



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service

Professor Elie Wiesel

May 1, 2002

ORDER OF EXERCISE

I. Welcome

Robert L. Gallucci
Dean, Edmond A. Walsh School of Foreign Service

II. Introduction of Elie Wiesel

John J. DeGioia
President, Georgetown University

III. Address

Elie Wiesel
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate
Professor, Boston University

IV. Closing remarks

Robert L. Gallucci

Professor Elie Wiesel

Nobel Peace Prize winner and Boston University Professor Elie Wiesel has worked on behalf of oppressed people for much of his adult life. His personal experience of the Holocaust has led him to use his talents as an author, teacher and storyteller to defend human rights and peace throughout the world.

Wiesel's efforts have earned him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States Congressional Gold Medal and the Medal of Liberty Award, the rank of Grand Officer in the French Legion of Honor, and in 1986, the Nobel Peace Prize. He has received more than ninety honorary degrees from institutions of higher learning.

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter appointed him Chairman of the President's Commission on the Holocaust. In 1980 he became Founding Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. Elie Wiesel is also the Founding President of the Paris based Universal Academy of Cultures.

His more than forty books have won numerous awards, including the Prix Medicis for *A Beggar in Jerusalem*, the Prix Livre Inter for *The Testament* and the Grand Prize for Literature from the City of Paris for *The Fifth Son*. The first volume of Wiesel's memoirs, *All Rivers Run to the Sea*, was published in New York (Knopf) in December, 1995.

A native of Sighet, Transylvania (Romania), Wiesel and his family were deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz when he was fifteen years old. His mother and younger sister perished there, his two older sisters survived. Wiesel and his father were later transported to Buchenwald, where his father died.

After the war, Wiesel studied in Paris and later became a journalist in that city, yet he remained silent about what he had endured as an inmate in the death camps. During an interview with the French writer Francois Mauriac, Wiesel was persuaded to end that silence. He subsequently wrote *La Nuit* (Night). Since its publication in 1958, *La Nuit* has been translated into twenty-five languages and millions of copies have been sold.

Three months after he received the Nobel Peace Prize, Marion and Elie Wiesel established The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity. Its mission is to advance the cause of human rights and peace throughout the world by creating a new forum for the discussion of urgent ethical issues confronting humanity.

Elie Wiesel has been Distinguished Professor of Judaic Studies at the City University of New York (1972-1976), and first Henry Luce Visiting Scholar in the Humanities and Social Thought at Yale University (1982-1983). Since 1976, he has been the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University where he also holds the title of University Professor. He is a member of the Faculty in the Department of Religion as well as the Department of Philosophy. An American citizen since 1963, Elie Wiesel lives in New York with his wife and son.

Thomas J. Ernst Family

The Ernst Family has sponsored Professor Elie Wiesel's visit to Georgetown University on May 1, 2002 as part of their long-term charitable giving plans to Georgetown, which are comparable to their gifts given to Seton Hall University's Judeo-Christian Studies program and to Delbarton School in Morristown, New Jersey.

Thomas J. Ernst is a product of 14 years of Jesuit education, including a law degree from Georgetown Law School. He holds three other degrees as well as a Ph.D. candidacy in Government. While earning his Master's degree in International Relations from St. Louis University, he served as Student Body President and was named Student of the Year. In addition, Mr. Ernst's lifelong commitment to civil rights and social justice includes service as a Voting Rights organizer for Dr. King's SCLC in Alabama in the early 1960s. He served as a lawyer in the 1970s and 1980s for many civil rights causes, including the A. Philip Randolph Institute, where he specialized in voting rights, registration, and disputed election law. Mr. Ernst served as a Congressional Assistant, and worked particularly with the U.S. House Health and Environment Subcommittee. He has successfully built and managed health care-related businesses for the past two decades. A former Central Intelligence Agency Officer and U.S. Air Force Intelligence Officer, Mr. Ernst was a USAF Squadron Commander during the Vietnam War and continued for many years as a USAF Intelligence Reserve Officer.

