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IRENA SENDLER

In the Name of Their Mothers



...a remarkable testament to one of history's great, unsung heroines...

Irena Sendler: In the Name of Their Mothers is the true story of a group of young Polish women, some barely out of their teens, who outfoxed the Nazis during World War II to save the lives of thousands of Jewish children.

For decades, Irena Sendler kept silent about her wartime work. Now, in the last long interviews she gave before she died at the age of 98, she reveals the truth about a daring conspiracy of women in occupied Poland.

Irena Sendler was a 29-year-old social worker when the Nazis invaded Poland. When Warsaw's Jews were imprisoned inside a ghetto without food and medicine, she and her friends smuggled in aid and began smuggling orphaned children out – hiding them in convents, orphanages and

private homes. Soon they were appealing to Jewish mothers to part with their children in order to save them. Before the Nazis burned the entire district to the ground, they had managed to smuggle out over 2,500 children.

Over the next two years, they would care for the children, disguise their identities and move them constantly, to keep them from being discovered and killed. They joined forces with the Polish Resistance to get money to fund and protect foster caretakers and they preserved the true identities of the children, hoping to re-unite them with their Jewish families after the war.

In October of 1943, Irena Sendler was captured by the Gestapo, imprisoned and tortured. When she refused to divulge anything about her co-

workers or her organization, she was sentenced to death. She escaped on the day she was to be executed, thanks to her friends in the Resistance who had managed to bribe a German guard. With a new false identity, she continued with her work until the end of the war.

All of the children rescued by Sendler's network survived the war, and many were re-united with their families.

This one-hour program features Irena Sendler and her liaisons along with several of the children they rescued. Their stories – evoked through rare archival footage, family photographs and poetic re-creations shot in Warsaw – are a resounding testament to the power of moral courage, even in the darkest of times.