helping others after they engaged with IWitness. Students also showed a 30 percent improvement in their critical thinking skills. In all, 72 percent of students surveyed said they benefitted from using IWitness.

Teachers interested in signing up their students for the IWitness Video Challenge must submit their class-winning entry by May 8, 2015. Regional winners will be announced on May 29, 2015. The national winner will be announced on June 5, 2015.

Now used in all 50 states and 58 countries, IWitness gives students access to some of the more than 53,000 testimonies of survivors of not only the Holocaust, but also the Rwandan Tutsi Genocide and Nanjing Massacre.

“Not only does IWitness teach digital skills that are so important today, it provides invaluable content that helps students understand that they not only have the power to make positive changes, but also the responsibility to take action,” said USC Shoah Foundation Executive Director Stephen D. Smith. “And now, with the IWitness Challenge, students can become teachers by creating and sharing their videos.”

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**About IWitness**
IWitness, which the American Association of School Librarians has named as a top website for teaching and learning, provides students with guided exploration to full-life histories and testimonies of nearly 1,300 survivors and other witnesses to the Holocaust and other genocides. Students watch testimonies and use them in individual or group multimedia projects; teachers can assign activities as classwork or homework, and can even custom-build their own lessons and activities. The testimonies are searchable by more than 9,000 keywords, enabling students to pinpoint exact moments of interest within each testimony. The built-in IWitness video editor gives students the ability to construct video essays and edit testimony as well as integrate footage and other materials from outside sources such as photos, maps, voiceover audio, music and text.

**About USC Shoah Foundation**
USC Shoah Foundation — The Institute for Visual History and Education is dedicated to making audio- visual interviews with survivors and other witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides, a compelling voice for education and action. The Institute’s current collection of more than 53,000 eyewitness testimonies contained within its Visual History Archive preserves history as told by the people who lived it, and lived through it. Housed at the University of Southern California, within the Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, the Institute works with partners around the world to advance scholarship and research, to provide resources and online tools for educators, and to disseminate the testimonies for educational purposes.