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“We Share The Same Sky” Is The First Testimony-Based Podcast Presented By USC Shoah Foundation, Bringing History To Life Through Exquisite Narration, Interviews And Archival Materials

Award-Winning Photographer, Writer and Educator Rachael Cerrotti Tells the Extraordinary Story of Her Grandmother’s Escape from the Nazis by Retracing Her Grandmother’s Steps, While Living a Personal Journey of Love and Loss

LOS ANGELES, CA/BOSTON, MA/COPENHAGEN, DE — Launching today, USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education introduces its first-ever testimony-based podcast, *We Share the Same Sky*. In a seven-episode arc, *We Share the Same Sky* presents an intimate portrait of Rachael Cerrotti’s family history and her own personal journey of love and loss as she retraces the steps of her grandmother, Hana Seckel-Drucker, who was displaced across Europe during and in the wake of World War II. Created, produced and hosted by Rachael Cerrotti, an award-winning storyteller, photojournalist, and Holocaust educator, Rachael was also the subject of an Edward R. Murrow Award-winning series titled *Beyond Sides of History*. In addition to its innovative storytelling, the podcast provides a resource for education that is grounded in the power of testimony, technology and the narrative of personal growth.

“We Share the Same Sky introduces a new storytelling experience for people worldwide — it is an intimate personal journey that connects them to history and to life today, beautifully supported and guided by Rachael Cerrotti through her grandmother Hana’s story,” said Stephen D. Smith, the Finci-Viterbi Endowed Executive Director of USC Shoah Foundation and UNESCO Chair on Genocide Education. “The podcast also opens new educational avenues, giving students a chance at a personal learning journey that connects them to the larger world, and their own power to make it the way they want it to be.”

Born Hana Dubova, Rachael’s grandmother fled her native Czechoslovakia at age 14 as part of a rescue mission for Jewish children, supported by the Danish government. While following her grandmother’s journey, Rachael’s travels bring her to a farm in Denmark owned by the descendants of the family that sheltered Hana, then to Sweden — where her grandmother arrived with no money, belongings, friends or contacts, after

fleeing a Nazi raid in the dead of night — and finally to America, where Hana immigrated after World War II, relying initially on distant relatives before they kicked her out of their home.

“Over the past decade, I have completely immersed myself in my grandmother’s story. Her escape from war and the travels that followed have been the backdrop to my entire adult life,” said Rachael. “What began as an effort to collect her stories grew into my life’s work. It has been an honor and a privilege to create art from her testimony. And, it has been an even greater honor to live her story myself. I went out to search for the stories of the dead and found myself a beautiful life.” *We Share the Same Sky* is the culmination of this journey, both the literal and the figurative.

Throughout her travels, Rachael encounters and interviews the children and grandchildren of her grandmother’s contemporaries, both the descendants of fellow survivors and those who took it upon themselves to protect Jews through the Holocaust, often at great risk. The story finds itself in the present on several occasions; most notably when Rachael, at age 27, experiences the shocking and devastating loss of her young husband, and when Rachael poignantly encounters current-day refugees from the Middle East and Africa, coincidentally finding refuge in the very same place where her grandmother once lived as a refugee.

We Share the Same Sky will be bolstered with multimedia educational resources that weave together Holocaust history, survivor testimony and other classroom-ready materials. These resources, developed by USC Shoah Foundation and Echoes & Reflections -- the leading provider of Holocaust education -- will be aligned to academic standards and available in a variety of online and offline formats, providing guidance to educators on the effective use of podcasts in the classroom. All content will be accessible on USC Shoah Foundation’s IWitness website beginning on November 11, coinciding with the release of the final episode of the series.

We Share the Same Sky is available for streaming and download on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts and most podcast streaming services and directly at sfi.usc.edu/we-share-the-same-sky.

About Rachael Cerrotti:

Rachael Cerrotti is an award-winning photographer, writer and educator whose stories focus on exploring the intergenerational impact of migration and memory. Her work has been featured by NPR, Public Radio International, WGBH, WBUR, The Boston Globe, Images & Voices of Hope and various publications in Israel and throughout Europe. She is an alumna of Temple University and the Rothberg International School at Hebrew

University of Jerusalem. In addition, she has completed educators' seminars with *Yad Vashem* and *Facing History & Ourselves*. Her work has led her to over a dozen countries and she is now based in her hometown of Boston.

In 2017, Rachael was the subject of multimedia series produced by Boston's NPR station, WBUR, titled *Beyond Sides of History*, which won the prestigious Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Innovation. For the past decade, Rachael has been pursuing her long-term project, *We Share the Same Sky*, retracing her grandmother's route of displacement during and in the wake of World War II. She presents this story in classrooms and communities worldwide and is preparing to publish a book to complement the *We Share the Same Sky* podcast.

About USC Shoah Foundation:

USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education develops empathy, understanding and respect through testimony, using its Visual History Archive of more than 55,000 video testimonies, award-winning IWitness education program, and the Center for Advanced Genocide Research. USC Shoah Foundation's interactive programming, research and materials are accessed in museums and universities, cited by government leaders and NGOs, and taught in classrooms around the world. Now in its third decade, USC Shoah Foundation reaches millions of people on six continents from its home at the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern California.