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Edward Bergman Receives 2009 Ellis Island Medal of Honor

New York, New York, May 10, 2009 – Edward Bergman, 28, received this year’s Ellis Island Medal of Honor from the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations (NECO) at a dramatic ceremony on Ellis Island. The medals were presented to individuals of diverse origins whose achievements inspire and touch the lives of people around the world. Six US presidents, Nobel Prize winners and education, arts, sports and government leaders have received the award over the last 23 years.

As a grandson of a family that escaped Nazi Germany in the 1930’s and as a son of a family who left Apartheid South Africa in 1970’s, Bergman has always had a strong commitment to social justice and community service. His commitment to service was evident even in his early years, beginning with his involvement in the Northport High School international service program, Students for 60,000, which brought him to Nicaragua and the Ivory Coast.

When he was a first-year student at New York University, Bergman understood that in order to give young people the tools, confidence and networks they need to be community leaders—like himself—he should establish a non-profit. This led to the creation of Miracle Corners of the World (MCW), an organization that empowers youth to make a positive difference in their own communities. Since 1999, MCW has served thousands of youth worldwide through leadership training, community development, oral healthcare, and partner initiative programs.

Bergman currently serves as the Executive Director of the Africa Travel Association (ATA), a global travel trade association that promotes tourism to Africa. He recently brought more than 200 travel experts and specialists from around the world to Cairo, Egypt for a four-day event focusing on the future of Africa’s tourism, hospitality and transportation industries.

He is also active on the boards of several non profit organizations, including the Synergos Institute, the Rubin Museum of Art, the International Crisis Group, and Shared Interest. In addition to being a member of NYC Manhattan Community Board 6. Bergman lectures at the Department of Hospitality Management at CUNY’s New York City College of Technology and serves on the advisory boards of the NYU Africa House, NYU SCPS Center for Global Studies, and NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Studies.

Jacqueline Murekatete, an MCW fellow and director of MCW’s partner initiative program, Jacqueline’s’ Human Rights Corner, also received the prestigious award from NECO in 2008. Murekatete, the youngest award recipient to date, was recognized for her work in genocide prevention education at the 2008 ceremony. Since then, MCW and NECO have begun a dialogue on possible ways to cooperate in the area of youth leadership

NECO serves as an umbrella organization for more than 250 groups that celebrate, educate and nurture ethnic pride, heritage, culture, tradition and commerce. Both the US House of Representatives and Senate have officially recognized the Ellis Island Medals of Honor. The names of its recipients are listed in the Congressional record. To date, more than 1,500 Americans have received the Ellie Island Medals of Honor.



Edward Bergman (center) with his South African-born parents, Stan and Marion.

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