

112TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 608

Honoring the life and work of Arab-American writer Ameen Rihani and celebrating the 100th anniversary of the publication of the first Arab-American novel, “The Book of Khalid”, by Ameen Rihani.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 29, 2012

Mr. RAHALL (for himself and Mr. BOUSTANY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

RESOLUTION

Honoring the life and work of Arab-American writer Ameen Rihani and celebrating the 100th anniversary of the publication of the first Arab-American novel, “The Book of Khalid”, by Ameen Rihani.

Whereas Ameen Rihani was born in Freike, Lebanon, in 1876 and moved to New York City with his family at age eleven in 1888;

Whereas Rihani mastered English and Arabic in his youth and wrote many novels, nonfiction books, plays, essays, poems, and travelogues in both languages during his lifetime;

Whereas Rihani became a United States citizen in 1901;

Whereas Rihani became an interlocutor between Arabs and Americans, meeting with Arab leaders, representing the Arabs at important international conferences, and reporting on the situation in the Middle East to the Department of State and several United States presidents;

Whereas by writing in popular American publications and giving lectures at major institutions, Rihani educated the American public about the lives and ambitions of Arabs;

Whereas Rihani introduced free verse poetry into Arabic in 1905, inspired in particular by the American poet Walt Whitman;

Whereas Rihani became a model and mentor for the “Mahjar” writers of Arab descent in the United States, whose work has become extraordinarily influential and popular around the world;

Whereas his 1911 masterpiece “The Book of Khalid”, the first Arab-American novel, is an important record of Arab immigration to the “Little Syria” community of Lower Manhattan and today is a powerful example of the potential of the United States to inspire the Arab world in its democratic aspirations;

Whereas Rihani’s travels in the Arabian peninsula in the 1920s and close relationships with the leaders of the region made him, according to scholar Irfan Shahid, “the apostle of the Arab-American relationship”;

Whereas Rihani was quoted by President George W. Bush about the power of the Statue of Liberty in 2008, stating that “[g]azing at her lamp held high, [Rihani] wondered whether her sister might be erected in the lands of his Arab forefathers. Here is how he put it: ‘When will you turn your face toward the East, oh Liberty?’”;

Whereas Rihani's protagonist in "The Book of Khalid" argues: "To these United States shall the Nations of the World turn one day for the best model of good Government; in these United States the well-springs of the higher aspirations of the soul shall quench the thirst of every race-traveller on the highway of emancipation; and from these United States the sun and moon of a great Faith and a great Art shall rise upon mankind."; and

Whereas Rihani died in his hometown of Freike, Lebanon, in 1940: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—
- 2 (1) honors the life and work of Arab-American
- 3 writer Ameen Rihani; and
- 4 (2) celebrates the 100th anniversary of the pub-
- 5 lication of the first Arab-American novel, "The Book
- 6 of Khalid", by Ameen Rihani.

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