



American Defamation League Honoree Acceptance Speech

I accept this award with great pleasure and with great humility. And I sincerely thank all those involved in awarding it to me.

But, let me tell you, to be associated with two men of such stature – Abraham Joshua Heschel and Lenny P. Zakim – is indeed a humbling experience.

Both men were giants!
Both men have left behind enduring legacies!
Both men have left the world a better place!

And that is something that I would like to take a moment to talk about – what we leave behind.

It is something we all think about at some point or other, and to paraphrase Lenny, “When you go up and meet your maker, they don’t ask ‘Were you as good as Moses?’ They ask, ‘Were you as great as you could be?’”

Of course – unlike Heschel and Zakim – for most of us, it doesn’t take long to realize our own limitations. I knew very early I wasn’t going to be a nuclear physicist! I knew that *my* skills and talents would fit into a thimble!

But I *have* realized that life is not about what you make, but about what you do and how you do it! One of my favorite quotes is from Oliver Wendell Holmes: “If life is action

and passion, it's required of a man that he participates in the life and action of his times."

And for me, it is the exercise of creating community, creating goodwill, and bringing people together that fulfills that dictate.

That is what has animated my life - contributing to ultimately building a lasting community.

And, going through the process of the dedication of the Lenny Zakim/Bunker Hill Bridge became, in fact, the process of building a community.

Through the concerted efforts of the many people involved, we built a community between Charlestown and Boston. We created bridges between the Jews and the Catholics, bringing them together, bridging misunderstandings, ultimately creating goodwill and establishing relationships that last still today.

We couldn't have created that community, however, without the Archdiocese of Boston, which did so much in improving Judeo Christian relations.

We couldn't have created that community without an organization such as the ADL, which engages in the process every day of making the community a better place to live.

We couldn't have created that community without the determination of all involved to disallow vilification of others - a syndrome which our culture manifests so readily today.

Abraham Joshua Heschel said, "The measure of a man's life lies in perfecting the universe." I don't presume to attempt to perfect the universe. But I *do* aspire to improve the community a little bit each day-and will hopefully leave behind a little better place.

Thank you!