

KENNEDY, Jimmy Carter, Governor Hugh Carey, Mario Cuomo, Mayor Ed Koch, David Dinkins and President Bill and Senator HILLARY CLINTON and welcomed them into our Queens County home.

Her intelligence, her warmth and kindness have made everyone who has come into contact with her feel welcome and comfortable.

However, Mary Lu's reach went well beyond local politics. You have to keep in mind, Madam Speaker, that Queens County has 2.3 million people who live in just that county alone. When she was not at county headquarters, she was working to create a better Queens, and in particular, a better Rockaway, her hometown in Queens County. For example, every year she hosted an annual fundraiser that was a must-attend event to help the children of St. Gertrude's Parish in Far Rockaway.

On top of all she has done for others, most important to her, I think, is her role as a mother and as a grandmother. There is nothing that Mary Lu won't do or hasn't done for her two children, Steve and Jamie; and her three grandchildren, Matthew, Christopher, and Caroline; and their mom, Nancy.

I have tremendous respect for Mary Lu and all she has accomplished throughout her years, but as her friend, I'm most proud of how she has led her family life, and I have always considered myself an extended member of that family, often enjoying many personal moments in the Rockaways, getting sand in my shoes with the Plunkett family.

In the coming weeks, my fellow friends and colleagues in Queens County will gather to honor Mary Lu for her lifetime of service to our great borough and to our great city and to our great country. We will applaud her for her charity, her wit and political skill, and I want to thank her for being a mentor and a friend.

Mary Lu, we love you and we congratulate you on your lifetime of achievement.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS

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

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, the current subprime housing crisis, coupled with volatile energy prices, rising costs in health care and looming tax increases, among others, have put our country on the dark path of economic slowdown. And although not yet a technical recession, it certainly feels like a recession in the communities that I represent in western Pennsylvania.

Clearly, America's hardworking families and employers are feeling the crunch from the slowing economy.

While there's a growing consensus in Washington that Congress needs to take action on a stimulus package to stave off further economic challenges,

an agreement on how to proceed remains very elusive.

In addition to recently participating in a Joint Economic Committee hearing on the state of the economy, I've met with half a dozen respected economists, and I strongly believe that unless Congress acts swiftly on a stimulus package that will inject money into the American economy and incentivize job creation, middle class America will be forced to bear the brunt of our country's economic instability.

To be clear, now is not the time for politics as usual. We need to unite to enact sound stimulus legislation that, among other things, will benefit both wage earners and job creators, will encourage investment in good paying jobs, and will put more money back into the pockets of working families.

Now, how can Congress achieve these goals on a bipartisan basis? In my view, Madam Speaker, the single best way to help struggling employers in this climate, while providing a jumpstart to the economy, is to allow companies to quickly recapture the money they invest in capital.

Congress should step up to the plate today to create incentives for American employers to invest in new equipment, to revive bonus depreciation to boost employer's capital, and to work to enact common-sense policies that will curb the reach of the corporate alternative minimum tax at exactly the time when its reach is most devastating, during economic downturns.

At the same time, Congress must explore ways in which we can mitigate the impact of a sluggish economy on low and moderate income families that are now facing new and severe economic uncertainty.

By extending unemployment benefits, rolling the income tax on unemployment benefits back, and increasing the child tax credit and providing a significant tax rebate for middle-class families, Congress can ensure that every American has access to the financial resources they need to weather this pending economic storm.

While I've outlined a stimulus plan that will create an environment for job growth, reform how we tax American employers and improve UC benefits for the long-term unemployed, Congress must be vigilant in crafting a pro-growth plan that will not disturb the government's fiscal balance.

I believe frankly we need to avoid absurd PAYGO rhetoric which, coupled with a liberal budget requiring tax increases, now seems to be hobbling action on the other side of the aisle.

Over the past year, some of my friends on the other side of the aisle have insisted on a budget that would impose substantial tax increases on a struggling American economy.

These Herbert Hoover Democrats have used the labels of tax reform and revenue neutrality as a carnival mask to conceal a policy of higher taxes and higher spending, essentially placing a

higher percentage of the American economy under government control, and this at a time when the economy is vulnerable, facing slower economic growth.

