

Whaling Wall in the city of Detroit on October 13, 1997. Wyland has chosen his home town to paint the 76th and final wall as part of his Great Lakes Midwest Tour.

In the tradition of Jacques Cousteau, by whom he was inspired as a youngster, Wyland has dedicated his career to educating and raising public awareness of the critical importance of our oceans and marine life. He is internationally renowned, with murals in Canada, Japan, Australia, France, and Mexico. His work will continue as he has set a goal of 100 murals worldwide by the year 2011.

While 1998 has been declared the "International Year of the Ocean," the people of Michigan, surrounded by the Great Lakes, have always treasured the unique habitat and wildlife fostered by marine environments. Each of Wyland's whaling walls will serve to heighten awareness and encourage future generations to appreciate and recognize the importance of marine habitats.

Mr. speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in commanding Wyland, a native Detroiter, for his vision, dedication to our environment, and commitment to educating children and the public at large about our endangered oceans. I extend my gratitude for his donation of time and talent to beautifying our city, and encouragement as he continues to his 100th Whaling Wall Mural in the year 2011.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN AFFAIRS EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION RESOLUTION AND ADJUDICATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. STEPHEN E. BUYER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 6, 1997

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I on the House National Security Committee, are in the process of completing the congressional review of sexual misconduct in the military. As difficult and shocking as that review has been, it pales in comparison to the problems that are coming to light in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Department of Veterans Affairs, this Nation's second largest agency, is a department that possesses a climate and culture that can only be described as openly hostile to women.

This culture not only allows the harassment of women, it aggressively moves to cover-up any allegations made by employees and often rewards those who have been convicted of wrong-doing.

There is a bunker mentality prevalent at the VA. It appears that the VA, when faced with accusations of sexual harassment, hunkers down and waits out the controversy while speaking aggressively. In reality, the attitude is that the VA winks at the claims of sexual harassment, protects the accused and victimizes the accusers.

As Kathy Lyons, a nurse with the VA described the VA process as, "The way they handle the thing is to punish the victims."

In 1993, this committee considered enacting legislation to re-organize the VA equal opportunity reporting system in light of abuses at the Atlanta VA hospital by the director, associate director, and chief of staff. At that time,

Secretary Brown convinced the committee that he had a "Zero tolerance" for sexual harassment and the committee did not pass the legislation.

My good friend and colleague, Congressman JAMES CLYBURN stated at that time that, "I don't care what you try to do, how many procedures you put in, how many training sessions you have, if your employees do not perceive the process or whatever you've done to be an adequate response to their past problems, there is going to be absolutely no trust in the process at all."

The problem has persisted. The pattern of reward and coverup, had it been undertaken in the military, would result in a major scandal. In the VA, it merely constitutes business as usual.

In April, the VA Committee held hearings that revealed, as described by Subcommittee of VA Oversight TERRY EVERETT, a pattern of "Club MED" treatment for senior VA employees that had been accused of sexually harassing their employees.

Following that hearing, Chairman EVERETT also stated that, "I have a concern there is a Good-Ole-Boy network out there and that there is a culture within the VA that protects the managers."

Specifically, the committee found that:

A hospital director in North Carolina who groped and abused female employees who was transferred to Florida to a job specifically created for him that preserved his six-figure salary;

A VA Director in Virginia who was reassigned to Atlanta after he was accused of seven accounts of sexual harassment.

A VA personnel director in California has been reprimanded but not severely punished after an investigation into his rape and sodomy of employees in his hospital.

Reports that since 1993, the VA has punished nine VA managers for various sexual harassment complaints.

Reports that the VA Headquarters in Washington alone has 73 equal opportunity complaints pending by employees at that facility.

Overall, the VA work force is 8.52 percent of the total Federal work force, but files 14.1 percent of all harassment cases filed within the Government.

These cases illustrate that the VA's culture is one of paying off the accusers and covering for the perpetrators.

The overall culture starts with the leadership at the highest levels of the VA. The fact that Acting VA Secretary and Secretary designate Hershel Gober is married to VA counsel Mary Lou Keener and that Mr. Gober's nomination has been placed on hold for irregularities in his background investigation is evidence of problems and conflict of interest at the top. I am deeply concerned this situation has been allowed to exist at the VA.

During consideration of this bill in committee, I offered an amendment that would establish an independent panel to assess the culture of the VA with regards to sexual harassment, equal opportunity, and hostility in the workplace.

I am pleased and honored that my colleagues accepted my amendment on a bipartisan basis. This is a sign that Members on both sides of the aisle recognized the problems within the VA and the need to look at those problems.

Four years after this committee's initial hearings, egregious problems still exist. I have

doubts in the VA's ability to police themselves. They simply have no grasp on the scope of these problems.

H.R. 1703 is designed to establish a new VA employment discrimination complaint resolution system. This legislation addresses the problem with the system within the VA.

