

INTRODUCTION BALDWIN AWARD
ELISA MASSIMINO
23 JUNE 2004

WELCOME, AND THANK YOU ALL FOR BEING HERE WITH US TONIGHT FOR THIS WONDERFUL OCCASION. MY NAME IS ELISA MASSIMINO, AND I'M THE WASHINGTON DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST.

IT'S NOT OFTEN – ESPECIALLY THESE DAYS – THAT WE IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMUNITY HAVE A REASON TO CELEBRATE. THE CHALLENGES WE ARE FACING ARE SERIOUS AND MOUNTING. BUT TONIGHT WE TAKE INSPIRATION FROM THE LEGACY OF GIANT IN THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, THE MAN FOR WHOM THE AWARD WE BESTOW HERE IS NAMED: ROGER BALDWIN.

THE STORY OF ROGER BALDWIN'S LIFE AND WORK IS IN MANY WAYS THE STORY OF THE MOVEMENT FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THIS COUNTRY. BALDWIN WAS A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR IN WORLD WAR ONE, AND IN 1919, HE FOUNDED THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION. THERE HE LED THE FIGHT AGAINST GOVERNMENT ABUSE OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY. HE SPOKE OUT AGAINST THE NOTORIOUS PALMER RAIDS AND STOOD UP FOR THE RIGHTS OF IMMIGRANTS IN THIS COUNTRY.

IN THE 1940'S, IN THE MIDDLE OF WORLD WAR TWO, HE FOUNDED ANOTHER ORGANIZATION -- THE INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. THE LEAGUE WAS CREATED AS AN UMBRELLA FOR RIGHTS GROUPS THAT WERE BEGINNING TO SPROUT UP AROUND THE WORLD. BALDWIN SPENT MOST OF THE REST OF HIS LIFE WORKING TO STRENGTHEN THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT, IN THE UNITED STATES AND AROUND THE WORLD.

ROGER BALDWIN WAS A MAN AHEAD OF HIS TIME – SOME MIGHT SAY HE WAS AHEAD OF OUR TIME TOO. BUT I THINK WE ARE SLOWLY BEGINNING TO CATCH UP TO WHAT HE ALWAYS KNEW: THAT THERE IS STRENGTH AND UNITY IN THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN DIGNITY AND INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY, AND THAT WHETHER YOU CALL THEM CIVIL RIGHTS OR HUMAN RIGHTS, WE ARE ALL ENGAGED IN A FIGHT WITH A COMMON PURPOSE: TO UPHOLD THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS WE ALL SHARE BY VIRTUE OF OUR HUMANITY.

ROGER BALDWIN'S COMMITMENT TO THE TWINNING OF CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS IS THE INSPIRATION FOR THE BALDWIN MEDAL OF LIBERTY WE AWARD TONIGHT. I AM EXTREMELY HONORED TO INTRODUCE WADE HENDERSON, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE ON CIVIL RIGHTS, WHO WILL PRESENT THE BALDWIN AWARD.

WADE IS, IN SO MANY WAYS, A MODERN-DAY ROGER BALDWIN. HIS CAREER BEGAN AT THE ACLU. WADE WAS THERE WORKING ON PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF HAITIAN REFUGEES WHEN I MET HIM MANY YEARS AGO. HE WAS AN INSPIRATION TO ME THEN, AND HE CONTINUES TO INSPIRE SO MANY OF US TODAY. WADE LEADS THE NATION'S LARGEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE COALITION OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS, OF WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST IS A PROUD MEMBER.

WADE'S MISSION AT THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE EMBODIES AND CARRIES FORWARD ROGER BALDWIN'S VISION. PLEASE JOIN ME IN WELCOMING HIM. WADE.