Instead of setting new priorities, the new majority has chosen to throw priority setting to the wind and have undermined the benefits of the very tax policies that have grown the economy and helped America's middle class.

At the time of economic hardship, when Americans are struggling to make ends meet, it would be inconceivable to place additional, unnecessary tax burdens on the backs of middle class America.

Madam Speaker, time is of the essence. Putting the economy back on a growth path must be a top priority for Washington. Congress must move on a bipartisan basis to enact a stimulus package that is swift, significant and effective.

We need to set aside sterile politics of class warfare and embrace strong pro-growth tax policies that will help benefit everyone by reinvigorating the American economy.

HONORING PRIVATE BOOKER TOWNSELL

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, Senator BILL NELSON and I introduced legislation today to amend the dark chapter of American history by providing a fair and just settlement for our African American soldiers who were wrongly convicted after an incident at Fort Lawton during World War II.

Last Saturday, I stood with the family of Booker Townsell at his gravesite in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. At long last, Private Booker Townsell received a burial with full honors, in a ceremony filled with emotion and symbolism. At long last, Booker Townsell received the military honors he deserved.

I want to read into the RECORD the remarks I read last Saturday because Booker and his family deserve to have his long overdue military honors permanently etched into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

In the House, I represent Seattle in King County, Washington, home to Fort Lawton and home to author Jack Hamann. He exposed what Booker Townsell, his family and others have often lived and known for a long time, that the color of their skin determined their fate and denied them due process.

And on behalf of the people in my Seventh District, who live in a county proudly named in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, let me sum up our feelings by quoting Dr. King: Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

That's why I got into this fight. America cannot and must not permit

racial injustice to breathe the same air that we breathe, or to live among us as a plague upon our Nation, or to poison the sweet light of day with its grim darkness of evil.

We come here today in the name of justice, to fully and finally honor Private Booker Townsell, a soldier, a hero, an African American who served his country in a time of war, only to be deserted by his country in his time of need.

Racial injustice struck down this innocent man, and others, who were denied the opportunity to live their lives with a full measure of honor for their military service and who were denied all their rightful benefits for their military service, including the right of their family to receive an American flag when they passed.

The American flag is a powerful symbol of our Nation's strength, unity and commitment to core values like equal justice under the law and equal rights. Today our flag also represents the courage of an Army private and the dignity of his family to accept justice delayed after being denied so long, and it represents the ability of a great Nation to look inward and admit a grave injustice.

This is a proud day for Private Booker Townsell and his family. He has been promoted from Army private to American role model, and his life, service and this day teaches us a lot about ourselves and our Nation.

Dr. King said: The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

Booker Townsell, and his family and others like Sam Snow who lives in Florida, stood up to the challenge and, in so doing, stood up for us all. Today, on their behalf, America renews its vow to fight racial injustice, to acknowledge the deep and tragic mistakes of the past and to restore hope in the future.

Here in Washington the work is not finished. The legislation Senator NELSON and I introduced today will, along with others, including Congresswoman MOORE from Milwaukee, direct the Army to provide the Fort Lawton survivors like Sam Snow in Florida and families like Booker Townsell with the economic benefits to which they're entitled. It's the least we can do. I also hope that we can put a memorial on the Fort Lawton site to teach future generations about the sacrifices made by Booker Townsell, Sam Snow, and others, and to remind us that we must never forget that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Today, we salute Private Booker Townsell and his loved ones on behalf of this grateful Nation. We are grateful for his military service, his courage, and his dignity, and grateful that America is strong enough to admit its mistakes and provide justice and honor at long last.

I would like to enter into the RECORD an article from the Milwaukee Sentinel

dated 19 January 2008, entitled, "Injustice Undone."

[From the Milwaukee Sentinel, Jan. 19, 2008]
INJUSTICE UNDONE: SOLDIER HONORED MORE THAN 20 YEARS AFTER DEATH
(By Meg Kissinger)

Carol Blalock closed her eyes and smiled as the sound of gunshots rang through the bitter cold morning air on Saturday.