Joanna Valgenti Ernst is a graduate of St. Louis University and is completing her Master's degree in Judeo-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University. She has been elected to numerous offices including the National Presidency of the Young Democrats' Women's Caucus and Delegate to the Democratic National Convention. She taught Social Studies for many years in inner city schools, and currently serves on the boards of many charities, including those helping abused children and Holocaust survivors.

Joseph Ernst is a security professional who has worked with Naval Intelligence, Kroll Associates, and with the U.S. Department of Justice's Center of Transnational Crime in the fight against terrorism and multinational crime groups. In the 1990s, he participated in three Student Exchange programs, during which he studied extensively in Russia, Central Europe, and Israel. Joe was selected as one of Ohio's Top Fifty Student Leaders while studying Military History at Ohio State University. He later received his undergraduate degree from American University, and is currently completing his Master's degree in International Relations, with an emphasis on National Security issues.

Benjamin Ernst is a freshman at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service. He participates in Georgetown's Rugby Club and various student committees. While at the Delbarton School in Morristown, New Jersey, Ben won AP Placement Distinction, National Merit Scholar Commendation, and played on Delbarton's State Champion football team. Ben received additional honors in American History, as Delbarton's Best Student of French, and he was named "Big Brother of the Year" for leadership in that service. Ben conducted a research project on prejudice reduction focused on Benedictine Father Bruno, who saved over 300 Jewish children from the Nazis. This project culminated in Professor Wiesel's address to Delbarton School.

Born, Sighet, Romania, September 30, 1928

ELIE WIESEL



THE PRESIDENT AND DIRECTORS OF GEORGETOWN COLLEGE: TO ALL WHO SHALL VIEW THESE PRESENTS: GREETINGS AND PEACE IN THE LORD

He made us see that from the darkest night comes the dawn, from the deepest despair can come renewal and hope. He wrote first of *Night* and then of *Dawn* and of *Testament* and onto *Ani Maamin*, "I Believe in Spite of All," landmarks of spiritual development. This is the inestimable gift that Elie Wiesel has given to all humankind, a gift for today and for always. It is a gift of faith, of hope, and of the deepest form of love.

Born a Jew in 1928 in Sighet, in northern Transylvania: the wrong place at the wrong time, a time of war and a fate that took him and his family to Auschwitz. His mother and sister died in the gas chamber. Eliezer and his father eluded death to work and starve and watch others die, many quickly, many slowly. He literally smelled civilization burning upward in the crematorium. And he watched his own father slip away from his very hand.

Elie Wiesel survived. But his is so much more than physical survival. He is the revival of the soul, the burnt Phoenix returned from ashes to life, an eternal proof of how to turn suffering into a recreative force of life.

Elie Wiesel bears witness to the fragility of the human condition, to what man can do to man. He testifies of the devastation resultant from man cut loose from moral values. He has emerged from silence to give voice to those who could not speak. He is a living monument to us, to our children, and to our children's children of the aid given to evil by the indifference of any of us. He remembers and he reminds humanity what happens when memory is destroyed.

We honor Elie Wiesel because of this. But he is more. His greatest gift to us and to our children's children is his message of hope, of faith, and of survival.

That message is universal. Elie Wiesel has taken that message to those who suffer throughout the world: to South Africa and Biafra, to Nicaragua and Vietnam, to Bangladesh and Ethiopia. Remembering his own ordeal and that of his people, he has brought physical aid and food to those areas of suffering, despair, and starvation. When Elie Wiesel sees a child who is hungry, a child who cries out and no one hears, he cannot remain silent. He has rejected a life of complacency. Rather, he has dedicated his life to those who are poor and oppressed, no matter their race or religion or their spot on earth.

And that message is eternal through his words, both oral and written. Through his twenty-five books and many articles, he will live on long after his physical days have ended. He has dared to carry his message to each of us, from the least of us to heads of state, speaking from truth to power, lecturing, cajoling, prodding into greater awareness and dedication to those values that render the human triumphant over evil.

