

IN MEMORY OF LT ALMAR LARON
FITZGERALD

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2006

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on March 4, 2006, I attended the funeral of Almar LaRon Fitzgerald, an American soldier from Lexington, South Carolina, who gave his life while serving his country in Iraq. This hero of Lexington County who graduated from The Citadel was lovingly eulogized at the Lexington Baptist Church by Pastor Ken Jumper of The Harvest Church of Lexington. Pastor Jumper, with a family of military service, provided an inspiring lesson of hope.

THE FUNERAL SERVICE OF LT ALMAR LARON
FITZGERALD LEXINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

And Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

As we were singing this last song, I was reminded of this scripture where we are given the promise of eternal life. And yes, we believe this.

I would like to thank the family for allowing me the opportunity to share in these moments with them, and my thoughts and prayers are certainly with you.

If I were to say today how I really felt inside, I would have to say, "It just ain't right". But my part today is to bring, and I have been asked to bring, "words of comfort".

With that said, we must understand today that our comfort will not be found in the context of human understanding. As a pastor, I am often called upon to explain the unexplainable, but the unexplainable remains unexplained even after I have said my piece. There are no real explanations as to why a quality young man should leave life so early in the day.

However, our comfort today will be found in the context of our faith. You see that is why we came to the church, sang some hymns, called a preacher and read some scripture. We understand that in moments like these we call upon our faith—a faith that transcends our human understanding and grief.

We look to the God unseen and an eternity yet unrealized to anchor our hope. The faith I speak of today is more than just a general faith in God. It is a specific faith that finds its foundation in the person of Jesus Christ.

As I pondered my thoughts for today, I was reminded of the first family created by God. Adam and Eve, the first family, lost a son. Their son was also lost through an act of seemingly meaningless violence. And at that time, they had to deal with the emotions you and I are dealing with today—the questions of why, feelings of loss and grief, and wondering where do we go from here. They had to make some sense and reconcile these thoughts of pain, loss and grief with God and eternal things.

Today as we think of Almar LaRon Fitzgerald and the life he lived—a life that served, a life that was savored and well lived, and ultimately a life that was sacrificed—I would like for us to turn our attention to "another Son" that was sacrificed.

Adam and Eve had a son that was lost, and God gave them another son. They named him Seth, and it was in and through this son they were to find hope. It was through "another son," Seth, that Jesus Christ was to be born. If you follow the genealogy of Christ back-

wards you will find this to be true. And today, it is through this Son, God's Son Jesus Christ, that you and I will find our comfort and consolation from today.

I wish I could explain the unexplainable today. Let me tell you what I do know. Let me tell you what I do know to be True, Reliable and Eternal. I know that God is Love. He is, He has been and He always will be. God created a world of peace and harmony with no violence, sickness or pain.

Unfortunately, mankind fell and chose to live their lives their own way. Therefore, we live in a fallen world today—one that has sickness, pain and death. We must be careful that we do not allow our pain and hurt to turn to bitterness against others or against the God who does love us and care for us.

For you see, it was right in the middle of this fallen world that God dropped a cross, planted it in the ground and hung His Only Son upon it. A cross that stands between heaven and earth. A cross that helps us reconcile life and eternity. A cross that helps us bear up under the burden of pain and grief. A cross where Jesus died, sacrificially giving His life for another. I remember as well, as I think of Almar's sacrifice, there is no greater love than this, that a man would lay down his life for another. So you and I can look to this cross and find the comfort and hope we need in order to navigate this life.

We find in this cross two arenas of hope. First of all, the hope of eternal life. For all those who have accepted Christ and believe in Him, there is the promise of life after death. You see, we who believe will see Almar again. There is life beyond this life. This is the hope and comfort we can have today.

Now we have the promise of eternal life, but we also have the promise of a Comforter. Jesus promised that He would be with us. He would comfort us. He would never leave us or forsake us. So during the days and weeks ahead and during the dark nights when no one is there, He will be there. He will be with me and comfort me in my darkness and most difficult moment! Can I get a witness in the place today?

This is the hope we have: Jesus and His presence will be with me and strengthen me, day by day until 'that day'. So we look to the cross and the Son. This is where we find our hope and peace.

We also find the grace to forgive at the cross. So we must today forgive those who have hurt us.

The Bible tells us that the power of the cross removes the sting of death. Death has no hold on us. As death went to catch Almar in its grip, poof, he was gone. Death looked around and could not find him. Jesus said those who believe in me will never taste, experience, death.

And as we forgive, we find peace. Interestingly, Almar gave his life for peace. So we must forgive others, even as Jesus hung on the cross and said, "Father forgive them, they don't understand." May we become peacemakers today.

Finally out of this comfort, may we find courage. The courage to get up and go on with our lives, learning to live life to its fullest. The courage to forgive others and be peacemakers. And the courage to accept Jesus Christ and forge a path through life that others can recognize and follow.

Now may the peace and grace of Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen and Amen!

A TRIBUTE TO SETA SIMONIAN

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2006

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ms. Seta Simonian, of Glendale, California. Each year in March, in recognition of Women's History Month, we pay special tribute to the contributions and sacrifices made by our nation's women.

Ms. Simonian's community involvement demonstrates her devotion to education and art, because she believes in promoting and preserving the treasures and the beauty of Armenian culture and heritage.

Seta was born in Aleppo, Syria, and at age 11 moved to Beirut, Lebanon. Upon graduating from the American University of Beirut at the age of 22, she married Hratch Simonian. The Simonians lived and worked in Saudi Arabia for 8 years, then moved to California in 1985. Since 1987, Seta, her husband, and their two children, Karin and Sebouh, have resided in Glendale, California.

Soon after moving to California, Ms. Simonian cofounded and chaired the Hamazkayin Educational and Cultural Society of Pasadena. She is a current member of Arvest and Artee Cultural Groups of Hamazkayin, and since 1994, has been the chair of the Hamazkayin Music Committee which collaborates with artists in Armenia and releases authentic CDs and classical Armenian music. She is currently an assistant for the Hamazkayin Student Forum held in Armenia every summer. Seta served as an Anchor for Horizon Armenian TV in Glendale for three years. A cofounder of the Committee of Armenian Students in the Public Schools, she is also a member of the Armenian Cultural Foundation, Armenian Educational Foundation, Armenian International Women's Association, the National Education Association, and the California and Glendale Teachers' Associations.

Seta received her bachelor's degree in mathematics from the American University of Beirut, and a master's in education administration from California State University Los Angeles. She has a teaching diploma, a bilingual teaching certificate, and has completed an Armenian Studies program.

A wonderful role model for her students, Seta has been a teacher for over 30 years and is currently teaching math at Wilson Middle School in Glendale.

I ask all Members of Congress to join me today in honoring an outstanding woman of California's 29th Congressional District, Seta Simonian.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT OF CONGRESS REGARDING ACCESS OF MILITARY RECRUITERS TO INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2006

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to raise and voice my concern on this