

Elisha Wiesel Reflects on Immigrant Ban and Father's Legacy

by **Amanda L Gordon**

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- Says Elie Wiesel would be 'disappointed' by direction of U.S.
 - Recalls his father tearing up at JFK airport 'welcome home'
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Chairman of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee Egil Aarvik, from right, with Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel, his son Elisha, and wife Marion, after Wiesel received the award, Dec. 10, 1986. *Photographer: Bjoern Sigurdsoen/AP Photo*

Elisha Wiesel, chief information officer at Goldman Sachs, said one or two employees have approached him so far about what President Trump's immigration order might mean for them.

Wiesel, the 44-year-old son of Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, understands their concern. He spoke in an interview Sunday at the [Museum of Jewish Heritage](#), where he was attending a reading of "Night," his father's account of his experiences in Nazi

concentration camps. Across the street in Battery Park, thousands of people had gathered to protest Trump's order.

"What all the marchers are doing -- that's just as much a part of his legacy as 'Night,'" Wiesel said of his father, who died in July at 87.



Elie Wiesel Photographer: Win McNamee/Getty Images

Elie Wiesel was born in Romania. After being liberated from Buchenwald in 1945, he studied at the Sorbonne, coming to the U.S. in 1955 on a journalist visa.

"He would tell me he had to keep on renewing the visa," Elisha Wiesel said. Then his father broke both his legs in a cab accident. In the hospital with a full body cast, he missed an appointment to renew the visa.

"He went to the embassy and this very nice guy there said, 'You know, you can become a citizen. Everybody can do it,'" Wiesel said. "And my father became, for the first time since the war, someone with a state. He'd been stateless."

The stories of people being detained at airports were painful for Wiesel in light of his father's experiences. "Every time we'd come back to JFK, his eyes would tear up a little when a customs official would stamp his passport and say welcome home."

Read more: Blankfein says Goldman opposes Trump's order

Wiesel said his father loved America but had no illusions.



Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel, second from right, his son Elisha, and wife Marion, on Dec. 10, 1986. Photographer: Bjoern Sigurdsoen/AP Photo

“He knew America wasn’t perfect. He asked why weren’t more people protesting the Holocaust when it was happening,” Wiesel said, adding that his father had a lot of concerns about the way the Obama administration “let what’s happened in Syria happen -- all these refugees having to go through Europe because their homes are destroyed.”

“In the same way he was dismayed at the lack of action over Syria, I think he would have been very disappointed at the direction this country seems to be turning,” Wiesel said.

To close the evening, Wiesel read his father’s 1986 Nobel Peace Prize [acceptance speech](#).