

Lamplighter Awards

September 11, 2024

Jeffrey DeBoer Acceptance Speech

Thank you all so very much . . . good evening . . .

I know what you all are wondering . . .

. . .Who is this fellow receiving the Lamplighter Award . .
. and how did this happen!?!?!?”

So . . .for those who don't know me . . .let me introduce
myself.

I was born and raised in Rapid City South Dakota . . .a
place where . . . *well let me just say . . .it's not real easy to
find a decent bowl of matzah ball soup. . .course no one is
really looking for one either.*

My grandfather served in World War 1.

My father enlisted in the Navy at 17 and served in the
Pacific.

Following World War 2, he served for 27 years in the US Air Force, as a senior master sergeant B-36; B-52 tail gunner.

My cousin Billy was killed in Vietnam, while on a non-recognized mission into Cambodia.

My mother and father raised my older brother and I to:

↳ respect authority . . .

↳ respect the military . . .

↳ and to deeply understand the sacrifices required ensure that America is the greatest country in the world . . .

↳ . . . and that the United States is viewed as a beacon of love and support for all people around the world.

I am not Jewish, or particularly religious.

But I am a person of deep faith who believes in the power of a higher spirit that is guiding each of us every and every day.

I am someone who:

- ↳ believes in helping those who need assistance . . .
- ↳ believes in respecting the views, faiths and traditions of all people . . .
- ↳ believes in the value of education . . . and
- ↳ believes in the value of listening to the experiences of others and learning from them . . .
- ↳ I believe in empathy . . . I believe in peace and love . . .
- ↳ And most of all . . .
- ↳ I believe in the important work of Rabbi Shemtov and The American Friends of Lubavitch (Chabad)

By the way...

The day I met Rabbi Shemtov he asked if I would help raise funds for his efforts . . . I said yes . . . although I really had no idea what I was getting myself into.

I quickly realized that being an ally to Rabbi Shemtov requires much more than simply attending a few cultural events . . .supporting a dinner now and then . . . and learning how to properly pronounce "chutzpah."

Thank you sir. . . for all that you do to make this a better . . . more peaceful . . . and loving world for people of all faiths.

And what an honor to be recognized on the same program as House Speaker Mike Johnson.

And to top it off, a visit and comments from House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries!

It is a testament to everyone here tonight that they took time to join us given the incredibly important policy matters they are both wrestling with . . .

And . . . let me just say . . .after my nearly 45 years of working closely with our nation's leaders . . . I can promise you this . . .

. . .you might agree, or disagree, with the policy decisions made by these two leaders . . .but you cannot question their compassion for people . . . or their commitment to

our country . . . and its place as the positive leader in the world.

We also were joined earlier in the evening by other smart, calm elected leaders. People like Richie Torres for example. . .a true leader! Please join me in thanking them all for attending as well.

I also want to acknowledge my good friends Norm Brownstein and John Fish, who worked tirelessly together to make sure tonight was a huge success.

Norm and John are so unique . . . so inspirational, yet so calming . . . so generous in their time . . . and of course so giving of their resources.

There really are no limits to their skills, determination and honesty.

Helping young people imagine their futures.

Building great cultural and educational facilities.

Selflessly urging sound, sustainable solutions to so many of today's challenges.

You two gentlemen are titans . . . unicorns of sorts. . . .the world is a much better place . . . thanks to the two of you.

. . . I am very deeply honored to call you my good friends.

My wife Joan and our son Mitchell are here tonight as well.

Thank you both so much for always supporting me, always encouraging me . . .and always loving me.

I love you both unconditionally.

I am indeed blessed.

As we all are . . . in so many respects. Thank you.

And, finally, I want to acknowledge those with us tonight who currently serve, or who did serve our country . . .as well as the many people here tonight who work positively on behalf of their nation.

Please join me now in thanking these service members, as well as the Ambassadors, diplomats, health providers, first responders and teachers who are here with us.

Today of course is September 11th.

A date etched into our minds.

A day when evil struck.

A day when innocent people lost their lives.

A day when people, here in America and around the world, stood together in announced opposition to narrow minded, senseless killing and oppression.

A day we must never forget.

Eleven months ago evil struck again . . this time in Israel.

Many innocent people were violently killed and many were senselessly abused.

251 men, women and children were taken hostage and removed from their place of choice.

The safe release of these hostages must be everyone's priority of course . . .but. . .

Just as 9-11 is etched in our minds . . . so must be 10-7 . . .
.the evil of terror must not be allowed to stand.

By being here tonight you know that is our duty as
individuals to stand up for what is right and to fight
against injustice wherever we see it.

I am honored to support the American Friends of
Lubavitch. . .particularly because of my deep respect and
appreciation for the good deeds the Chabad does.

But also because of my utter dismay at . . . and disgust by
. . .the rise of anti-Semitism in America . . . and in many
places around the world.

Just two days ago an arrest was made in Canada of a
person charged with planning a terrorist attack in New
York City around October 7 with the stated goal of
slaughtering in the name of ISIS, as many Jewish people
as possible.

Moreover, I am moved to provide assistance because of
my deep distress over the violence that has been planted
and allowed to grow on the campuses of our nation's
greatest universities.

We must realize that speech is sometimes violent . . .But violence is never speech. One is allowed . . .up to a point. The other should never be allowed particularly on university campuses where young people are supposed to be learning

Together we must continue to stand up against hate and bigotry in all its forms. . . History shows that hate allowed to stand will only grow more and more.

In closing . . .I would like to leave you all with a joke.

But, unfortunately, my wife Joan has restricted me from telling jokes in public.

(If we had a ketubah) this would have been one of the terms. . . .but no)

So, instead of a joke, I'll end with a story.

Like most of you here tonight I fly quite a bit . . .and perhaps like many of you I don't really like to talk much on the plane with whoever sits next to me.

Recently on a flight . . .an older woman sat down next to me and said “hello young man . . . my name is Goldie, how are you?”

Before I could answer . . .and for the two hours, Goldie told me everything about her life, marriage and especially about her grandchildren. She even produced a plastic-foldout photo album of all nine of the grandchildren and reviewed all of their traits with me.

I really didn't say anything.

Suddenly Goldie became troubled and I guess finally realized that she had dominated the entire conversation with me and spent considerable time talking about her grandchildren.

And she stopped and looked at me and said “Oh, I'm so sorry . . .I've done all the talking.. I know you certainly have something to say.

Please, tell me... what do you think of my grandchildren?”

May we all continue to enjoy long lives, share our good fortunes, enjoy much laughter and few tears . . .

And may we all work toward unity not division . . . so that we all have brighter and more harmonious futures.

Thank you all again.

Shalom, and. . .Ahava

Or as Ringo says . . .

Peace and Love . .

Thank you all very much.