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Ceremony Honoring Ethel Rosenberg on her Centenary

September 28, 2015 • City Hall, New York City

Robert Meeropol's statement:

On behalf of our family, many of whom are here today, I thank all who have brought this to fruition: Councilor Daniel Dromm who initiated the effort, his staff member Michael Mallon who guided it, and all the Council Member co-signers. Thanks also to Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer for her statement declaring today "Ethel Rosenberg Day of Justice" in Manhattan, and to Letitia James, New York City's Public Advocate, for her support.

We are grateful to Tibby Brooks and Charles Bayor, of the Rosenberg Family Ethel Rosenberg Centenary Campaign for their hard work and good counsel, to my daughter, Rachel's, partner, Tomas Hunt, for obtaining the support of so many elected officials, to Amber Black at the Rosenberg Fund for Children for her press work, and to attorney Daniel Meyers, who first suggested this idea. I apologize to those I've missed.

When I was born, I was brought home from the hospital to an apartment about a mile from here. To have so many Council Members of my parents' hometown – my hometown, my brother's hometown – acknowledge our mother's achievements and note that she was wrongfully executed is a dream come true. Today, a major elected institution of this great city and Manhattan's Borough President have taken important steps towards acknowledging a terrible injustice. Next, it is time for the Federal Government to step up and do the same.

One final thank you: to my parents, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, for their courage, their faithfulness to their ideals, and their activism to create a better world for their children.

Michael Meeropol's statement:

This past summer, the Grand Jury testimony of the chief witness against our parents, our mother's brother David Greenglass, was unsealed. We believe that this testimony provides the final piece of evidence that leads to an inescapable conclusion. Our mother, Ethel Rosenberg, was not an espionage agent. She was framed by the government to put pressure on our father. In effect, the government took her as a hostage – and then murdered her when our father refused to falsely confess to atomic espionage and name names.

Let me echo Rob's thanks to the members of the City Council, the Manhattan Borough President and the Public Advocate for recognizing the injustice that was done to our mother and, as a result, to her entire family.

We also want to make it clear that the unjust prosecution and execution of our mother damaged our country as well. The Rosenberg case was based on perjured testimony and guilt by association arguments. It culminated in the outrageous statements of the sentencing judge and President Eisenhower – that our parents had caused the Korean War and a future nuclear war. These combined to fuel a dangerous climate of fear and intolerance in our country which permitted political opportunists like Senator Joseph McCarthy to poison our society.

We believe that the issuance of these proclamations implicitly calls upon the federal government to take corrective action. We would like to make this request explicitly. Therefore, we call upon Attorney General Lynch and President Obama to acknowledge the injustice done to Ethel Rosenberg back in 1953 as a way of learning from our past in the hope that similar injustices will be avoided in the future.