



February 29, 2016

The Honorable President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing this letter of recommendation to ask you to consider honoring the Rev. Waitstill Sharp and his wife, Martha, with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Martha and Waitstill Sharp's incredible story of heroism began in 1939, just days before the German invasion of Czechoslovakia. A young Unitarian minister and his wife accepted the call from the president of the American Unitarian Association to travel on a dangerous mission from Massachusetts to Prague to help save Jews and dissidents from the growing Nazi threat. Leaving their two young children at home, they risked their lives to provide refugee assistance and to smuggle those in danger out of continental Europe.

The story of these two Americans' daring and clandestine missions, which resulted in the rescue of hundreds of people, including dozens of refugee children, will be told in an upcoming PBS documentary titled *Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War*, directed by Ken Burns and the Sharps' grandson, Artemis Joukowsky III. A book detailing their work will be published by Beacon Press in September.

The Sharps heeded the call of our denomination and risked their lives to save others. Their story exemplifies the principles of our Unitarian Universalist faith tradition: affirmation of the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity and compassion in human relations; acceptance of one another; the goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all; and respect for the interdependent web of existence which we are a part.

Martha and Waitstill Sharp are two of only four Americans honored at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem as "Righteous Among the Nations," the highest honor given by the State of Israel to non-Jews, in recognition of their personal sacrifices and commitment to save innocent lives.

The Sharps' selfless heroism was certainly admirable in their time. Given today's refugee crisis, their story still shines as an example of the best of what the United States represents. We believe that Martha and Waitstill sharp are most deserving of the Medal of Freedom in the name of human rights and social justice today.

We appreciate your consideration of Waitstill and Martha Sharp for this distinguished honor.

A blue ink signature of Rev. Peter Morales.

Rev. Peter Morales
President
Unitarian Universalist Association

A blue ink signature of Rev. Bill Schulz.

Rev. Bill Schulz
President
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee