Other than the death of my own father three years ago, I cannot remember a week in which I have felt such overpowering sadness.

The sadness of thinking about Matt, his parents, his brother, and his close friends. The sadness of thinking about Matt's gay colleagues, struggling to express simultaneously both their resistance to this violence and their fear that it could have been them in Matt's place.

The sadness of the University faculty and staff who have struggled so hard to create a truly inclusive climate here, only to have others tear down years of work in just a few hours of unspeakable horror.

The sadness of a closeknit community trying to defend itself against ignorance and stereotypes. The sadness of occasionally hearing expressions of such ignorance.

Life is not fair, we've all been told, and this week we lived that lesson again.

But with this sadness have come some small moments of triumph. The Homecoming Parade and the march for Matt. A moment of silence as the football game, broken only by the sound of tears.

The Sunday community vigils and the coming together of this community to ''Remember Matthew'' on Monday afternoon. Gay Awareness Week, and the courage of our Lesbian, Gay, bisexual, and Transgendered Association (LGBTA) to stay the course and not to let fear ruin their plans.

The leadership of our student organizations, ASUW, the Multicultural Resource Center, the Residence Halls, the Greek Community, and our student-athletes to find ways to express their solidarity and support for Matt and their collective opposition to violence, discrimination, and bigotry—regardless of any personal philosophical differences or religious beliefs they might have about homosexuality.

And the professional and personal involvement of our faculty and staff in counseling students and in three days of teach-ins on campus to demonstrate that education and free expression are the most powerful weapons we have against forces that would divide us as an academic community and as a society.

What now can we do? The answer is not simple, but we must begin.

We must begin by reaffirming that UW and Laramie welcome all people, without regard to who or what they are.

We must reexamine all that we have done to cultivate an appreciation of diversity and make sure that we haven't missed a teaching opportunity.

We must find a way to commemorate this awful week in a way that will say to the entire state and nation that we will not forget what has happened here.

And, working closely with the leaders of the local community, we must be vigilant in making sure that the climate for those who are different—whether defined by their sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, national origin, disability, or any other personal characteristic—not only meets the letter of the law but lives up to the standards of our hearts.

I hope that our elected legislators will also seize this moment. I recognize that the question of hate crimes legislation is a matter over which reasonable and thoughtful people who are neither homophobic nor bigoted can and will disagree. No hate crimes statute, even had it existed, would have saved Matt. But Matt Shepard was not merely robbed, and kidnapped, and murdered. This was a crime of humiliation. This crime was all about being gay. No group of people should have to live in this kind of fear.

I speak only for myself and not this University, but it is time our state makes a public statement through the passage of such legislation that demonstrates our values, our commitment to the state motto, and our collective zero tolerance for hatred. Once was more than enough.

All of us have reacted to the events of the last ten days in our own personal way. Matt meant something different for each of us. That is how it should be. Matt could have been my son. He could have been your brother. He was our friend. All of us will remember him.

INTRODUCTION OF THE VETERANS AMERICAN DREAM HOMEOWNERSHIP ASSISTANCE ACT

HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 1999

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, thousands of former servicemen and servicewomen in five states are currently prohibited from receiving state-financed home mortgages. That is why Congressman HERGER and I, along with 21 of our colleagues, are introducing the Veterans American Dream Homeownership Assistance Act. This legislation is similar to bills we introduced in the 104th and 105th Congresses.

In order to help veterans own a home, Congress created a program where states could issue tax-exempt bonds in order to raise funds to finance mortgages for owner-occupied residences. Five states—Wisconsin, Alaska, Oregon, California, and Texas—implemented such a program for their veterans. Under a little-known provision in the 1984 tax bill, Congress limited the veterans eligible for this program to those who began military service before 1977.

As a result of the 1984 tax bill, veterans who entered military service after January 1, 1977 are prohibited from receiving a state-financed veterans mortgage. This means veterans who served honorably in Panama, Grenada, or the Gulf War cannot get veterans home mortgages from their state government. Are those who began serving our country after January 1, 1977 any less deserving than those who served before?

This arbitrary cutoff was created to rise additional revenue in the 1984 tax bill by limiting the issuance of tax-exempt bonds. When this provision was enacted, post-1976 veterans were a small percentage of all veterans, without much voice to protest this discriminatory change. But, nineteen years later, there are thousands of veterans who have served our nation honorably.

Mr. Speaker, as time goes by, this legislation takes on increasing importance. The State of Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs has informed me that if the cap on veterans bonds is not lifted this year, the State will be forced to disband the program because too few veterans are eligible for the program.

This legislation would simply eliminate the cutoff that exists under current law. Under our proposal, former servicemen and servicewomen in the five states who served our country beginning before or after January 1, 1977 will be eligible to quality for a state-financed home mortgage. This legislation does not increase federal discretionary spending by 1 cent. It simply allows the five states that have a mortgage finance program for their veterans to provide mortgages to all veterans regardless of when they served in the military.

There is no justification to allow some veterans to qualify for a home mortgage while others cannot. Mr. Speaker, I urge the House to help those veterans who have served after January 1, 1977 to own a home and pass this important legislation into law.

TRIBUTE TO DEBERAH BRINGELSON

HON. ANNA G. ESHOO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 1999

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Deberah Bringelson, an extraordinary citizen of San Mateo County, California, who is being inducted into the San Mateo County Women's Hall of Fame.

Deberah Bringelson has served San Mateo County for more than 14 years, both as a professional and a volunteer. She has brought her energies and expertise to the issues of civil justice reform, child protection, toxic cleanup, as well as water and land use policies. Deberah has made significant contributions in the field of criminal and juvenile justice reform, reforming the system and creating efficiencies of operation. Her commitment to the issues of drug abuse and violence arise from her own personal experiences.

Deberah helped create the County Adult and Juvenile Drug Courts, and designed a comprehensive life skills treatment program which serves female offenders and focuses on mothers. Deberah serves as a mentor for young women, coaching several girls' athletic teams. She's been honored for overcoming the personal trauma and violence of her childhood and for bringing her talents, compassion and energy to our community.

Mr. Speaker, Deberah Bringelson is an outstanding woman and I salute her for her remarkable contributions and commitment to our community. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring her on being inducted into the San Mateo County Women's Hall of Fame.

LEARNING THE LESSONS OF HISTORY

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 23, 1999

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Capuchino High School of San Bruno, California, for an extraordinary program they have instituted called ''Sojourn to the Past.'' Envisioned by Jeff Steinberg, a history teacher at Capuchino High School, this ten-day trip recently led eighty-five high school students through a history of the civil rights movement that was made very personal.

The trip began in Washington, D.C., and ended in the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, in the hotel room where Martin Luther King, Jr., was martyred. Along the way the students met with several major figureheads of the civil rights movement, including Chris McNair, father of one of the Birmingham Four, Elizabeth Eckford, who de-segregated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, and my own good friend, Congressman JOHN