At long last, justice had been served. Her father, Booker Townsell, who died in 1984, had finally been granted full military honors, a proper military burial at Graceland Cemetery on Milwaukee's northwest side. An Army contingent, including Ronald James, Assistant Secretary of the Army, traveled to Milwaukee to correct an injustice begun more than 63 years ago.

In August 1944, Townsell and 42 other African-American soldiers were blamed for the lynching death of an Italian prisoner of war at Fort Lawton, an Army base outside Seattle. Many of them, including Townsell, were convicted of rioting. Two others were convicted of manslaughter.

The story might have ended there, had it not been for curiosity of a television reporter named Jack Hamann, who, along with his wife, Leslie, spent 20 years uncovering the facts of the case. Their account, in the book "On American Soil: How Justice Became a Casualty of World War II," prompted a bipartisan call for the convictions to be overturned and full military honors to be restored. In October, the Army reversed the conviction of Townsell and the others.

Hamann stood at the front of the chapel at Graceland on Saturday, fighting back tears as the Army color guard played taps.

"Reporters are trained to check out emotionally," he said. "But this one is tough."

Also standing in the crowd was Ronald Hayes, a retired master sergeant and Townsell family friend, who likewise swallowed hard when Wisconsin Army National Guard Brig. Gen. Roger Lalich presented the U.S. flag to Townsell's oldest daughter, Marion Williamson.

"This is good," Hayes said.

Later in the day, nearly 200 people gathered at the Milwaukee County War Memorial Center to pay tribute to Townsell and to celebrate his ultimate exoneration.

"He wouldn't have wanted this attention," Williamson told the crowd. "But he deserves it. I hope my father's soul can finally rest in peace."

Speakers included Jim McDermott, Democratic congressman from the state of Washington who pushed to have the Army reverse the convictions.

"Too often the color of skin defined fate and denied due process," McDermott said.

Quoting the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., McDermott talked of why this decision is so important and the need to celebrate it so urgent.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," he said. McDermott complimented the Army for admitting a grave mistake. He recalled the images of Townsell as a dedicated family man and factory worker, who danced with his children and cheered his granddaughter at her track meet.

It would have been easy for Townsell to wallow in the bitterness of this dark chapter of his life, McDermott said. Instead, he chose to persevere. Again invoking King's words, McDermott said, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

As far as Blalock and the other members of Townsell's family were concerned, Saturday's ceremony was no less precious because of the time it took to make things right.

"I loved my father's laugh," Blalock said. "When they had that 21-gun salute and played taps, it was like I could hear him laugh again."

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

RIC WILLIAMSON

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

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I come to the floor of the House this afternoon to remember one of the most dedicated public servants from the State of Texas we lost on December 30 of this year.

Ric Williamson was a member of the Texas Transportation Commission and served as that body's Chair that oversees statewide activities for the Texas Department of Transportation. He was appointed to that position in March of 2001 by Governor Rick Perry and in January of 2004 became the chairman of the Texas Transportation Commission.

Prior to his appointment, he served in the Texas State Legislature from 1985 to 1988. Numerous professional and legislative accomplishments are attributed to Ric Williamson, and many awards from the Texas media, including twice being recognized as one of the 10 best legislators in the Texas State Legislature in 1989 and 1991.

Ric was born in Abilene, Texas, and graduated with a B.A. degree from the University of Texas in 1974. He later founded his own natural gas production company. He made his home in Weatherford, Texas, with his wife, Mary Ann. He has three beautiful daughters, Melissa, Katherine and Sara, who spoke so eloquently on behalf of their father in the memorial service that we held this past January 3. Ric has two grandchildren. Most recently, his grandson was born at the beginning of December of this past year.

Chairman Williamson brought a sense of purpose, a sense of vision, and a sense of urgency that had not previously been present in the State of Texas when it came to issues regarding transportation. He established a strategic plan, he set real goals, and then he did everything within his power to meet those goals.

He wanted to reduce congestion. He wanted to improve safety. He wanted to expand economic opportunity, increase the value of the assets in the Texas highway system, and clean the air.

One of his greatest legacies was to empower local leaders to make local