

THE CHURCHILL PARK PUBLIC ART PROJECT

Appendix D

The Legacy of Raoul Wallenberg

The intent of the following statement, provided by Madeleine Levy, leader of the 2012 Hamilton Jewish Federation delegation to Council, is to inspire Artists in developing their proposals by providing further details about Raoul Wallenberg's actions and legacy.

Raoul Wallenberg, the face of courage and justice

This Churchill Park Public Art Project is a fitting tribute to Raoul Wallenberg, who rescued thousands of Jews during the Holocaust and served as a model for today's principles of human rights law.

The singular heroism and moral courage of this hero of humanity – this Swedish diplomat who the United Nations characterized as “the greatest humanitarian of the 20th century” – and who embodied the Talmudic idiom that if you save a single life it is as if you have saved the entire universe stands as an inspiration for all.

Raoul Wallenberg was born on August 4, 1912 into a family of wealth and influence in Sweden. Highly educated, he had many career paths open to him, but he chose public service. He could have remained safely in neutral Sweden during World War II. Instead, as first secretary at the Swedish Legation in Budapest in the summer of 1944, Wallenberg acted without concern for his own safety, he worked tirelessly to save thousands of Jews from certain death at the hands of the Nazis.

Raoul Wallenberg, a quintessential hero of humanity, immortalized the words, “to me there is no other choice. For me, there is no choice.” By acting upon this maxim during the Second World War, he saved more during six months of the Holocaust than any single organization or government foreshadowing today's foundational principles of International Humanitarian Law.

Wallenberg was a beacon of light during the darkest days of the Holocaust, and his example remains so today. Prior to his arrival in Budapest in July 1944, some 430,000 Hungarian Jews had been deported to Auschwitz in the space of 10 weeks – the fastest, cruelest and most efficient mass murder of the Nazi genocide. Yet Wallenberg rescued some 100,000 Jews in six months, demonstrating that one person with the courage to care, and the commitment to act, can confront evil and transform history.

Wallenberg is best known for the distribution of Shutz-Passes and the establishment of safe houses – diplomatic passports and sanctuary conferring protective immunity on their recipients and inhabitants – affirming the principle of diplomatic protection, a foundational principle of International Law.

In his organization of hospitals, soup kitchens, and orphanages– the staples of international humanitarian assistance – Wallenberg provided the vulnerable with a semblance of human dignity symbolizing the best of what we today would call International Humanitarian Intervention.

His last rescue – sending the Nazi Generals threatening to liquidate Hungary’s remaining Jews a warning that they would be brought to justice, if not executed, for their war crimes – was perhaps the most memorable as he saved 70,000 Jews while prefiguring the Nuremberg principles – what we today call International Criminal Law – while personifying the Responsibility to Protect.

Indeed, Wallenberg’s heroism embodies and symbolizes the universal lessons of the Holocaust, with their contemporary international resonance and importance for our time:

The danger of forgetting – the responsibility to remember – le devoir de mémoire;
The danger of state-sanctioned incitement to hate and genocide – the responsibility to prevent;
The danger of silence in the face of evil – the responsibility to act;
The danger of indifference in the face of mass atrocity and genocide – the responsibility to protect
The danger of impunity – the responsibility to bring war criminals to justice;
The danger of la trahison des clerics – the betrayal of the elites – the responsibility to speak truth to power;
The danger of assaults on the vulnerable – the responsibility to intervene – refugee responsibility;
The danger of genocide denial – the responsibility to repudiate false witness;
The danger of violence against women – the responsibility to prevent and protect;
The danger of atrocities against children – the responsibility to prevent and protect;
The danger of the bystander community – the responsibility to pay tribute to the rescuers;
The imperative to respect the legacy of survivors of the Holocaust and other genocides;

Tragically, Mr. Wallenberg disappeared after being captured by Soviet forces near the end of the war. Although his fate remains unknown, his legacy lives on through the many awards, monuments, institutions, forests, and anti-racism campaigns that bear his name.

In 2001, the Government of Canada designated January 17 as Raoul Wallenberg Day to honour Canada’s first honorary citizen (1985), and to mark the day he disappeared in 1945.

We encourage all Hamiltonians, Canadians, to celebrate the courage and compassion of Raoul Wallenberg. He demonstrated the best of humanity, and showed that it only takes one

individual to change the world for the better. Through this project, we hope to shine a light on Raoul Wallenberg's heroic story, including the sacrifice he made to save others.

Perhaps the most important part of Wallenberg's legacy lies in its lessons for the generations to come. It is incumbent on us to pass on his story to those who come after us not as part of a distant heroic myth, but as an example of the values that should inform the way we live our lives.

As we look around the world today, where are the modern-day equivalents of Raoul Wallenberg? How can we support them?

~Madeleine Levy

Information excerpted from the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights
<https://www.raoulwallenbergcentre.org>