

the community ever since. He opened his clinic in a predominately African American neighborhood, and was one of the first African American medical professionals to provide services to this underserved community.

In addition to his work in the medical field, Dr. Merritt has been a tireless advocate for his community. He is a past Exalted Ruler of the Pride of Fort Lauderdale Elks Lodge #652, as well as a Life Member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Urban League, and the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity. Dr. Merritt has also been a member of the Mount Hemon A.M.E. Church since 1964, where he has served as a Trustee.

None of these great achievements would have been possible without the love and support of Dr. Merritt's wife Rose Legon, who together raised two wonderful children, Dr. Pamela Merritt and Portia Mehaffey. They are also the proud grandparents of four lovely grandchildren, Courtney, Cierra, Darby, and Addison.

Mr. Speaker, to arrive at the great milestone of 85 years is no small thing. I am truly honored to share in this celebration of Dr. Merritt's many accomplishments and contributions. I wish him many more years of happiness and success.

RECOGNIZING THE WEST FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL'S LADY JAGUARS AS CLASS 4A STATE SOFTBALL CHAMPIONS

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2014

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to congratulate the First Congressional District of Florida's West Florida High School's girls softball team for winning the Class 4A State Championship. This victory marks the Lady Jaguars first ever state championship. West Florida High School ended their championship season with a record of 29–1, with a victory over P.K. Yonge High School on May 8, 2014 in the Class 4A State Championship Game.

Led by head coach Jessica Smith, pitching coach Angie Johnson, and assistant coach Gary Jackson, the Jaguars are a team of young women with tremendous persistence and passion. These attributes were on full display in the championship game when the Jaguars found themselves trailing by four runs and down to their last out in the 7th inning. Despite the long odds, the Jaguars refused to give up. A pivotal moment in the game occurred when the Navy's Blue Angels, home based at Pensacola Naval Air Station, could be seen flying over the field, which was located over 500 miles from Pensacola, in Vero Beach. As Coach Smith described, catching a glimpse of home both encouraged and sparked a special energy in the Jaguars, and they triumphed over P.K. Yonge with a score of 6 to 5.

Winning the state championship is a true testament to the hard work, ambition, and dedication of the West Florida High School girls softball team. Each team member is an invaluable asset to both the Lady Jaguars and the local community. To be honored with the

opportunity to bring home a state championship is a wonderful reflection of the team's commitment to Northwest Florida and to each other. I commend Korina Rosario, Kathleen Smiley, Jordaine Watkins, Nachele Watson, Ali Cutaio, Kristin Gunter, Emily Loring, Kayla Miller, Breana Rogers, Danyelle Black, Maegan Freeman, Jibrasha Moore, Farrah Nicholas, Lauren Carnley, Jasmyn Nguyen, and Ealon Pyle for challenging themselves as a team and setting a shining example of camaraderie and athleticism for their fellow students and youth in Pensacola.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, it gives me great pleasure to recognize this outstanding group of young women and their devoted coaches for their extraordinary victory. My wife Vicki joins me in offering our best wishes to West Florida High School and its talented athletes for their continued personal and athletic success.

HONORING DR. AFAF I. MELEIS

HON. TOM MARINO

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2014

Mr. MARINO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Dr. Afaf I. Meleis, outgoing Dean of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Nursing. Dr. Meleis has served as Dean for 12 years, and will be truly missed by her students and colleagues.

Dr. Meleis assumed her role as Dean of the University of Pennsylvania School of nursing in 2002, and under her leadership, Penn Nursing is now regarded as one of the world's most regarded schools of nursing. Thanks to Dr. Meleis, Penn Nursing is now internationally renowned for their innovative research, teaching and practice and the School has established departments of Behavioral Health Sciences and Family and Community Health.

Dr. Meleis is internationally recognized for her work in nursing theory and her devotion to the health of women and girls. Dr. Meleis has intensified efforts to improve the health of women around the world by creating academic partnerships, and developing relationships with the United Nations and other international organizations dedicated to equity and well-being.

The first time I met her, my daughter Chloe and I had joined her for a CARE learning tour in West Africa, I was so overwhelmed by her compassion and dedication. Her expertise and brilliance are quickly made known to those around her, but it is her endless humanitarian work and advocacy for children which is most admirable. Her work as the Dean of Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing, has elevated the program to what it is today: one of the leading nursing graduate schools in the world.

Although I have only known Dr. Meleis for a short time, she has made a tremendous impact in Chloe's and my life. I want to congratulate her on her long and successful tenure she has served as Dean. She has gone above her duty to ensure that the University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing, is regarded as a top tier nursing program, and I wish her the best of luck in all of her future endeavors.

SHANNON MELENDI'S DEATH STILL STINGS, 20 YEARS LATER

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2014

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, on previous occasions I have spoken about the loss of Shannon Melendi, a beautiful girl who attended my alma mater, Southwest Miami High School, and whose life was taken tragically as a teenager in 1994. As their Congresswoman and friend, I thank the Melendi Family for keeping us vigilant. I would like to share an eloquently written story about Shannon by Anne (Martinez) Vasquez, Associate Editor at the South Florida Sun-Sentinel, which was published by the newspaper on March 25, 2014:

SHANNON MELENDI'S DEATH STILL STINGS, 20 YEARS LATER

What I would give to relive those days of playing with our collection of cheap drug-store makeup sprawled on the bedroom floor as we plotted our outfits and gossiped about boys. Shannon Melendi and I became fast friends at the cusp of adolescence, when you dream of days still decades away and fantasize about chapters in your life you've yet to write.

Tears still sting my eyes when I think of the final chapter of Shannon's short life: At 19, a sophomore at Emory University, she disappeared on a Saturday afternoon after going on a lunch break from her part-time job as a scorekeeper at a softball field in suburban Atlanta.

The year was 1994, 20 years ago this week. It would be another painful 12 years before the man long suspected of kidnapping Shannon confessed.

Shannon's body was never found. There was no funeral, no official moment to mourn. Instead, the last 20 years have unfolded in surreal fashion, where life goes on for Shannon's closest family and friends even as we've struggled to fill in the blanks, a search for answers that never come.

Only now, as I reflect on the twists and turns of my life, do I realize the imprint that Shannon's story has left on my soul, a silent narrative that has molded my evolution as an adult and, ultimately, as a mother. The underlying lesson lingering in my subconsciousness: If evil can strike on a Saturday afternoon—snatching a smart 19-year-old with quick wit, the president of her high school senior class, an aspiring lawyer, a champion debater, the daughter of present and caring parents—it can happen to anyone, anywhere.

EVIL STRIKES

I woke up on Tuesday morning, March 29, 1994, with my father handing me a small clipping buried inside the Local section of The Miami Herald. I found the concerned look on my father's face puzzling, until I read the brief article, just a few lines long, saying Shannon's parents had flown to Atlanta after learning she had gone missing.

The rest of the week was a blur until I went to see Shannon's younger sister, Monique, who was staying with her aunt and grandparents. She turned 14 years old five days after Shannon disappeared, and I wanted to bring her a present. I sought to revisit happier times, when the Melendi family would invite me to join them on their vacations to the Florida Keys. Endless summer days where I first learned to water ski, jump waves and conquer my fear of treading open water.