

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

HON. JENNIFER A. KIGGANS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2025

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD remarks submitted at the request of a Virginia Beach constituent, Rabbi Dr. Israel Zoberman of Temple Lev Tikvah, and are a reflection of his views:

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY—80TH
ANNIVERSARY OF AUSCHWITZ'S LIBERATION

Israeli author and lawyer Yishai Sarid was born in Tel Aviv in 1965, serving as an intelligence officer in the IDF. His law degree is from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem earning an M.A. Public Administration from Harvard University. His arousing, even disturbing novel, *The Memory Monster* (New York: Restless Books, 2020), raises profound questions reflecting the searing struggle of Israelis to come to grips with the Holocaust's enormous impact on their identity and very lives, with the Shoah's long shadow as constant backdrop. In addition, the genocide's implications touch on the universal human condition and its absurd dimension. As much as human memory is an honored, even reveled, component in the Jewish lexicon laden with lessons, warnings, and guideposts, it carries within it, as the novel's title attests, no less than a devouring monstrous quality.

The mesmerizing account is a confessional report to Jerusalem's Memorial Yad Vashem's chairman of the rise and collapse as well as fall from grace of a once enthusiastic recruit on a sacred national mission of accompanying Israeli high-schoolers, military personnel, VIPs, and ordinary adult tourists to Poland seeking a very brief exposure to a death camp site. The heavy-laden theme is made bearable by a genuine literary talent utilizing a relieving dose of sarcasm and deprecating self-loathing. We do know that biting dark humor was used by the camps' condemned inmates as a survival mechanism in a universe turned upside down.

The author, however, finds tragic, grotesque and Kafkian qualities in a so-called normal post-Holocaust reality where the unnamed book's protagonist becomes consumed by the realization that the past is embedded in the present with "The Memory Monster" threatening to remind us that we cannot escape the past and thus we are destined to be doomed rather than redeemed. Yad Vashem's chairman turns from his respectful position "as the official representative of memory" to someone who enables carrying on painful memories which are bound to exact a heavy price on the living.

The Israeli military delegations' visits do have a commendable educational purpose and value, binding a torturous not too remote past with present able military personnel of a proud Jewish state. Not all the Israeli soldiers have family ties with the Holocaust, some are not from a European background and their ties with Polish Jewry are very tenuous. The sight of Israelis in military uniform is disturbing to some Poles in a land where antisemitism is still present

albeit with a small Jewish community. I vividly recall upon visiting Poland in 2017 and stepping out of the new state-of-art Polin Museum next to the giant Warsaw Ghetto Memorial, an Israeli military group getting ready to conduct a memorial service at the moving site. I introduced myself to a handsome colonel pilot who asked me to intercede with then-President Trump to advance peace between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Leading a day tour of Israeli adults whose goal in Poland was shopping and vacationing, not too serious Holocaust learning, provokes a questioning soul-searching response from their disappointed guide who regards his job as a sacred calling without God's participation, "What's the point of all these recitations? If it is our duty to carry on living, why not live life in all its stupidity?" The narrator's scholarly dissertation was prepared in a book form for the public with the attractive covet of Belzec SS officers exuding confidence.

Belzec is the last of the six major extermination camps on Polish soil to be properly maintained. It is also the place where many of my paternal relatives from Zamosc perished, including my great-grandparents Rabbi Yaacov and Dena Manzis Zoberman. Visiting there in 2017, I led our group of seventeen American Jews in the Kaddish, aware that I was touching my severed-sacred roots.

Rabbi Dr. Israel Zoberman is the founder of Temple Lev Tikvah in Virginia Beach. Hundreds of his family members were murdered in the Holocaust.

RECOGNIZING THE 2025 FAIRFAX COUNTY STUDENT PEACE AWARD RECIPIENTS

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2025

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the recipients of the 2025 Fairfax County Student Peace Awards.

The Fairfax County Student Peace Awards began with one high school in 2006 to encourage high school aged students to think about peace as both a means and an end, and to recognize young people who work as peacemakers. By 2013, the program was being offered to every public high school in Fairfax County, as well as in many private schools.

Participating high schools choose one Junior or Senior, or one student group active in promoting peace or removing the causes of conflict. Examples of outreach include committing to peace by engaging in activities that strive to end conflict, either locally or globally, promoting the understanding of divisive issues and situations to bridge differences, and working to resolve conflicts among students or members of the community who feel isolated or alienated.

I am pleased to include in the RECORD the names of this year's Student Peace Award winners: Sage Nagle, Annandale High School; Jayden Lee, Centreville High School; Nila Elangovan, Chantilly High School; Mia Martin-

Escandarani, Edison High School; Kiran Ashok, Fairfax High School; Shri Bala, Falls Church High School; Ava Saunders and Grace Varughese, Hayfield Secondary School; Clarissa Dantes, Herndon High School; Muslim Student Association, Justice High School; Essam Jazzar, King Abdullah Academy (KAA); Manas Puri, Lake Braddock Secondary School; Annyah Rizvi, Langley High School; Madison McLaughlin, John. R. Lewis High School; Hunter Guthrie, Madison High School; Ghalia Sakly, Marshall High School; Bushra Eikhamenor, McLean High School; Jennifer Villalobos-Saenz, Mount Vernon High School; Julia DeVera, Mountain View High School; Isaac Rodriguez, Oakton High School; Jonathan Johnston, Quander Road School; Jasmine Sklarew, Robinson Secondary School; Ghazi "Zizo" Hanania, South County High School; Jahnnavi Nandanavanam, South Lakes High School; TJ Send-a-Smile Club, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology; Salaiha Najeeb, West Potomac High School; Simeon Samuel, West Springfield High School; Westfield United Sports, Westfield High School; Harun Khan, Woodson High School.

Mr. Speaker, the efforts of these young people are the building blocks of a more peaceful and tolerant world. I commend them on their efforts and dedication and ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating each award recipient and thanking them as well as Fairfax County Public School System and sponsor organizations for all they have done for our community.

RECOGNIZING DOMINICAN HERITAGE MONTH AND CELEBRATING THE 181ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 27, 2025

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dominican Heritage Month and to celebrate the 181st anniversary of the Independence of the Dominican Republic, observed on February 27th. This month provides an opportunity to reflect on the resilience, history, and achievements of the Dominican people—both in their homeland and across the diaspora.

Over the past 181 years, the Dominican Republic has overcome profound challenges, from civil wars to military occupations and authoritarian rule. Yet, through it all, Dominicans have demonstrated extraordinary strength and perseverance. Today, more than two million Dominicans call the United States home, with approximately 700,000 residing in New York City alone. In my district, spanning Brooklyn and Queens, the Dominican community is integral to our past, present, and future.

As a Nation, we are enriched by the contributions of Dominican Americans in the arts,

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