

IF MY SON WERE ALIVE

**HON. NANCY PELOSI**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 4, 1997*

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, today, as we mark the eighth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, I rise to bring to the attention of my colleagues a moving memorial statement by Ding Zilin, the mother of one of the young men killed by Chinese soldiers. This statement, which is being read at Tiananmen Square memorials in the United States, is an eloquent testament to the courage of Jiang Jieliang, a 17-year-old high school student, and his mother, who has struggled to make sense of his tragic loss. I urge my colleagues to read this statement and to remember those who have given their lives and those who continue the struggle to promote democratic reform and basic human rights in China.

IF MY SON WERE ALIVE . . . ON THE 8TH  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE JUNE 4TH

(By Ding Zilin)

"If my son were alive . . ." For eight years I have been preoccupied with this thought, which cut deeper whenever I saw youths of his age. I would be struck with an empty feeling, a sensation that I was falling into an abyss. If he were alive, he would be 25 years old. At that time he was only 17, yet he stood more than six feet. Now, he would be taller.

On the evening eight years ago, that most sinister moment, he left home, determined. He went to a most dangerous place. He never came home again.

"If you fall, we will take your place!" This was the slogan they held up while marching in support of the college students on the hunger strike. The date was May 17, 1989. Those characters were written in black ink on a white background and were eye-catching. He was marching in the front row, holding the banner of "People's University High School" and followed by all his schoolmates. He did fall, fulfilling his promise with his young life.

I often think: what is a person living for after all? If my son were still alive, I would give him all my love. I would do everything to support him to put him through college, get degrees, and go abroad for further studies, just like many other mothers of my generation. He died, however, taking with him all my love and hope. Does life truly end up in "nothingness"?

But I cannot forget what he said to me on that evening before leaving home: "If all the parents in the world were as selfish as you are now, would our country and our nation have any hope?" Indeed, what we adults dared not or would not take responsibility for was placed on the shoulders of our young children. Perhaps his was only a momentary passion generated by idealism. However, why don't we adults give something for ideals?

A friend once tried to comfort me. She said: if a person lives just to be alive, his life would be meaningless even if he reached seventies. Although your son lived for only 17 years, he achieved a life full of value. I am not sure if my son's death was meaningful, because so-called meaning can only mean something to the living; some day the living might be talking about the "June 4th" and make only small talk about those who died on that day! But I still believe that people should not sustain a meager life, for such a life can only be sustained by compromising one's dignity.

I know my son. If he had not died during that massacre, if he were alive today, I believe he would not give up his pursuit for liberty. He would be fulfilling his duties to this era by plunging himself into the surging tide of democratization.

Here it suddenly occurs to me: what would I be if my son were still alive? After the "June 4th" disaster, perhaps I would be like a scared hen, to be more careful in protecting my son, to constrain his freedom in both thought and action with all the instinctive love of a mother, "making" him an obedient citizen. It is almost certain that such an attitude would give rise to conflict between mother and son, because he would not tolerate selfishness and cowardice. He would not despise me or sever the ties with me, because he loves his mother deeply, but he would take the road chosen by himself. In the end, I would have to go along.

It is often said that children are the continuation of parents' lives, which has been reversed in our family. I am still alive today. Moreover, I have awakened from ignorance and slumber, and have regained my dignity, but this rebirth has been achieved at the expense of my son's life. My breath, my voice, and my whole being are the continuation of my son's life, forever . . .

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. CHARLES W. "CHIP" PICKERING**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 4, 1997*

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to return to Washington, DC today due to a death in my family and missed the following votes:

Rollcall vote No. 157, ordering the previous question to H. Res. 159. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

Rollcall vote No. 158, passage of the rule on H. Res. 159. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

Rollcall vote No. 159, the Skaggs amendment (No. 45) as amended by Mr. DIAZ-BALART to H.R. 1486, to continue funding for TV Marti broadcasts to Cuba. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

Rollcall vote No. 160, the Hamilton amendment (No. 65) to H.R. 1486, to authorize the President to implement, in the most efficient and effective manner possible, the President's proposal to consolidate and reinvent the foreign affairs agencies of the U.S. Government. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

Rollcall vote No. 161, the Bachus amendment (No. 40) to H.R. 1486, to require the State Department to report to Congress by March 1 of each year a listing of overseas U.S. surplus properties for sale and require the amounts received from such sales to be used for deficit reduction. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

Rollcall vote No. 162, the Goss amendment (No. 108) to H.R. 1486, to strike bill provisions which establish new responsibilities for the Office of the Inspector General at the State Department. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

Rollcall vote No. 163, the Paul amendment (No. 47) to H.R. 1486, to add new provisions to the bill which repeal the United Nations Headquarters Agreement Act, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations Act, and the United Nations Environmental Protection Act of 1973. Had I been present, I would have voted "no."

Rollcall vote No. 164, the Stearns amendment (No. 6) to H.R. 1486, to allow Congress, instead of the Secretary of State, to decide to withhold 20 percent of the funds appropriated to the United Nations. Had I been present, I would have voted "no."

IN HONOR OF ESSIE COLBERT'S  
DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**HON. JOSEPH P. KENNEDY II**

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 4, 1997*

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Ms. Essie Colbert on the occasion of her retirement on June 3, 1997, after 18 years of service to the U.S. House of Representatives. Essie Colbert works tirelessly during late night shifts cleaning congressional offices, including mine, with admirable attention to detail.

Walking into the office each morning, I inevitably notice how much pride Essie Colbert takes in her work. I have never been disappointed in her performance. I am, however, disappointed that she will be leaving us. My staff and I wish her a most relaxing and rewarding retirement.