

“New U.S. Top Diplomat in Our Country Wants to Make a New Wind Blow”

“From Lawyer and Actor to Ambassador”

Article in conservative Het Laatste Nieuws (10/7) (circ. 283,000)

“Our country has a new American Ambassador and we will have known that. Howard W. Gutman (53 y.o.) is not particularly someone who is hiding himself. He was already present for one at the homecoming of Kim Clysters and Bree, and he was a guest of honor during the festivities around the figure of Father Damian in Tremelo. Gutman is, just like his big chief Barack Obama, a man of the people after all. His curriculum is characterized by surprising turnarounds: from waiter, lawyer and movie actor to ambassador.”

Reporter Joost Freys

“For Gutman it is serious. ‘I want to visit every village and every city in Belgium’, he says. ‘I really want to meet with everybody: from high officials to the housewife in Zeebrugge. Closing ties is something you do ‘face to face’. Everyone in Belgium needs to be convinced that change is underway and that we have to work together. Only in that way we can secure the future of our children.”

“Striking statements for an American Ambassador, certainly if you know that his predecessors most of the time were hiding behind the safe walls of their Embassy in Brussels. But when you look at the track record of Gutman, his special approach is not that much of a surprise in the end. Gutman grew up in a Jewish family in the Bronx, the northern and oft poor part of New York. As a young guy he already had a couple of small jobs: waiter and bus boy. It needed to be that way, because as a sixteen-year old he lost his father. ‘It sounds rough, but actually that was a hidden blessing’ he says about that. ‘Because in that way I was eligible for a scholarship. In the end I could go to Harvard Law School and I obtained my degree in law.’ In just a few years’ time, he became a successful lawyer in Washington.”

“Midlife Crisis”

“‘And then I got a midlife crisis’, so the father of two sons said. ‘In America, you can choose then. Either you buy a Ferrari, or you go to act. I chose the second option. At a certain point in time, I got in touch with the network HBO. It asked me for advice for a new George Clooney TV-series about politicians and lobbyists:

‘K-Street’. Clooney already quickly wanted that I played a lawyer in his series. I left to Hollywood and recorded a couple of playing minutes. But soon after already appeared that my acting performances were not that great after all. I decided to return soon to Washington, but in the meantime played a couple of small roles, including in the new dancing movie ‘Fame’.”

“Barack Obama’s Man”

“In January 2007, Gutman was again sitting behind his familiar desk with the law firm Williams and Connolly, when he all of a sudden got a call. ‘From a young Senator from Illinois: Barack Obama. He told me that in a few hours’ time, he was going to announce his run for the presidency. He told me that he was told that he could use me support well, because of my good connections and my talent to convince. No question about it, my first reaction was. In the end, he managed to convince to talk with him for an hour. After that talk, I went back home and I told my wife Michelle: ‘I just talked for an hour with the next U.S. President’. At that time, I had already pledged my support. The way in which President Obama can mobilize people is impressive. You know that he is really serious about things. That he wants and will change things. That you are entitled to be a part of his team is a blessing.”

“Obama also became President and did not forget about Gutman’s support. Besides priceless advice, the man had also raised over 500,000 \$ in campaign funds. ‘Shortly after his inauguration, he phoned me again. If I did not feel like becoming Ambassador in Belgium. I accepted right way. If there is place in Europe where you are always heard, it is in Belgium. All important European institutions are here and moreover the Belgians themselves form a multi-cultural society to which is listened and looked at.”

The caption under the three portrait pictures with the Ambassador read:

“Ambassador Gutman, busily gesturing last night during the talk with our paper.”

The caption under the picture with the Ambassador unveiling the statue of Father Damian reads: “The Ambassador (on the right) last Sunday helped to unveil the commemoration statue of Father Damian”.

The caption under the picture with the Ambassador and Dr. Loewinger, his spouse, reads: “With his wife in Bree after the victory of Kim Clysters in the U.S. Open”.