



**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**African First Ladies Health Summit – Remarks of Gelila Assefa Puck**

**Beverly Hills, CA – April 20 , 2009 –** *[Remarks of Gelila Assefa Puck made at Bel Air Hotel, Monday, April 20, 2009 at the African First Ladies “Leadership for Health” Summit]*

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for being here. I am Gelila Puck. My husband Wolfgang and I are happy to be sponsors of this evening’s dinner.

I would like to congratulate the honorees, African First Ladies, and thank African Synergy Against AIDS and Suffering and U.S. Doctors for Africa for creating such wonderful organizations and for all the work you do for Africa.

Today we are here for the “Kick-Off” honoring the African First Ladies for what you do to improve the health of millions of mothers and children by providing medical needs, education, and prevention of HIV/AIDS and other related issues.

I have first-hand knowledge of the crisis. I was born in Ethiopia. I left Ethiopia when I was 16, and ten years later, I went back home. I went to visit all of my childhood friends I grew up with. I was devastated to find out that, out of the 28 families I visited, 11 friends had died of AIDS. The sadness was not only that these friends and family had died of AIDS ... but the silence. They don’t talk about the disease. They hide it. They consider it a cultural shame.

Please continue to share the awareness!

Children’s causes are close to my heart. Now, as the mother of two young boys, I have never felt that more intensely.

I have been involved with an orphanage in Ethiopia called the Ethiopian Children’s Fund since the early 1990s. There were only 21 children back then ... when I came on board. It felt so great getting involved with such a worthy cause. I didn’t realize then how much the little help I offered made such a huge difference! Today there are more than 400 children under our wings at ECF and they are getting the help they need.

I would like to thank all of you who are here tonight ... you have helped Ethiopia and the continent of Africa. It is the continent that has the deepest troubles in so many areas including disease, famine ... but such great promise for the future.

We not only need your help ... it seems we also need your prayers.

There is no help too small in Africa ... because every little bit goes a long way.

Thank you, Ted Alemayu, my fellow Ethiopian who founded U.S. Doctors for Africa ... an incredible organization that has made AIDS a principal focus of his efforts. I applaud you for all your work!

So, if you can't write big checks for Africa ... you can still help Africa ... by communicating its problems ... by raising awareness of its needs. I would like to thank everyone here for all of your support for Africa.

Welcome to L.A. – the land where dreams are made real. Enjoy the meal tonight ... Wolfgang and I are honored to support this event.

I would like to particularly thank my husband for his support for this evening – he did it knowing how much I love Ethiopia and how much the continent of Africa means to me.

And thank you for inviting me to speak tonight.

### **About Gelila Style**

GelilaStyle features the couture collections of Gelila Assefa Puck, an internationally known designer of fine gowns and handbags, who was born and raised in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Gelila's designs are rooted in her East African heritage and today are principally focused on a distinctive handbag line, which includes simple, classic clutches and bags made from crocodile, ostrich and African springbok.

Gelila and her husband, superchef Wolfgang Puck, support numerous charities worldwide, and were both honored in March of 2009 for their philanthropy by the Children's Institute in Southern California with the prestigious Champion of Children Award.

### **Contact**

Gelila Style

[www.gelilastyle.com](http://www.gelilastyle.com)