

Laffita, who is currently at Villa Marista, a state security facility and still remains detained even though her name appears on the list of prisoners scheduled to be deported from Cuba to Canada, Marta Beatriz Roque Cabello, Migdelis Pozo Casanova, Esperanza Micaela Atencio de la Rosa, Daula Carpio Matas, Avianes Jordan Contreras, Mayda Barbara Jordan Contreras, Ana Maria Agramonte, Anaismiel Sanchez, Reina Isabel Rojas Sanchez, and many others.

"Currently on a hunger strike since February 24 and after being released from the hospital at Santa Clara are Lilian Meneses Martinez and Ileana Penalver Duque, both charged with illicit association and sentenced to 18 months in prison due to their participation with the opposition group that recently carried out the 120-day hunger strike in that city.

"In light of so much injustice and ignominy, we join our voices of opposition so that the world may learn of the spitefulness and indignity with which Cuban women political prisoners are treated.

"We call on all free citizens of the world to join in support of these women that suffer."

It is signed Soiris Aguiar Callejas of the Popular Democratic Alliance, Geronima Rosa Soto of the Association in Favor of Constitutional Democracy, Vicky Ruiz Labrit of the Committee of Peaceful Opposition Members and Co-ordinator of the National Centers for Studies on the Family, Celia Jorge of the Liberal Current, Maria Antonia Escobedo Yaser of the Democratic Front Oriental, Neri Gorostiza Campoalegre of the Movement Pro-Human Rights, Adis Alcolea of the Organization of Social Christians, Ana Luisa Lopez Baeza of Cuba Press, Isabel del Pino, Humanitarian Association Followers of Christ Jesus, Beatriz Garcia of the Association of the National Front Against Injustice, Dr. Iraida Leon of the Independent Medical Association, Daisy Carcases Batle of the Feminist Forum, Gladys Linares Blanco of the Humanitarian Feminist Front of Cuba, Nancy Sotolongo Leon of the Democratic Action Movement, Marta Parga of the Movement in Favor of Solidarity and Peace, Cecilia Zamora Cabrera of the Independent Feminist Organization of Cuba, Odilia Collazo Valdez of the Pro-Human Rights Party of Cuba.

Just another reality check, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the horror of Cuba today and what has been going on despite the hope that much of the world had that things could change pursuant to the Pope's visit. And things will change in Cuba.

A seed has no doubt been planted for the future of spirituality. But the reality of today is totalitarianism and continued repression. I think it is important for the international community to know the plight of Cuban human rights violations and of prisoners of conscience, especially women

and corporations have initiated successful minority lending programs to compensate for these shortfalls, much still remains to be done.

and prisoners of conscience that languish at this very moment in Castro's dungeons.

Mr. Speaker, March 8th is commemorated each year as international women's rights day. At this moment a great number of dignified Cuban women patriots are in dungeons of the dictatorship for the sole crime of seeking freedom for their country. Silence before their suffering is unacceptable and constitutes a form of complicity with the jailers of Cuban women prisoners of conscience. I will not cease denouncing the existence of political imprisonment in Cuba until it is but a tragic chapter of past history.

ON WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES IN CELEBRATION OF WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Women's History Month, I rise to pay tribute to the achievements of businesswomen, both in my own congressional district and across the Nation. In Montgomery County, Maryland, the district that I represent in Congress, we have one of the highest percentages of women entrepreneurs and working women in America.

The growth of women-owned businesses has been extraordinary. Women are starting businesses at twice the rate of men according to the Small Business Administration. The SBA anticipates that women will own 50 percent of the small businesses in America in the 21st century. At present, there are 9 million women-owned businesses that generate \$2.3 trillion in annual revenues, an increase of approximately 236 percent over the last 10 years.

Women business owners employ one out of every four company workers. Women-owned businesses generate more jobs than all of the Fortune 500 companies combined. According to the National Foundation for Women Business Owners, women employers are more likely to offer flexible work arrangements, child care subsidies and health care benefits.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that of the 9 million women business owners, 1.1 million are minority women entrepreneurs. Of the 1.1 million minority-owned businesses, approximately 35 percent are owned by African American women; 33 percent by Hispanic American women, and 26 percent by Asian American women. Although Native Americans represent only 1 percent of the American population, 6 percent of all women-minority-owned businesses are owned by Native American women.

□ 1815

Despite all of their progress, women entrepreneurs still have difficulty obtaining access to capital. Women and minorities still only receive 5 percent of total loans for major financial institutions. Although government agencies

and corporations have initiated successful minority lending programs to compensate for these shortfalls, much still remains to be done.

On this important day, in celebration of the achievements of women in business, I am proud to join with the Business Women's Network in saluting the strong trends represented by women's organizations. Under the leadership of Edie Fraser, president of BWN, this group provides an extraordinary network, bridging together 1,200 business women's business and professional organizations.

BWN has shared some special examples of women helping women:

BWN has been working with 30 women's organizations to provide 13,000 jobs for women who have been on welfare.

Dare to Dream is a special program that provides mentors to girls in school.

The American Women's Economic Development Center, AWED, offers new women business owners one-on-one counseling with a successful entrepreneur.

The Association for Women in Science has developed a mentoring guide and programs to encourage young women to enter the fields of science, engineering and technology.

Today, more than 52 percent of all web users are women. BWN located 169 women's resource web sites last year, and that number has now increased to 750. From 169 to 750.

As we look toward the new millennium, it is clear that women will continue to be leaders in the business arena. My congratulations to the Business Women's Network and the 1,200 women's business and professional organizations for their accomplishments in promoting women-owned businesses. I salute women in business for their outstanding achievements and their contributions to the economic well-being of America.

SUNDRY MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Sundry messages in writing from the President of the United States were communicated to the House by Mr. Sherman Williams, one of his secretaries.

TRIBUTE TO WOMEN IN BUSINESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Women's History Month, I rise today to pay tribute to women in business and to express pride in the fact that the women of Chicago and Cook County have benefitted from the successful programs of the Women's Business Development Center.

Based in Chicago, the Women's Business Development Center serves 2,000 women annually with counseling, training, financial assistance, certification, procurement and advocacy on