

**STANLEY BERGMAN
ELLIS ISLAND
MEDALS OF HONOR CEREMONY
MAY 7, 2011**

- It is such an honor to be here today in the distinguished company of the 2011 Ellis Island Medal of Honor recipients.
- I first learned of the Medal of Honor from Jacqueline Murekatete,
 - who arrived in the United States as a 10 year-old orphaned survivor of the Rwandan genocide.

- Jacqueline joined Miracle Corners of the World, an organization co-founded by our younger son Eddie and dedicated to youth empowerment and genocide prevention.
- Jacqueline, who is now completing law school, is a 2008 recipient of the Medal,
 - and our son Eddie is a 2009 Medal recipient.
- This evening, I am so proud to follow in the footsteps of Jacqueline and Eddie.

- My family's journey to this place tonight began 75 years ago
 - when my parents fled Nazi Germany in February 1936 for South Africa.
- In South Africa, they once again witnessed the birth of evil
 - in the form of the Apartheid regime.
- And within our lifetimes, Germany, South Africa, and Rwanda have become vibrant democracies.
- Eddie married Sharon, whose parents and grandparents fled Iran and were welcomed with open arms to this country.

- Our other son, Paul, and his wife Sara, are giving birth to a baby in Shanghai in the coming weeks. Sara and her parents came to the United States from South Africa. Paul, Sara, and her parents are all Americans, and the baby will be too.
- The journey that Marion and I took from apartheid South Africa landed us at JFK airport 35 years ago this week!
- From our first day here, the United States and the great City of New York that is now our home welcomed us with open arms,
 - as with countless other immigrants over the years.

- I remember so distinctly the day that I became a citizen of this great country 25 years ago,
 - and we celebrated with an “apple pie party” at my company’s warehouse.
- This country also became home to my beloved parents – Oma and Opa – and Marion’s parents, who often would tell us how blessed they felt to spend their golden years in this land of freedom and opportunity.

- Tonight we are here to bear witness to the irrefutable fact that the United States of America provides that rare environment that allows people to dream big,
 - and to turn those dreams into reality.
- No dream is too big for Americans:
 - Our unique American culture provides the oxygen that enables our dreams to become reality.
- My family's "American story" is echoed time and time again throughout this great country.

- Americans dream of making this a better world for our families and for all citizens of this country.
- We are idealistic, and dream of exporting our participatory culture and democratic values around the world.
- We may get things wrong from time to time,
 - but our unique values based culture invariably brings us back to the right way.

- Yes, our world is faced with major challenges,
 - but tonight Marion and I are here to confirm humanity's ability to rise from the lowest depths to the highest of ideals.

- Indeed, this land called America
 - provides unsurpassed opportunity to those who land on its shores and strives to make the world better for all.

- Because of this strength, there can be no doubt that America's best years lay ahead of us.
 - And we are deeply grateful to be a part of it.
- Thank you Mr. Nasser Kazeminy and NECO for what you do for America.