

PREPARED REMARKS OF JULIUS GENACHOWSKI  
CHAIRMAN, FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL COUNCIL  
NEW COUNCILMEMBER SWEARING-IN CEREMONY  
WASHINGTON, DC  
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Thank you, Tom Bernstein and Sara Bloomfield, for the incredible work that you do to preserve memory and promote liberty. Thank you to Josh Bolten, the entire Council, and the staff and Survivor Volunteers here at the Museum. I'm humbled to be here with each of you, and with the five new Council members I have the privilege to swear in today.

As for so many of us, this is personal for me. Genachowski is a name pronounced easily in a part of the world devastated by the Holocaust, and my family's roots are in that part of the world.

Roots like Bella Rabinovitch, my great grandmother.

Bella lived in Belgium in the 1930s. Her husband, Chaim Ben Zion, was the Cantor in Antwerp's main synagogue. His gift was his voice, which he used to lead the congregation in prayer and to sing his beloved operas. Bella's children were married; young grandchildren were part of the family mix. A nice life for a girl originally from a poor rural village in the Ukraine.

But as the German invasion of Europe spread into Belgium, Bella's world began to crumble. Bella's husband and son were arrested and sent to a slave labor camp. Her son-in-law, Shimon, was picked up by the SS on a streetcar. His identity card had been checked; it was marked "J." He brazenly escaped, and that night left the country with his wife, Bella's daughter Dina, and their five-year-old son Azriel.

Of course, the worst was yet to come. Bella went into hiding with her remaining daughter, son-in-law, and grandson – Sara, Isaac, and four-year-old Jacob. Like so many others, they were soon discovered.

On April 19, 1942, they were packed onto a train along with 1,396 others. After three days in the cattle car, they arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The meticulous Nazi records state that Bella, along with Sara, Isaac, Jacob and more than 1,000 others were gassed on arrival, almost all of the rest killed in the months that followed. My father, Azriel Genachowski, was the five-year-old boy who was able to escape Belgium with his parents.

Their path to freedom was harrowing, and at several key moments over many months non-Jews risked their lives to save theirs -- as non-Jews in Holland risked their lives to save my wife's father, handed at the age of three to the Dutch underground and hidden separately from his parents for the years of the war.

The Holocaust proves many sad truths. One is that modernity is not an inoculation against genocide. The pillars of modernity – technology and science – are powerful forces. They were perverted for evil by the Nazis, but technology and science are also sources of unlimited hope, opportunity and transformative change.

My father, who eventually came to the United States to study engineering, taught me about the power of technology to transform lives for the better.

From him – and from the memory of my family members who were killed at Auschwitz – I learned that we must fight so that technology is deployed to spread knowledge, to educate, to ensure that people in all corners of the world know of death-camp victims and survivors.

We must fight so that technology is used to shine a light on oppression and intolerance, to illuminate persecution and dehumanization, to take oppression and mass murder out of the shadows.

We must preserve the stories and information about the Holocaust, as well as the physical documents, artifacts, and sites of the camps like Auschwitz that shock us into an understanding that sometimes ideas alone cannot.

We must work together – as all those associated with this Museum do – to ensure that the facts of the Holocaust and its lessons remain fresh for each new generation.

As President Obama said last year upon visiting Buchenwald, a death camp his great-uncle helped liberate as an army infantryman, “It is up to us to bear witness; to ensure that the world continues to note what happened here; to remember all those who survived and all those who perished, and to remember them not just as victims, but also as individuals who hoped and loved and dreamed just like us.”

Let me conclude with this. In January 2010 President Obama asked me to lead the U.S. Delegation to the Commemoration of the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz. The extraordinary Roman Kent - who I'll have the privilege to swear in in a minute - was a member of that delegation, along with other survivors. My parents joined as well.

President Obama asked me to head the delegation because he knew about my background.

He knew because twenty years ago when we were in law school together we talked about how in fundamental ways our backgrounds are more similar than different, about how they are stories of opportunity born of tragedy and survival, and about how – as Simon Weisenthal put it – “survival is a privilege which entails obligations.”

Those obligations are ones that have been recognized and embraced by the distinguished group of new Council members being sworn in today: Nancy Gilbert, Roman Kent, Marc Stanley, Howard Unger and Clemantine Wamariya.

Over your extraordinary lives, each of you has already devoted substantial time, energy and resources to promoting freedom and preserving human rights and dignity. And today you take on new responsibilities to advance the Holocaust Museum's mission: to disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy; to preserve the memory of those who suffered; and to encourage us all to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the Holocaust as well as our own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.

Your selection as members of the Holocaust Memorial Council both recognizes your accomplishments and reflects your new commitment to further this powerful and deeply important cause. For the work you have done and for the work you will do, we applaud you.

Thank you. Please join me now to be sworn in.