

I would like to share an excerpt from the article: “Ten days since Gabe was killed, Bob and Donna Conde were sitting on a couch in their basement surrounded by relatives, close friends, and 16 of the soldiers who fought alongside their son in Afghanistan.

“The soldiers had been back in the United States for just a few days—exhausted from their 9-month deployment and relieved to be home. They had come to this small farming town an hour’s drive from Denver to help bury Spec. Gabriel Conde. . . .

“By the time Gabe deployed in September, the war had fallen so far out of the headlines that Bob found it hard to figure out why the U.S. military was still in Afghanistan. He tried to read up on the war, but the news accounts of suicide bombings, civilian deaths, and political infighting never really made sense. They didn’t explain what Gabe was fighting for.”

Mr. Speaker, that is why so many of us in the United States House of Representatives are disappointed, frustrated. We have written numerous letters from Members of both parties asking for a debate, and to this day, Mr. RYAN, the Speaker, has not allowed the House to meet its constitutional responsibility to debate and vote on a 17-year-old war.

And as the Washington Post article notes, that is why the Conde family is so hurt. U.S. military members and their families deserve a debate on the future involvement in Afghanistan and committing our troops to other countries around the world.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to share with this body that the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the 31st Commandant, is a friend of mine, Chuck Krulak. He and I have communicated for 5 years on Afghanistan. He agrees with me there is nothing we are going to do to change it.

And he said to me one time in an email:

Let me say, no one has ever conquered Afghanistan, and many have tried. We will join the list of nations that have tried and failed.

Again, this is the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps, Chuck Krulak, who is now retired.

Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense that our men and women in uniform have been there for 17 years. The Afghan Government will never change. History has proven that Afghanistan is a graveyard of empires, and yet we in Congress who take an oath of office, and that oath says that we are responsible for voting to go to war, we can’t even get a debate.

Speaker RYAN, I know you have a lot to do, but for goodness’ sake, before you leave in January, let us have a debate on the future of Afghanistan. Let Members vote “yea” or “nay,” but at least give us a debate.

It is very disappointing, Mr. Speaker, that you will not allow us to meet our constitutional responsibility.

WE NEED TO COME TOGETHER TODAY ON IMMIGRATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. HIMES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HIMES. Mr. Speaker, I stand to address this Chamber at the start of this legislative week in a slightly different mode of thinking than I usually do, because as we have become aware in the last couple of days, this country is in the midst of a moral and ethical emergency.

Mr. Speaker, we debate lots of things on this floor, and that is a good thing. We argue about taxes. We argue about our budget. We argue about the best way to take care of our children, regulations, all sorts of things where the debate in this Chamber is constructive, sometimes to a good solution.

What we have become aware of on our southern border is not a debatable thing. It transcends ideology. It transcends political party. It gets to the very moral core of all of us as individuals and at the very thing that makes this country truly exceptional.

We are exceptional for a bunch of reasons. We are a very powerful country. We are a very wealthy country. But there are other powerful and wealthy countries.

What makes this country exceptional is that we stand up for values and morals and ethics. And there is no ethical or moral way to look at an agent of the United States Government removing a small child from the arms of his or her mother and to in any way say that that is a moral act consistent with the values that make this country exceptional.

There is no debate. There is no ideology. There is no deterrent effect that would make that okay.

Since our President is uninterested in doing what we all know he could do, which is to stop this immoral action right now, it is time for the Congress of the United States, the Representatives of the people of the United States, of the good people of the United States, to stand up today and say: That act will not be done in my name.

We should have debates about immigration. We should solve the immigration challenges that face us. But never ever, ever should we go to where we are today where the lives of young children are being used for a deterrent, are being used as legislative leverage.

My colleagues, we have been here before. We interned American citizens of Japanese descent, because at the time in World War II, we thought that they might be a threat.

The President promulgates the notion that immigrants are a threat. To him, immigrants are MS-13. We are all immigrants. This country is great because we are a Nation of immigrants.

So it is time for us to set aside whatever calculations, whatever ideology, whatever arguments might be made around the vexing problem of immigration, and to stop the separation of babies from their parents in our Nation today.

If we don’t do that today, we will be complicit. The Representatives of the people will be complicit in a moral act that resonates with the internment of American citizens of Japanese descent. And I don’t think any Democrat or Republican in this Chamber wants their legacy to be that act.

The President could fix this problem right now. It will take us a little longer, but because it will take us a little longer and because I do believe for all the arguments and dysfunction in this Chamber that we are fundamentally a moral group of people, reflective of the ethical aspect of our constituents and of our country, that this afternoon is the time to come together to stop babies being taken from the arms of their parents in our country and in our name.

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100 YEARS AFTER WORLD WAR I

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, 100 years ago this month, American marines forged their legend as the world’s most effective fighting force as they halted the German advance in France at the Battle of Belleau Wood. Less than 6 months later, World War I came to an end, and this year we mark the centennial anniversary of the conclusion of the planet’s first global conflict.

There was nothing like it before its time. It was the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month that all of the guns fell silent. After 4 years of war, 18 million people laid dead, 23 million others were wounded, and many of the old empires of Europe crumbled.

Often called the War to End All Wars or the Great War, the First World War left a long shadow over history which we can still feel today. But none experienced the horror of this war more than the 4 million Americans sent to fight over there in Europe and the families they left behind. Their lives were immediately changed forever.

The United States came late to the war, but when we arrived and restored hope to our European allies, we reached a defining moment in our history and world history. Until that time, America was not a great power as we are today, but with the arrival of our doughboys, they ushered in a new era of freedom in Europe. This was the beginning of the American century, the New World superpower, the United States.

Our military saw that it was their duty as champions of liberty to help our allies in need and to make the world safe for democracy. They went to liberate, not to conquer. Our enemy was shocked. Our allies were stunned by the tenacious doughboys. The American doughboys changed the course of the war forever.

Here in this photograph, we have Americans going over the top, as they