

during those days to go into the capitol and I lived two blocks from the capitol in Tallahassee, and I always looked up at the capitol and wondered if some day I would become a part of it. Who would imagine that I would become a part of the Florida senate, of the Florida house? Who would imagine that I would come here to Washington to be in the Halls of Congress? This is a revered body. It is a body that is well respected.

I grew up during the period of intolerance and strict segregation. It was so unfair, and it left a lasting impression on me, and I knew I had to continue to work. I saw good people held down and prevented from rising to their potential simply because of their color. I knew of good men who were killed for the same reason. I saw that power could be used to build or destroy, and I saw how powerlessness could lead to frustration and anger.

I can only state to this Congress, to every last one of you, how much I respect my blackness and my racial identity. I feel very strongly that there is still a debt we owe to the people who came before us.

When I was a child, I heard Roland Hayes sing. I got a chance to hear George Washington Carver speak. I heard W.E.B. DuBois speak. I heard Marian Anderson sing. I read the poems of Countee Cullen. So that great diversity and love that God has given came from my experience as a black person.

I stand before you today as the granddaughter of a slave. How wonderful. When you look at me, you can see that our Nation's legacy of slavery and racism is not so far removed from our lives today. But we have to keep fighting. One of the reasons that I was elected to this office was to remind you of that, and I have tried to do so to the best of my ability.

In my 10 years in the Congress and over three decades of service to my community, I have tried to live by a commitment every day of my life, and that is service is a price you pay for the space that God has let you occupy.

Because of the love of a strong Christian family, loving parents, protective older brothers and sisters, outsiders who took an interest in me, both white and black, and a strong desire to succeed, I was able to move forward.

Education is the springboard, Mr. Speaker. I have stood for it since I have been here. Improving the quality of life in housing and good health care, these are springboards. So I know it is a vehicle, and that is why I think we should continue in the Halls of Congress to do so.

I wanted to say a few things here today because of what I have lived through. We do not have time for me to go through all of it. One of these days I will write a book so each of you can read it. And other than that I will be coming back from time to time. I have six grandchildren and I have three children, and they all know of my legacy.

And when I go back home, I am not going to sit still.

My colleagues need to know some of the reasons why I am not retiring. I am not retiring because I am so feeble I cannot come up here every day. I am not retiring because I do not feel I can do the job, and I am not retiring because I feel that if I were to run I would be defeated. Mr. Speaker, I am almost undefeatable. I am almost that way in my mind, so that is no reason why I am leaving. But I want to go now, because I have other things to do and other careers to pursue.

I love this country very much, and serving it has been the greatest honor of my life. We need more respect. We need respect of diversity, we need to embrace it, and we have to listen. I fully appreciate now how progress rarely comes in giant steps, but in small, incremental lurches forward. So I will retire from Congress, fully confident that our great Nation will continue to prosper.

Dr. Benjamin Mays, the former President of Morehouse College said, "It isn't a calamity to die with dreams unfulfilled, but it is a calamity not to dream."

Mr. Speaker, I hope all of my colleagues will remember me as someone who tried as hard as she could to do both.

#### NEVER CAN SAY GOOD-BYE

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I just want to echo the sentiments on this side of the aisle about our sadness regarding the departure from this wonderful institution of our dear colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK).

In my 20 years of elective office, I have served every one of those days with my colleague, CARRIE MEEK. The Congresswoman from Florida has been a distinguished member of every institution I have had the pleasure to serve. In the Florida house we served together. We moved together to the Florida senate, and then we served here in the U.S. Congress.

In those many years, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) has distinguished herself as a dedicated public servant, carrying the water on so many items of interest to south Florida and, indeed, our Nation; because I think her legacy extends far beyond her Liberty City district, far beyond our Sunshine State, far beyond our borders. She leaves a legacy of leadership, of dignity, of dedication, and a real sense of community service.

CARRIE, we are going to have you to kick around for a lot of years. You are not retiring; you are going to be in our hearts and you are going to be in our community for many decades to come. I cannot imagine serving here without you. So every day when we are voting,

you will be a part of this institution, you will be a part of our body, you will be a part of our legacy. Asi que te va vamos a estranoi, mi amiga. You are my friend. We have traveled many a hard road together, and we will continue that struggle together for many more years. You are not leaving, so we are not going to say good-bye. Adios, mi amiga.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, July 8, 2002, I was unavoidably detained in my district on official business, and I missed rollcall votes, numbers 283 and 284. If I was present, I would have voted "aye" on rollcall vote 283 and "aye" on rollcall vote 284.

#### MANY THANKS TO CARRIE MEEK, A GREAT AMERICAN

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I have had the honor of serving with the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) on the Committee on Appropriations for many years now. We saw the parade of Members from both sides of the aisle, all sorts of ideologies, come and give the gentlewoman a hug. They gave her a hug not for her, although she appreciated it; they gave her a hug for themselves. She is an historic leader of this House, an historic leader of her State, and a great American. She loves this country, and the great news is her country loves her.

The gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) is a person of great depth, of great intellect, of great ability, who is as humble an individual as I know, as effective an individual as I know.

And, CARRIE, all of us will miss you in the day-to-day operations of this body. But as the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) indicated, we know that you are not going. We think you are probably going to be coming here regularly to visit family. Who knows?

But we certainly want to say to the gentlewoman that we thank her. We thank her for being her, for being our friend, for being such a great Member of this House. She has brought honor to this House, she has brought humanity to this House, and she has brought great service to her district.

#### EXTENDING DEEP LOVE AND APPRECIATION

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I wish to add my words to that of the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) and the Florida delegation in extending our deepest love and appreciation to our treasured colleague from the State of