



**REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY AT THE 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF MARTIN  
LUTHER KING'S "I HAVE A DREAM" SPEECH  
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Our Raoul Wallenberg Centre was established in remembrance of, and in tribute to, Raoul Wallenberg, Canada's first honorary citizen – also an honorary citizen of the U.S. and Israel – who demonstrated how one person with the conscience to care and the courage to act can confront evil, prevail, and transform history.

From May 15, 1944 to early July 1944, 440,000 Hungarian Jews were deported to the death camp Auschwitz, the cruelest, quickest and most efficient killing field in all of the Holocaust. Raoul Wallenberg arrived as a Swedish diplomat with the Swedish delegation in Budapest in mid-July 1944, and with a combination of bravery and bluff, courage and commitment, saved 100,000 Jews. So, what the international bystander community did not do, Wallenberg demonstrated how one person with integrity can make a difference.

Canada's second honorary citizen is Nelson Mandela – yet another inspirational, historical role model – who endured 27 years in a South African prison, and emerged to not only preside over the dismantling of Apartheid, and to become the first president of a free, democratic and nonracial South Africa, while embodying the three great struggles of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – the struggle for freedom, for democracy, and for equality.

Martin Luther King, Jr. – yet another inspirational and historical role model – was assassinated before he could become an honorary citizen of Canada. I was present 60 years ago at that historic March on Washington gathering. I sat transfixed, as I listened to the cadence and content of Dr. King's moving and prophetic "I Have a Dream" oratory and the immortal words, "I dream of an America where people are judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character" – and the rallying cry that the arc of history may be long, but it ultimately bends towards justice.



That experience, those words, still resonate with me and have had a transformative impact on my life. In 1970, I became the first professor to teach Law & Poverty in Canada; in 1985, I invited Coretta Scott King to the launch of Project Genesis, an anti-poverty, social justice project; and in 2003, 40 years after that inspirational, historical moment, I was sworn in as Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, where I then launched Canada's first National Action Plan Against Racism and Hate, against the backdrop of Martin Luther King's legendary "I Have a Dream" speech.

Today, 60 years later, we are bearing witness to and experiencing yet another historical inflection moment, characterized by a resurgent global authoritarianism, the backsliding of democracies, illiberal populism, assaults on human rights, and political prisoners as a looking glass into this historical moment.

Vladimir Kara-Murza, the heroic, Russian dissident and Canada's most recently named honorary citizen, known as the "Mandela of Russia", has been convicted of high treason and sentenced to 25 years in prison in a Kafkaesque trial. Kara-Murza's "crime"? Telling the truth about Russia's domestic oppression and criminal aggression in Ukraine – the most unambiguous example and obvious victim of the Stalinist and Putinist doctrine of "give us the man and we will find the crime."

Nasrin Sotoudeh, the iconic, Iranian woman human rights lawyer, known as the "Mandela of Iran", has gone down the line for women victims of gender apartheid as well as for juveniles destined for execution; she fought for journalists whose speech has been silenced and for lawyers imprisoned for defending political prisoners; and she sought justice on behalf of political prisoners, until she became one herself. She was first convicted in 2011 when, as a Parliamentarian, I took up her case and cause, and then again five years ago when she was sentenced to 38 years in prison and 148 lashes – a virtual death sentence for a woman in her late



50s – while a few days later, in an Orwellian inversion of justice, Iran was elected to the U.N. Commission on Women’s Rights.

Finally, Swedish-Eritrean journalist Dawit Isaak, who was arrested and disappeared with his colleagues in 2001 – the longest serving imprisoned journalist in the world – whose case has come to be known as Eritrea’s “9/18”, and where the government of Eritrea, one of the most oppressive regimes in the world, has utterly ignored calls by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and others for Dawit Isaak’s immediate release.

May I close by commending the Anti-Defamation League and its National Director, Jonathan Greenblatt, and the National Action Network for organizing this timely, significant and, indeed, inspiring gathering. May this 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorative assembly recalling and paying tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr. as a world historical figure, be not only the moving act of remembrance which it is, but the compelling call to action – the continuation of *The Dream* – and the bending of the arc towards justice on behalf of our common humanity.

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