

# EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

A TRIBUTE TO BEV ROSS SNYDER

**HON. ROB PORTMAN**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 14, 1997

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. Speaker, the month of July marks the official birthday of our Nation, and I would like to acknowledge the outstanding work of a patriotic American, Bev Ross Snyder of Owensville in Clermont County, OH.

Ms. Snyder is a descendant of Betsy Ross, who was credited with the creation of our national flag—the Stars and Stripes. She has been the driving force behind the “Glorifying Our Flag—Through Education” campaign—an effort to educate students about the history, importance, and use of our national emblem. As a result of her efforts, students in grades 3 through 12 in Clermont County have been encouraged to learn more about the flag and have participated in very competitive art and essay contests. And, she has been an outspoken advocate of legislation in the Ohio General Assembly to encourage school districts to educate students about the proper respect, use, and display of the flag.

Ms. Snyder is making her first visit to Washington this week. I commend her on her work, and encourage all Americans to take an active role in learning more about the national symbol of freedom—our flag.

YES, APOLOGIES WOULD BE IN ORDER

**HON. LOUIS STOKES**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 14, 1997

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, in an article that appeared recently in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, the question of whether or not the Government should issue an apology for slavery in the United States was answered with a heartfelt, personal response. The article is entitled, “Yes, Apologies Would Be In Order.”

In the article, Afi-Odelia E. Scruggs, a columnist for the Plain Dealer, tells a touching story of tracing her family lineage back to a time when America allowed the slave trade to thrive. Through her experience, she illustrates why an apology for American slavery is so important to those who ancestors bore the burden of forced labor and dehumanization. Also, Scruggs recognizes that an official apology can help close that chapter of America's past many would like to forget, yet still lingers at the forefront of the memories of African-Americans today.

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion this writer has written one of the best articles I have read on this subject. I believe that it is crucial for those currently debating this issue to hear from both sides of the argument, and for that reason I would like to share this excellent article with my colleagues and others across the Nation.

YES, APOLOGIES WOULD BE IN ORDER

(By Afi-Adelia E. Scruggs)

For reasons I don't quite understand, I am intellectually and emotionally drawn to the antebellum period. Maybe it's because of my interest in genealogy. I've already written about finding my great-great-grandfather on a slave inventory.

But the connection grew stronger about five years ago, when I attended a traveling exhibit on slave life commissioned by the Museum of the Confederacy. The artifacts included a list of slaves from a South Carolina plantation. There, on the last line, I saw my own first name. Both experiences showed me how the past seeps into the present, how history can reveal itself with stunning immediacy.

Within the past week, the past has come alive again. This time, the catalyst is a possible presidential apology for slavery.

I would welcome it. The proposal has made me realize how much I need to hear it. I don't know whether I stand with the majority or the minority. I've seen a variety of reactions to the idea.

Some blacks, such as Baltimore Sun columnist Gregory Kane, shrug off the apology as a cynical political gesture. They say mere words will not lay 300 years of history to rest.

On the other hand, my colleague Joe Dirck points out that his family didn't have anything to do with slavery because the Dircks came to America shortly before the start of the Civil War.

I wouldn't expect an apology from the Dircks; that would be meaningless. I wouldn't expect an apology from the Kelly family of Williamson county, Tenn. They are descended from the man who owned my ancestors.

I talked to the Kellys years ago. My genealogical quest brought me to them; most blacks who track down their family history must inevitably knock on the slave owner's door.

Our conversation was cordial and brief. I was looking for information about Ed Scruggs' family, I told them, especially records of his plantation operation. If this sounds familiar, it is. “Roots” author Alex Haley made an identical request to the descendants of his family's masters.

Haley found a trove of information. But my call turned up nothing. I'd already traced Ed Scruggs as far back as possible, I was told. I could try the Williamson County court records. It seems Ed Scruggs' nine children were notorious for suing each other. We chuckled over that one. I got an invitation to call again if they could be of help. I haven't spoken to any of the Kellys since.

If the Kellys contacted me as a way of erasing the family's debt to history, I would be touched. If the Kellys wanted to talk about the part our ancestors played in this racial drama, I would agree. But I don't desire an apology from the Kellys, or any individual white person, because slavery wasn't a personal transgression.

It was a societal sin.

Slavery was an institution, a peculiar one that turned human beings into commodities. Because of that, people were treated no better than dogs, or horses, or any other piece of replaceable property. Slaves were sold, bartered, used as collateral for loans, and taxed as personal property.

Slaves were passed down as heirlooms and given as gifts. Five of my maternal ancestors, for example, were included in their mistress' dowry. When she married and moved to Tennessee, they left South Carolina with her. If fate hadn't intervened, in the guise of the Civil War, my name might be included today on someone's inventory list.

I need to hear an apology for such a dehumanizing system. I need to hear this country admit the corruption in a way of life that placed my ancestors in a trust fund for their master's children.

I need to hear President Clinton, as this country's leader, assure us all that Americans will never again be reduced to entries in an accounting ledger.

I need to hear all that, so that I can release my rage over the way my people were treated.

I must hear it so I can continue to forgive the society that allowed slavery to happen and resists acknowledging the depths of slavery's dehumanization.

And if an apology is given, I will accept.

THE DELETION OF HARRISBURG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT FROM SUPERFUND

**HON. GEORGE W. GEKAS**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 14, 1997

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, exactly 2 weeks ago, during the recent Fourth of July recess, at 2 p.m., on Monday, June 30, 1997, I participated in a brief ceremony which was the culmination of an effort that spanned nearly my entire career in the House of Representatives. That event was the removal, or deletion, of the Harrisburg International Airport from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Superfund List, the nationwide priority list of hazardous waste sites. Very few things in which I have participated during my tenure as the Member of Congress from the 17th District of Pennsylvania will have the stunning regional impact as the seemingly small and bureaucratic action of this Superfund list removal.

In addition to me, those participating in the deletion ceremony included Bradley L. Mallory, Pennsylvania's secretary of transportation; Elizabeth S. Voras, deputy secretary for aviation and rail freight [PADOT]; Timothy Fields, Acting Administrator for Solid Waste and Emergency Response for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Maj. Joseph Hand, Deputy District Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District; M. Joel Bolstein, deputy secretary for special projects, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection; and, many of those who toiled for years to accomplish this goal.

In 1983, hazardous contamination was discovered in the soil and groundwater on and around the land of the Harrisburg International Airport [HIA] forcing the inclusion of HIA on the Superfund list in June 1986. The HIA Superfund site included not only the airport,

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