



The Tale of Two Electromagnetics Friends, Yahya and Nader: From the University of Tehran to Receiving Ellis Island Medals of Honor

by Yahya Rahmat-Samii and Nader Engheta

The Medal

As written on the official website of Ellis Island Honors Society: "The Ellis Island Medals of Honor embody the spirit of America in their salute to tolerance, brotherhood, diversity and patriotism." They are presented each year "to a select group of individuals whose accomplishments in their field and inspired service to the nation" are worthy of commendations. The Ellis Island Honors Society, the medal's sponsoring organization, is proud that since its founding in 1986, the Medal (see above) has been officially recognized by the US House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate as "one of our nation's most prestigious awards" and its honorees are recorded annually in the Congressional Record.

The award description states: The Ellis Island Medals of Honor recognizes "individuals who have made it their mission to share, with those less fortunate, their wealth of knowledge, indomitable courage, boundless compassion, unique talents and selfless generosity." They do so while acknowledging their debt to their ethnic heritage and they uphold the ideals and spirit of America. Since the medal was founded, distinguished and diverse Americans including Presidents Ronald Reagan and William J. Clinton, as well as five other presidents of the United States have been honored.

Award Ceremony

On May 11, 2019, both Prof. Yahya Rahmat-Samii and Prof. Nader Engheta received the prestigious Ellis Island Medals of Honor at an elegant and spectacular award ceremony held on the historical Ellis Island, New York. After a beautiful sunset ride on a boat to Ellis Island from New York, the award ceremony was held in the grand hall of the historical building where over 11 million immigrants have passed through to come to the United States. The U.S. military flags were on display at the entrance and the invited attendees were paraded in with their formal attire. The place is now a museum displaying many historical photos of people who arrived here including Albert Einstein. It was a breathtaking formal dinner ceremony attended by the awardees and their families. Yahya and Nader and their families were at the same table in the ceremony hall.

Each awardee's name was individually called upon and the awardees walked to an ornate stage and received their medals. Their names, affiliations and contributions were read and their photos were shown on a big screen. At the end of the ceremony, the awardees and their families were taken back to the boat and cruised by the Statue of Liberty with amazing fireworks planned specifically for this event. The 2019 medal recipients were all highly accomplished individuals including, Representative Adam Schiff of California, former Google Chair and CEO Eric Schmidt, MasterCard CEO Ajay Banga, IBM CEO Ginni Rometty, former Apple CEO John

Sculley, former PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi, Dr. Sanjay Gupta of CNN, Vice Admiral Mary Jackson, and others. In previous years, seven U.S. presidents, Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, Muhammad Ali, Rosa Parks, and Lee Iacocca also received the honor, to just name a few. A complete list of past Medalists can be found on www.EIHonors.org; video of the event can be viewed at www.EIHonorsVideo.org.

Tale of Two Friends

Now about the tale of the two electromagnetics friends, Yahya and Nader. They were both born in Tehran, Iran, and both graduated from University of Tehran with the highest distinctions from the engineering faculty in the electrical Engineering Department. They both came to the United States receiving their Ph.D. degrees focusing on the subject of electromagnetics. Yahya finished at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and Nader graduated from Caltech. Upon graduation Yahya joined NASA/CalTech/JPL and became one of the youngest Senior Research Scientists at JPL. Subsequently he joined UCLA as a full professor and advanced to the rank of Distinguished Professor and the holder of the Northrop Grumman Chair in Electromagnetics. Similarly for Nader, after receiving his Ph.D. from Caltech and spending one year as a postdoctoral fellow at Caltech and four years as a Senior Research Scientist at Kaman Sciences Corporation's Dikewood Division in Santa Monica, California, Nader joined the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania where he is currently the H. Nedwill Ramsey Professor, with affiliations in the Departments of Electrical and Systems Engineering, Bioengineering, Materials Science and Engineering, and Physics and Astronomy. They both received the IEEE Electromagnetics Award, the IEEE Antennas and Propagation Distinguished Achievement Award and the URSI Medals. Besides the aforementioned similar awards, Yahya and Nader have received numerous other top awards for their research activities.

Yahya and Nader are electromagnetics friends with common languages in Farsi, English, and Maxwell's equations who both received the coveted Ellis Island Medals of Honor (Nader, left, and Yahya, right) in May 2019.



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