As writer, educator, and philosopher, Elie Wiesel bears witness to the depths into which man can fall. He stands as a reminder. But he also bears witness to the capacity of man to endure the depths of anguish, and to rise again, reaching beyond himself in faith. He bears eternal witness to stir each of us from complacency to compassion for suffering wherever it may be, from self-centeredness to service in the cause of humanity. He bears witness that in *Night* we can find the *Dawn*, if we truly believe, and in *Testament*, faith. And we can make that new day of value, if we truly care.

For the courage he inspires and for the wisdom he teaches the President and Directors of Georgetown University respectfully proclaim

ELIE WIESEL

Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa

In testimony whereof they have issued these their formal letters patent, under their hand and the Great Seal of the University at Georgetown in the District of Columbia, this twenty-sixth day of May, nineteen hundred and eighty-six.

TIMOTHY S. HEALY, S.J.
President

ROBERT PITOFSKY
Dean

PETER P. MULLEN
Chairman, Board of Directors

VIRGINIA M. KEELER
Secretary

Honorary Degree Recipients

ELIE WIESEL

Author, teacher, and memorialist of the Holocaust, Elie Wiesel sums up his role as a writer and witness to the Holocaust in these words: "Since I live, I must be faithful to memory. Though I want to celebrate the sun, to sing of love, I must be the emissary of the dead, even though the role is painful. . . . I write to understand as much as to be understood. Literature is an act of conscience. It is up to us to rebuild with memories, with ruins, and with moments of grace."

Elie Wiesel personally experienced the Holocaust. Abused, tortured and degraded, he survived the human hell of Auschwitz, Buna, and Buchenwald. After the war, he studied at the Sorbonne; worked as a journalist in Israel, Paris, and New York; and set down his Holocaust experiences in *Night*, published in 1960. The brief memoir was followed by several novels: *The Accident*, *The Town Beyond the Wall*, and *The Gates of the Forest*. In each, his intent was to express faithfully not only what has been but what might be, and to ask how humans can remain indifferent spectators.

The three volumes following: *Jews of Silence*, *A Beggar in Jerusalem*, and *One Generation After*, published on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his liberation from Buchenwald, focused on the rebirth of the Jewish homeland in Israel and the cultural silencing of three million Soviet Jews. Probing deeper and deeper into Jewish history, in 1972, he wrote *Souls on Fire*, a series of portraits of 18th and 19th century Hasidic masters. His most recent work, a three-volume collection, *Against Silence: The Voice and Vision of Elie Wiesel*, contains his essays, lectures, interviews and commentaries. In addition to the Holocaust era, among the subjects covered are the meaning of Jewish identity, Jerusalem, open letters, friends and teachers, education and youth.

Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities, University Professor and Professor of Religion at Boston University, he began his career in education as Distinguished Professor of Judaic Studies at the City University's City College. He served as Distinguished Visiting Professor of Literature and Philosophy at Florida International University and Henry Luce Visiting Scholar in the Humanities and Social Thought at Yale University. He is past Chairman of the United States President's Commission on the Holocaust; Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council and the Advisory Board of the World Union of Jewish Students; Trustee of the American Jewish World Services; and member of the boards of the International Rescue Committee; the National Committee on American Foreign Policy; the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies; and Haifa, Bar-Ilan, Tel Aviv and Yeshiva Universities.

The author of 26 books and the subject of 13 other works, Professor Wiesel is widely acclaimed as one of the most important and influential writers of our time. He has received a number of prestigious literary prizes and awards including the *Prix Rivarol de Paris*, the International Literary Prize for Peace of the Royal Academy of Belgium, *Le Grand Prix de la Littérature de la ville de Paris*, the Congressional Gold Medal of Achievement, and honorary doctorates from 31 world-wide international renowned institutions of higher learning.

The College of New Rochelle acclaims the extraordinary achievements of Elie Wiesel. In his personal and literary journey he has sought to cast light into dark corners, to demonstrate that goodness can prevail, and to teach by his prophetic witness that we should not suspend life, but, despite adversity, choose life. The College of New Rochelle is privileged to confer on Elie Wiesel the degree Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.