

**DONALD RUBIN**  
**Miracle Corners Gala**  
**April 7, 2008**

Thank you President Brademas. Before he took on the task of moving this great institution forward, Dr. Brademas was for many years one of the most effective members of the US Congress. A partisan of the arts, he cosponsored the bills creating the National Endowments and was the chief House sponsor of crucial legislation for American museums.

Shelley and I have gotten to know Miracle Corners in a special way – your student visitors have come to the Rubin Museum of Art to learn about the paintings and sculpture of Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal, and India. We invite all of you to join us there.

We are here tonight in response to the hopes embodied by Miracle Corners. Let me tell you something about why we care.

You all know the old story – one of the oldest: “Where is thy brother, Abel?” And Cain replied “Am I my brother’s keeper?”

The first murderer offered this first, amazingly dishonest denial. He didn't even ask the right question -- our job, after all, is not to tend our brothers and sisters like sheep. Am I my brothers' keeper? No! I ought to be my brother's brother!

The old stories are still with us, but in our world, we have time and again gone past simple murder, and even mass murder, all the way to genocide. And it is those vast killings -- ideological, ethnic, tribal, and racial -- that are on my mind tonight.

My father was born in Gradno, Poland in 1904. He left there to come to America in 1921. After Hitler and Stalin divided Poland, he hardly heard from anyone in the family. By 1945, not one of them remained alive -- five brothers and sisters gone, aunts and uncles and cousins exterminated, vaporized.

My father got to America. But in the 1930's, while he was helping other immigrants to find better lives, fascists in Spain were destroying the Republic -- a war on which Dr. Brademas once did an enormous amount of research. But Spain is also an

example. Even though 500,000 died in the Spanish Civil War, even though Spain was an ally of Hitler, that country is now a flourishing democracy.

We know that war and brutality are constant threats. But we also know that decent governments can be created. Like Eddie, we are concerned with problems in Africa, where a genocidal regime in Rwanda killed hundreds of thousands, where right now the genocide in Darfur goes on, and where political jealousies have put the citizens of Kenya at great risk.

Africa has given us leaders of vision and hope: among them, for example, South Africa's Mandela, Tutu, and DeKlerk. Rwanda is rebuilding its communities and has a decent government. North and south of the Sahara there are many human rights activists and many builders of communities. Yet there are also destroyers, people who will take away liberty, steal food, and even murder their brothers.

In 1948, responding to the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt and activists around the world, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The same year it adopted the Convention on Genocide. These documents put all countries on notice: human rights are a part of international law. “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.” No arbitrary arrest, detention or exile. No torture. No genocide.

But we all know that human rights are always in danger, that governments, even our own, often violate them. Too often, the destroyers win.

Shelley and I want to side instead with the builders. We are committed supporters of groups like Human Rights Watch. We are here tonight to celebrate the great things being done by Miracle Corners and by other terrific NGOs – small and effective organizations fighting AIDS, rescuing children from serving in Armies, building schools and community centers, or creating businesses that help communities emerge from the catastrophe of destitution.

**It is fine to praise these folks, but it is even better to help them. We all need to speak out when people are killed by soldiers or jailed by tyrants. We all need to pitch in when schools and community centers are built.**

**I want to challenge you here tonight. We are celebrating miracles, small communities of caring people who treat each other as human beings should. But a few such miracles aren't enough. We need them by the dozens; by the hundreds. In fact, if we are going to defeat the corruption and tyranny of governments we need them by the thousands.**

**We have what it takes: the vision, the energy, the sense of solidarity. We know how to treat people like brothers and sisters.**

**Unlike many others in the world we are free to act. And the time for action is always now.**

**Gloria Calhoun**

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**From:** Bruce Payne  
**Sent:** Monday, April 07, 2008 5:31 PM  
**To:** Donald Rubin; Shelley Rubin  
**Subject:** Don's Monday night speech  
**Attachments:** DR Miracle C speech rv.doc

Here's a copy of the final version.

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