

academic career to her future accomplishments.

HONORING THE LIFE OF MATTHEW SCHNIREL

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 30, 2009

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Matthew Schnirel, a lifelong member of the Buffalo, NY community. He died tragically when the single engine plane he was riding in crashed just east of Cleveland, OH the afternoon of April 28, 2009. Schnirel was helping Michael Doran, his associate at the Doran and Murphy Law firm and pilot of the plane, with his ongoing fight for the railroad workers of Ohio. The two were on their way back to Buffalo.

Making Matthew's death all the more heart-rending was the fact that the 26 year old was just starting his life and career. He returned from earning an undergraduate degree in history at the University at Albany to graduate from the University at Buffalo Law School in 2008. Matthew passed the Bar Exam in January 2009 when he began work as an attorney at Doran & Murphy. He and his longtime girlfriend, Lauren, recently purchased a home in a Buffalo suburb, where he is missed by parents, brother and two sisters.

Matthew's parents, a salesman and an emergency room nurse, taught him the values of hard work and helping others and he hoped to put those values to use as a civil litigator to help those injured or wronged by the carelessness of others. An avid competitor in nationwide trial competitions Schnirel was described as a "superstar in the making" by Christopher Murphy, a partner at the law firm where he worked. His life and spirit will be remembered by his family and friends for his hard work ethic and contribution to his community.

Madam Speaker, I offer my deepest condolences to Matthew's family, his girlfriend, Lauren, and all those whose lives he touched. Our community grieves the loss of this young and promising life.

HONORING SONIA LEROIA RUSSELL

HON. CAROLYN MCCARTHY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 30, 2009

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise in honor of Sonia LeRoia Russell for her contributions to both society and the arts. Through her poetry, Ms. Russell has impacted the lives of many, both locally in New York and throughout our nation. Her recent work commemorating the election of President Obama has been widely cited and read. For these reasons and many others, I believe that Ms. Russell is deserving of recognition.

An esteemed author, poet and publisher, Ms. Russell has enriched the community within which she lives through her sustained contributions to society. Through these numerous contributions, Ms. Russell is proud to both represent and actively participate in the large, influential and diverse African American community in New York and beyond. In addition to

her successful poetic, publishing and writing ventures, Ms. Russell gives back to her community in various other fashions. Formerly, Ms. Russell held the presidency of the first poetry ministry with the Holy Unity Baptist Church located in Queens, NY. In keeping with that trend, Ms. Russell is currently ministering poetry at the Living Water Church in Harlem, NY. Writing and orating for special events, Ms. Russell lends her strong, poetic voice to her community. In addition, Ms. Russell is also a member of the Music & Fine Arts Ministry where she writes and sings songs for the choir. Further, Ms. Russell also writes poetry for important community events, such as weddings and anniversaries. Ms. Russell's recent work commemorating the Presidency of Barack Obama and the African American struggle for civil rights and equality has been well received and further exemplifies her continued efforts at serving her community in lending her important voice to contemporary issues.

Our country, built on the premises of equality, freedom of speech, and a vocal citizenry, needs talented individuals like Ms. Russell in order to fulfill these founding principles. In addition, the arts, in general, play a vital role in our society, enriching our communities and inspiring our youth to confront their future circumstances in creative and innovation ways. For her efforts in both vocalizing the experiences of her community and county and in stimulating the arts, I am thankful to Ms. Russell.

The work of Ms. Russell is inspiring, and I am grateful to her for all that she has accomplished. I ask my colleagues to join me in expressing the gratitude of the U.S. Congress for her contributions to society.

The following is the aforementioned poem authored by Ms. Russell entitled "Inauguration Poem for President Barack Obama":

INAUGURATION POEM FOR PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

I laid my head down and sleep stole my thoughts
And I drifted like a disembodied soul
I began to see figures moving slowly in my haze
And I heard a familiar refrain remind me of my role

softly—"It's been a long time coming"

So many before me who paved the way to today

Many lives who unknowingly touched mine
So many died before their work saw fruition
Many who stood on that freedom, faith, line

softly—"And I know change is gonna come"
"Not in vain," I hear them shouting, "hold on fast."

"It's not for skin that we are striving, but for equal eyes,

Equal tongue, equal ears, equal image, equal time!"

Now there's no more lamenting that we can't rise

softly—"There's been times that I thought I couldn't last for long"

I watched with suspicion many take up the cause

As we were beaten down, lifted up, then given our cross

I watched behind the fine lines of others sacrifice

As we were being defined by the way we handled loss

softly—"But now I think I'm able to carry on."

Frederick Douglass was the first black man to aspire

He was on the ticket as vice President to Victoria Woodhull

Their 1872 Equal Rights Party did not make it to the top

But the ink was spilled and all felt the inevitable pull

softly—"It's been a long time coming"

And the people sang, "Run Jesse run, keep hope alive,

Don't let Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. have died in vain!"

There are spiritually, mentally, and physically scarred folks

Who don't believe this country can look upon them without disdain

softly—"It's been a long time coming"

America watched a people stand tall against oppression

Strong men holding signs reminding doubters "I am a man"

Then time convinced some that this was not the case

Until a new sign was held up that insisted, "Yes we can!"

So as I rose up from my dream and allowed reality to sink in

I saw a man of African, and white American descent

Representing all people of America as a spiritual, patriot

On the values and principles that this country was meant

softly—"It's been a long time coming"

And I cried as I remembered the ghosts of my dream

Those who believed and had faith that change would occur

Those ghosts spanned the ages of time before Christ

And had more to do with prejudices and fear than mere color

softly—"It's been a long time coming"

Now let us pray that God lights and directs the path

Of the one whom we the people chose to lead us

Let us pray that the ghosts of the past will always remind him

And that Jesus will strengthen his resolve and his purpose

softly—"And I knew change was gonna come"

And it did, yes it did

God bless you and keep you President Barack Obama!

—Sonia "LeRoia" Russell.

INTRODUCTION OF THE "AFGHAN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT ACT OF 2009"

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 30, 2009

Mrs. MALONEY. Madam Speaker, today, along with Representative TAMMY BALDWIN (D-WI), I am reintroducing the "Afghan Women Empowerment Act of 2009." This legislation would authorize \$115 million each year from FY2010 through FY2012 for programs in Afghanistan that benefit women and girls as well as the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs. The funding would be directed toward important needs including medical care, education, vocational training, legal assistance, protection against trafficking, and civil