



L'CHAIM

Resurgent Jewish Life (Germany) 2020

26:42 minutes, premiering on public television in April 2021



Mentored by Emmy-nominated filmmaker Anja Baron, Semon Shabaev (age 19) tells his story about resurgent Jewish life in Germany at a time of rising antisemitism worldwide.

Today the world is seeing a rise in antisemitism. The Anti-Defamation League reports that the number of antisemitic incidents and assaults on Jews and Jewish institutions in the United States has doubled in the last year, and that one billion people (26 percent of the world's population) harbor antisemitic attitudes.

Despite Germany's dark history, the country now has the fastest-growing Jewish population in Europe.

L'Chaim, a BYkids film about the resurgence of Jewish life in Berlin, is directed by 19-year-old Semon Shabaev, whose parents emigrated to Germany from Russia in the 1990s. Semon's film dives into the question of identity, of feeling both German and Jewish, and addresses the historic burden and guilt of the Holocaust carried by his adoptive country. Semon explores German-Jewish identity and the Holocaust by examining silent memorials, active remembrance, and daily echoes of the Holocaust in everyday life in Berlin. He focuses on efforts to both understand antisemitism and find ways not to repeat the past. At the same time, he introduces us to a lively community of young German Jews and the joyous celebration of their rich heritage and culture.

To be broadcast on public television in 2021 and distributed with educational material by PBS LearningMedia, Discovery Education and PenPal Schools, ***L'Chaim*** will be shared with kids and teachers with a standards-

aligned school guide and a Take Action guide to engage kids in conversations and actions around antisemitism.

L'CHAIM key scenes include:

- Commemoration services on Holocaust Remembrance Day at Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg, a Nazi concentration camp where political prisoners were detained from 1936 to 1945. Each year Germany commemorates the Holocaust with memorial services at Sachsenhausen and throughout the country.
- A visit to the Central Council of Jews in Germany to discuss a program called Likrat, which trains young German Jews (called Likratinos) to introduce non-Jews to Jewish culture and highlight the vibrant Jewish life in Germany today.
- Jewrovision, a once-a-year Jewish song contest modeled on the Eurovision competition and one of the most joyous events for Jews living in Germany.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT – SEMON SHABAEV

"My dream is to show the world the greatness of Jewish life in Germany.

Antisemitism exists in Germany (some Jews opt not to wear their yarmulke or Star of David), but we learn about the Holocaust from an early age and denying the Holocaust is punishable under criminal codes. What a lot of people forget is that Germany is trying to do better. I hope my film will make people more aware of the human connection we all share to build bridges of understanding and respect." —

MENTOR'S BIO – ANJA BARON

Anja Baron is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, producer, and director whose work has been screened at prestigious festivals worldwide and shown on U.S. and European television to critical acclaim, including two Emmy nominations. Baron worked as a correspondent for UNICEF, reporting on crises concerning women and children around the world. She mentored Mohammad Shasho in the BYkids film ***Out of Aleppo***, which documents the 17-year-old Syrian refugee's story of relocation to Berlin.

MENTOR'S STATEMENT

"Thirty years ago, there was hardly any Jewish life or community in Berlin to speak of. Returning to Berlin, after spending my adult life in New York and marrying a Jewish man, I am profoundly touched to discover Jewish life blossoming here. Mentoring a young Jewish man in the filmic exploration of Germany's dark history while exploring new horizons is a profoundly moving experience for us both—and possibly helps us navigate the many layers of the ongoing relationship between Germans and Jews." —Anja Baron

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS Stephanie Apt, Holly Carter, and Helen Sheinman

ABOUT BYKIDS We create understanding through storytelling.

BYkids produces documentary films by kids and partners with public television and educators to inspire conversations around global issues of human dignity and social justice. FILMS BYKIDS share the stories of kids who confront issues such as immigration, bullying, juvenile justice, climate change and child marriage. We reach kids in classrooms with teaching materials that promote empathy and understanding to make issues feel personal, relevant and actionable, rather than foreign. Join us at BYkids.org to see and support stories that build global citizenry.

"By giving kids from diverse backgrounds around the world tools, skills, and guidance to make documentary films, this great organization provides an outlet for sharing personal stories, which in turn brings us closer together as an international community rooted in compassion and understanding."

— Former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg