Foreword

It has been a great honor to be associated with the Wildes family for many years. With Leon, I go back to the days when I was an unknown law teacher, helping him prepare the legal memorandum for John Lennon’s immigration case—a case that continues to have far-reaching consequences.

Leon is a great lawyer—probably the greatest immigration lawyer of his generation. Leon helped to establish the field and remains one of its outstanding practitioners. And, as the cases in this book show, his son Michael Wildes has continued to build the family law firm, not just physically but in terms of esteem, prestige, and success.

I’ve had the pleasure of working with Michael and Leon on several important cases. I don’t overstate the fact when I say that the Wildes lawyers are the best. This is not just my belief; it is a conclusion on which I act. When my friends and clients face immigration issues, these are my go-to guys.

In this era of politically motivated immigration ploys and decisions, there are dangerous precedents in drawing lines to exclude people. It’s not so long ago that such lines threatened my own family. In the 1930s and 1940s, the march toward the Holocaust set many European Jews in motion, seeking refuge in the United States. Given the economic climate of the time, the United States was unwilling to meet even the restrictive visa quotas available. As the flood of refugees started, the government made the cumbersome immigration process more complicated, more rigorous . . . more exclusionary.

People seeking to come to the United States had to prove they would not become “public charges”—that they had a job waiting for them. My grandfather, Louis Dershowitz, saved twenty-nine of our relatives through the shul he’d established in the basement of his Williamsburg
home. Using this tiny congregation, he issued letters to fill nonexistent positions for a rabbi, a cantor, and other religious workers to bring endangered family members to this country. These refugees became productive citizens, as have their children and grandchildren.

Although my grandfather might be criticized from a legalistic standard, I believe his actions exemplify the values of what the United States should be like. As the cases in Safe Haven in America: Battles to Open the Golden Door show, Michael Wildes continues the same struggle—in courtrooms, in the halls of government, and in front of the cameras, fighting for the values to which I hope our country will always remain true.

Alan Dershowitz
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