

# Voices for Truth & Humanity 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Remembrance Awards



Top row: (from left to right) Elisha Wiesel with Martin Bloch; Francine Raubvogel, Chief of Staff, Consul General of Israel in NY with Prime Minister Salih Hudayar; Roey Diefendorf, his daughter Jennie Donovan and educator Joey Waters, 3 Dimensional Wealth Advisory. Second row: (from left to right) Dr. Lorna Lewis and Roger Tilles, NYS Board of Regents; Representatives from the NJ Commission on Holocaust Education; Sal and Molly Ferro, Allure Home Improvements; Fiona Graham and Rey Jimenez, CIO, CF Global Trading; Jack Britvan, President, Voices for Truth and Humanity. Third row: (from left to right) Glen and Janine Marderstein, Charlie and Candace Bergmann, Marlene and Angel Cepedal; Mark and Dr. Beth Krieger; Stuart Tauber, UJA-Federation with Mr. and Mrs. Rick Lewis, CEO Mid Island YJCC and Suffolk YJCC. Bottom: (from left to right) Glen Landow, Rabbi Yakov Saacks, The Chai Center, Noel Rabb, Corey Rosenberg, Cree8 Marketing Group; Anna Sophia Bloch, Martin Bloch and Tatiana Bloch; Scott Haber, Signature Bank; Michael Cohen, Eastern Director, Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Photos by: Alex M. Wolff.

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## Going to Bat for Holocaust Education



Top: (from left) NYS Assemblyman *Steve Stern* and Congresswoman *Carolyn Maloney* received the Public Service Award at the Voices for Truth & Humanity's 2nd Annual Remembrance Awards Dinner on Nov. 10, 2021 for their groundbreaking bills to establish a Holocaust education program throughout NYS and the entire US. Also seen are award winning journalist, *Rita Cosby* and the former president of the NYS Council of School Superintendents, Dr. *Lorna Lewis*. Bottom: (from left) Honoring the legacy of *Elie Wiesel* and representing the Wiesel family is *Elisha Wiesel*, recipient 2021 Remembrance Award (along with his mother, *Marion*), Honored guest *Salih Hudayar*, Prime Minister, East Turkistan Government-in-Exile, *Eric Post*, LI Director, American Jewish Committee, Rabbi *Joe Potasnik*, Exec. VP, NY Board of Rabbis, *Andrea Bolender*, Chair, Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center and *Avi Posnick*, Managing Director NE, StandWithUs. Photos by: Alex M. Wolff.



# Going to Bat for Holocaust Education

By Henry Levy, Alan Manheim and Glen Landow

On Wednesday November 10th, Voices for Truth and Humanity (V4TH) and its 200 guests celebrated the enormous support for its mission at their fabulously successful 2nd Annual Remembrance Awards Dinner at the Crest Hollow Country Club in Woodbury, New York. The event had taken a one year hiatus due to Covid restrictions. The evening's distinguished honorees included Remembrance Award winners Marion and Elisha Wiesel, the wife and son of Nobel laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, as well as Public Service Award Winners Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, New York State Senator Anna Kaplan, New York State Assemblyman Steve Stern, and renowned educator Dr. Lorna Lewis.

The gravity of the timing of this year's dinner was not lost on anyone, as the event took place while Kristallnacht programs were being held around the world commemorating the start of the Holocaust, and veterans were being celebrated for their sacrifice and selfless duty to country on Veterans Day.

That is what made V4TH's message resonate so strongly, as numerous elected officials, dignitaries, partner organizations, and supporters gathered together, motivated to advance their shared goals.

The evening's speakers reinforced V4TH's clear and focused mission, to promote the adoption of a curriculum on the Holocaust, slavery, and other genocides in public schools throughout the United States. As referenced during the evening's program, recent surveys alarmingly demonstrate that younger generations have little to no knowledge of the Holocaust, or an understanding of the magnitude of the atrocities that were committed.

The program included a panel discussion moderated by noted TV news anchor and correspondent, radio host, and best selling author Rita Cosby who began by telling the harrowing and deeply moving story of her father who grew up in Poland during World War II and although not Jewish, was arrested for helping Jews imprisoned in the ghetto, then escaping only to be saved by allied troops. She stated, "V4TH repeatedly cautions us that the perpetrators of every genocide throughout history have followed the same strategy. First they delegitimize, then they dehumanize, and then they destroy because by then, no one cares."

The panel discussion featured a lively conversation with Congresswoman Maloney, Assemblyman Stern, and Dr. Lewis, each answering questions about State mandates on Holocaust education and the inconsistent foundation

students receive because those mandates are rarely followed by a formalized curriculum, or testing metrics to measure learning outcomes.

Congresswoman Maloney's Never Again Education Act, which was passed by both houses of Congress and signed into law by President Trump in 2020, reinforced the need for Holocaust education and provided funding and resources for its implementation.

Assemblyman Stern, co-Sponsor of a bill in the NY State Assembly to study the limitations of current Holocaust education in NY, expressed his belief that education is the key to combating the alarming rise in incidents of anti-Semitism and hate plaguing the country. Dr. Lewis, a pioneer in education and the first woman of color to be President of the New York State Council of School Superintendents, explained that the current extent of Holocaust education in each school district is unfortunately dependent upon the demographics of the community, and whether it is locally considered a topic of

importance.

Elisha Wiesel accepted the Remembrance Award on behalf of himself and his mother Marion who is ninety years old and sent her regrets for being unable to attend. Together, they lead the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity. Mr. Wiesel gave a serious voice to the need for young people to be educated about the Holocaust, and to be aware of history and learn from the past. He explained that all people have a responsibility to speak out against injustice. He urged the audience to be participants in promoting dialogue among people who disagree, and recounted how his father, when meeting people with opinions that differed from his own, would always ask questions about their beliefs rather than attacking their positions. That approach often led to a more positive understanding of each other.

Mr. Wiesel also admonished the attendees to reject the lies and propaganda of the BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) movement targeting Israel, explaining that the world's lone Jewish nation

and homeland of the Jewish people is under attack by those who seek her destruction, emphasizing that it is critical to accept that hate emanates from the right and the left.

The Wiesel family was presented with a sculpture by world renowned artist Tmima, herself a daughter of a Holocaust survivor. The piece depicts suitcases taken from the inmates at Auschwitz. 2019 Remembrance Award winner, Martin Bloch, himself a Holocaust survivor, presented the Wiesel family with this year's award. In his presentation, he emphasized the need to include Holocaust education within the context of WWII.

The invocation was given by Rabbi Joe Potasnik, Executive Vice President of the New York Board of Rabbis who said, "Hearing Elisha Wiesel speak on the same day on the calendar we remember Kristallnacht gives testimony to the spiritual resilience of the Jewish people. As Elie Wiesel said, 'When you are born, you begin life, but sometimes you have to learn to begin again.'"

Eric Post, Long Island Regional Director of the American Jewish

Committee, commented on the gala, "The speakers and discussion were fantastic. I look forward to continuing to work together on improving Holocaust education in NYS."

In her message delivered to everyone in attendance, NYS Governor Kathy Hochul said, "Voices for Truth and Humanity is committed to teaching the history and the lessons of the Holocaust, World War II, and other genocides in a formal curriculum in public schools. The world must never forget the tragedy of the Holocaust and the 11 million victims who endured intolerable pain and suffering during one of the darkest chapters in the history of mankind." She paid tribute to the legacy of Elie Wiesel and recognized the honorees for their inspirational dedication to fight against anti-Semitism and hate movements.

Andrea Stewart-Cousins, New York State Senate Majority Leader, expressed in her message her gratitude for V4TH's work and mission, "promoting the education of WWII, the Holocaust, and other genocides in public schools throughout the United States."

Cardinal Timothy Dolan and the Archdiocese of New York sent a message, "joining in celebrating the illustrious guests and remembering the departed friends honored tonight as the vital mission of Voices for Truth and Humanity continues."

Andrea Bolender, Executive Director of the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center, a sponsor of the Remembrance Award, congratulated Marion and Elisha Wiesel, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, NYS Senator Anna Kaplan, and NYS Assemblyman Steve Stern, and thanked them for, "ensuring that Holocaust and genocide education are a priority in our schools, that we remember the lessons and victims of the Holocaust, and that we continue our unwavering fight against BDS and other hate-filled movements."

The evening's honored guest, Prime Minister Salih Hudayar of the East Turkistan Government-in-Exile, gave an impassioned speech reinforcing the shared suffering between the Jewish people and the Uyghur and Turkic people. He seared in everyone's mind the vision of the modern-day genocide currently being perpetrated by the Chinese Government against his people including indiscriminate arrests, forced labor camps, rape, killings, and the denial of basic human rights. He expressed the deep appreciation of his people for the overwhelming support they have received from the Jewish community.

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To learn more about Voices for Truth and Humanity or to join in their mission, visit their website at [www.voices4truthandhumanity.org](http://www.voices4truthandhumanity.org)



**Top: (from left) Honorees New York State Assemblyman Steve Stern, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, award winning journalist Rita Cosby and panelist Dr. Lorna Lewis, former president of New York State Council of School Superintendents. Bottom: Voices for Truth and Humanity Board of Directors presenting Elisha Wiesel the Remembrance Award created by artist Tmima. From left: Jack Britvan, Henry Levy, Gary Glick, Tmima, Elisha Wiesel, Glen Landow, Michael Laurie, Angel Cepeda, Noel Rabb, Tom O'Rourke. Photos by: Alex M. Wolff.**