My amendment tasks a panel to look at the people, their attitudes and practices within the VA. We need a baseline look at the culture within the VA, and recommendations on how to change that culture.

Some of the cases that the VA Committee has probed could have been handled even with the old EEO system in place. Within the VA, there was merely a failure to aggressively pursue. We need to know why those within the VA have this attitude, and what can be done to correct the situation.

RECOGNITION OF "A SAFE PLACE" FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

HON. RONALD V. DELLUMS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 9, 1997

Mr. DELLUMS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with gratitude and admiration to acknowledge A Safe Place which will be honored on Saturday, October 11, 1997 for its dedication, service, and tireless commitment to the bay area community.

A Safe Place provides crucial supportive and transitional services to battered women and their children. The mission of this organization is to decrease the number of battered women and educate the community on the issue of domestic violence. This extraordinary organization also provides personal support and attention to battered women, assisting them in becoming self-sufficient and providing skills to develop positive self images which in my opinion, is crucial in breaking the cycle of violence. I cannot emphasize enough the value of these services to our community. All those who have tirelessly cared, and passionately struggled to create this organization and expand its resources must be commended.

In 1976, a small group of women working in a shelter in San Francisco, La Casa de las Madres, began a shelter in the East Bay. Soon after, they began providing referral services and crisis counseling from a small office in Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Oakland run solely by volunteers. The initial, attentive activist focused on the needs of the community, and created the basis for a holistic and nurturing environment for women and children, and a community outreach violence prevention program.

With this objective as the foundation for A Safe Place, the L.C. and Mary J. Scaggs Foundation provided a grant in 1978 which made it possible to fund three half-time positions. Over time, with grants, corporate contributions, and individual donations, the staff was expanded.

In December of 1980, A Safe Place was forced to find new facilities, or shut down completely. With the help of the media, the organization received a \$100,000 anonymous donation and a \$75,000 interest-free loan, which enabled them to purchase a house to be used as their new permanent facility. In March of 1981, the doors were opened and the house

welcomed 20 women and their children. The resolution of this crisis situation illustrated not only the dedication of the staff and volunteers of A Safe Place, but also the value and appreciation that the bay area community had for its services.

That was over 15 years ago. Since then, countless women have benefited from the care and dedication of this organization. Those who have entered A Safe Place receive much more than shelter, they experience physical, emotional and spiritual comfort and support which empowers them to begin a new way of life. In my opinion, the entire community reaps the benefits from the seeds planted and sown by A Safe Place which through its educational focus attacks domestic violence at its source and establish new patterns of productive living.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to salute A Safe Place and the role it has played in creating a safer, healthier, and more peaceful bay area community. I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing and thanking this organization for its invaluable service.

IN HONOR OF MIGUEL PEREZ: AN
OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUAL AND
VALUED COMMUNITY MEMBER

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 9, 1997

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a special gentleman, Miguel Perez, who has distinguished himself through continuous dedication and hard work for the Latino community. Mr. Perez will be honored by the Bergen County Hispanic-American Advisory Commission on October 16, 1997 at the board of freeholders in Hackensack, NJ.

Throughout his long career, Mr. Perez has been an educator, role model, and strong voice for the downtrodden. He entered the United States as a refugee at an early age. He didn't speak a word of English, but by the time he reached high school, he became the sports editor of the Miami High Times. This was the beginning of a long and illustrious career in the media. Mr. Perez went on to become editor of two college newspapers, including, "The Falcon Times" of Miami Dade Community College, which received the Pace-maker Award, given to top six college newspapers in the nation. He was also founder and first editor of the Good Times of Florida International University, where he graduated in 1974 with a bachelor's degree in political science. Mr. Perez continued his passion and advocacy for those who are ignored, mis-

understood, and victims of discrimination, serving as a bridge to non-Latinos. "Teaching important lessons about our community," stated Latin New York magazine, "and tries to instill a sense of pride in Latinos."

Mr. Perez's commitment to serving his community extends beyond his journalism. In 1979 he was instrumental in helping police persuade three Spanish speaking gunmen to release two dozen hostages held in a Brooklyn supermarket. Two years later he spent three months disguised as an illegal alien and wrote a four-part series for the Daily News on sweatshops: "The new slavery," for which he was awarded the Public Service Award of the Public Relations Society of America, New York chapter. Upon graduation from Columbia, he went to work for the Daily News as one of the few English-language Latino columnists in the country at that time. In 1982 Perez won the Mike Berger Award, considered the top print journalism award in New York. This year he won a fellowship from the Newspaper Association of America to study interactive media at the prestigious Poytner Institute in St. Petersburg, FL.

A journalist more than twenty-four years, born in Havana, Cuba, 47 years ago, Mr. Perez has been covering the New York metropolitan area's Latino community relentlessly. He epitomizes excellence in community service, and it is an honor and a pleasure to have him residing in my district. I am certain that my colleagues will rise with me and honor this remarkable individual