

The sense of frustration and anger felt by so many African Americans, especially young African Americans, is understandable. There remain great inequities in the functioning of our criminal justice system, inequities which are also still found in housing, finance, employment, and electoral politics. History suggests that the reduction of these inequities come only after sustained, unremitting public protest, unified community resistance and economic, legal and political action. The progress we have made as a nation in securing equality and social justice has been uneven and intermittent. There have been periods of backlash and backsliding but over the years the end result has been slow, but relentless progress in repealing and reversing legal, social and economic injustices.

The question before us now is how best to protect our youth, how to end violence, including police violence in our community. Times like this bring to the surface powerful emotions and the temptation to lose faith in our still too often imperfect democratic process. Peoples of nations around the world which either have never established democratic institutions and processes or have given up on perfecting them have paid a horrible, and unnecessary, price. Now is a time to make our laws and law enforcement work for our community, not against our community. Now is the time for us to redouble our determination to reform and strengthen our system of laws and law enforcement, not to abandon it for a brief moment of street rage.

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

SPEECH OF

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 1, 2014

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Ferguson Grand Jury's decision not to indict Officer Darren Wilson for the August 9th shooting of unarmed teenager Michael Brown is a grave injustice. This decision plays into the deeply painful narrative, held in the hearts of many African Americans, that the lives of young black men are not valued in this country. While this notion may seem hard to believe for some, it is a reality for many minorities, as we continually see our justice system betray us. Most disturbing about the death of Michael Brown is the chilling fact that he is not the first unarmed African American man to die at the hands of police officers who were not held accountable for their actions. When I think of Michael Brown, I think of Edward Garner, Anthony Baez, Amadou Diallo, Anthony Lee, and Oscar Grant. I think of the futures that could have been, and the pain and suffering brought to their families. How many more lives will we lose before deciding to bring about meaningful change?

As the proud mother of a black man and grandmother to three grandsons, I cannot imagine the depth of the wound left in the hearts of Lesley McSpadden and Michael Brown Sr. As a Member of Congress who represents a predominantly minority community similar to Ferguson, I mourn for the societal ills faced by my constituents, the people of Ferguson and communities of color around the country. I share in their sense of hurt and

anger. Our charge now is to harness that anger into constructive change, initiating dialogue with our community members, our elected officials, and our police departments, to ensure that there are no more senseless tragedies.

We are never wrong for heralding the call for justice. However, it is time for us to evaluate our methods for sounding that call. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King once said: "we must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." At a time when it may seem easy to retreat to our respective corners, we should instead seek understanding and acceptance from one another, by working together to secure a better future for our sons.

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

SPEECH OF

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 1, 2014

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Speaker, first, let me thank Congressmen JEFFRIES and HORSFORD for hosting this important Special Order. I appreciate your leadership in organizing these important discussions.

We stand here tonight, once again, to talk about the ongoing and systematic failure of our justice system. I am deeply disappointed at last week's decision by the grand jury in Ferguson to not indict Officer Darren Wilson. I share the feelings of frustration, anger and disappointment by the recent decision.

And the protests that have spread across the country are a testament to that frustration and anger.

How many more deaths like Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Oscar Grant—one of my constituents—Michael Brown, and Tamir Rice will be tolerated until America decides that black lives matter? How many more jail beds will be filled by black and brown men and boys until we realize America has a deep and long rooted systematic problem that must be addressed? The killing of Michael Brown has, once again, confronted us with the systematic issues of racism and injustice that are endemic in our society.

In a recently published op-ed in The Washington Post, Stacy Patton writes: "Black America has again been reminded that its children are not worthy of being alive—in part because they are not seen as children at all, but as menacing threats to white lives."

Mr. Speaker, enough is enough.

Disparity and inequality continue at every level of our society—a legacy born in the suffering of the Middle Passage, nurtured through slavery and preserved with Jim Crow. Today, we see this in the form of things like repressive voter ID laws, economic inequality, and mass incarceration.

The African American poverty rate of 27.2 percent is more than two and half times the poverty rate of white Americans. The 10.9 percent unemployment rate among African American is nearly twice the national average.

These statistics paint a clear picture of inequality in America yet we continue to ignore these disparities. This cannot continue.

To quote Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and when they fail in this purpose they

become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress."

Mr. Speaker—the only way we can remove the dam is by addressing the deep and long-rooted structures that continue to disproportionately affect people of color.

And Congress is the body in which to do it. We were sent to Washington by our constituents to address the issues facing our nation—let's start working on the structural and racial biases that pervade our institutions.

I applaud the President for calling for a \$263 million spending package to reform police departments. But much more work remains to be done.

We have a duty to pick up the banner carried by Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, and Medger Evers, to ensure that our children and our children's children can live in a world free of ignorance, discrimination and racism.

That is why we must pass legislation that will require the Department of Justice to support training programs for police departments to reduce racial bias and profiling. We need legislation and funding programs that focuses on diversity hiring and retention of officers in communities that need them the most. We need to pass legislation like H.R. 5478, the Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act, of which I am a proud cosponsor.

As a nation, we have made progress against racism but we are backsliding.

We are losing the prize that our forefathers and mothers fought, bled and died to obtain and preserve. We must stand together—stronger than ever—to raise our voices, march in the streets, and cast our ballots demanding change. The soul of our nation is at stake.

The American dream of equality, freedom, liberty, justice and life for all can and should be more than just words. It should be a promise to all Americans, regardless of the color of their skin or where they were born.

It should mean that for every mother or father, regardless of their race or socio-economic status, that they can look across the dinner table from their son or daughter and know that they can and will have a better life than their parents. That they will be protected and judged equally under the law. That their son or daughter will be at the table again tomorrow night.

A world where justice for all is fulfilled.

UNITED STATES-ISRAEL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP ACT OF 2014

SPEECH OF

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 3, 2014

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support S. 2673, the U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014.

I rise to reiterate my support of our strategic ally, and the only true democracy in the Middle East, Israel.

I want to applaud my colleagues in the House and Senate for passing this legislation. It is vital that Israel and the U.S. continue to protect our shared values including our commitment to liberty, equality and religious freedom.

I am pleased to offer my support to the legislation that shares technology, prioritizes