

Dr. Aomar Boum to Lecture on Jewish Refugees in Saharan Labor Camps

Mark Kirchhoff, Program and Communications Assistant

On Friday, March 3 at 12:00 pm, Dr. Aomar Boum, Assistant Professor in Social Anthropology at UCLA will speak in the Board Room of the Rose Blumkin Jewish Home. In addition to being a faculty member at UCLA, Dr. Boum is a Fellow with the United States Holocaust Museum. With this lecture even a kosher meal will be available through the Star Deli at participant's expense. Those desiring to have a meal are asked to arrive no later than 11:45 am to place an order and have it delivered to the board room prior to the start of the lecture. The lecture is open to the public free of charge and is limited in length to assist participants in arriving and leaving over their lunch breaks.



Dr. Boum describes himself as “a socio-cultural anthropologist with a historical bent concerned with the social and cultural representation of and political discourse about religious and ethnic minorities in the Middle East and North Africa.” His topic for the day is *Untold Stories: Vichy and the Internment of European Jews in Saharan Labor Camps*. Dr. Boum explains that in the aftermath of Nazi occupation of France, many European Jews fled towards North Africa to seek refuge. However, a lot of them were captured by Vichy [name for France during the war] authorities and sent to forced labor camps in the Saharan desert of Morocco and Algeria

where they built trans-Saharan railroads. Following the American landing in Casablanca, many refugees were able to leave the camps, although a number were not able to survive the desert climate and Vichy treatment. This talk sheds light on this marginalized story of the war by highlighting the daily lives of a number of Jews who were interned in these desert camps.

On Thursday, March 2 at 7:00 pm at the Magnolia Hotel, 1615 Howard Street, Omaha, Dr. Boum will be the keynote lecturer for the Missouri Valley History Conference. This year's conference theme is “Remembering and Being Remembered: Monuments, Memorials, and Legacies.” Dr. Boum's keynote address is *The Politics of Memory: Muslim Perception of Jews in Post-colonial Morocco*. The evening begins with a reception at 6:30 pm. The event is free and open to the public. This is the second consecutive year that the Schwalb Center and History Department at UNO has sponsored a speaker for the Missouri Valley History Conference. The Jewish Federation of Omaha readily accepted the offer to sponsor Dr. Boum for the Friday luncheon lecture. The Schwalb Center originally came to know Dr. Boum when Dr. Moshe Gershovich, of recent memory, met him while on a trip to Morocco. Moshe was impressed with his depth and breadth of knowledge and was the primary advocate for Boum's coming to Omaha for this conference and lecture.

Mark your calendar to attend either or both, the keynote address on March 2 at 7:00 pm at the Magnolia Hotel or the luncheon lecture at 12:00 pm on March 3 at the Rose Blumkin Jewish Home.