

“THE KING OF VIBES”

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 24, 2001

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, as the Dean of the Congressional Black Caucus, and chairman of its annual Jazz Issue Forum and Concert, I rise to call to this body's attention the achievements of a distinguished American, Mr. Lionel Hampton. At the age of 92, he continues a career that has brought him international acclaim as a musician, composer, and bandleader. I am extremely honored that he will be my guest here in Washington, DC, on Thursday, September 27, 2001, during the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Annual Legislative Conference. That evening, my colleagues and I will have the opportunity to thank him for the great pleasure that his life's work has brought to us, and to millions across this nation and around the world.

The Congressional Black Caucus is not alone this year in recognizing the magnificence of what Lionel Hampton has accomplished. On January 31, 2001, the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History added “Hamp's” vibraphone to its collection of “national treasures.” In addition, on February 22, 2001, the University of Idaho dedicated the Lionel Hampton Center for the Study and Performance of Jazz. The University, however, did not just discover and acknowledge Lionel Hampton's genius, it did so many years ago by launching the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival in 1984. It reaffirmed its reverence of Hampton in 1987 by establishing the Lionel Hampton School of Music; the first music school named in honor of a jazz musician.

Born April 12, 1909, in Louisville Kentucky, Lionel Hampton has for 70 years been a giant in the field of jazz. Many highlights of his career are noted in the following excerpts from a biography prepared by the University of Idaho:

Lionel Hampton began his phenomenal musical career at an early age when a student at the Holy Rosary Academy in Kenosha, Wisconsin, where he studied under the strict supervision of the Dominican Sisters. His first instrument was a set of drums and his idol during these early years was drummer Jimmy Bertrand whose records he treasured. Louis Armstrong soon became a major influence in Hamp's young years. It was in 1930 that Armstrong hired him to appear, on the drums, at a Los Angeles nightclub engagement. Louis was so impressed with Hampton's talents he invited him to join his big band for a recording session. During the session break, Armstrong led young Hampton to a set of vibes and asked if he knew how to play them. Lionel, who was well schooled in his keyboard studies, picked up the mallets and played. The first tune cut that day, “Memories of You,” (with Lionel on vibes) became a tremendous hit and has remained a classic throughout the years.

In 1936, Benny Goodman asked Lionel to join his small group, featuring Goodman, Teddy Wilson on piano, and Gene Krupa on drums. They immediately became the legendary Benny Goodman Quartet. Musical history was being made, both for the brilliant music produced, and because they were the first racially integrated group of jazz musi-

cians. The Swing Era had begun. “Moonglow,” “Dinah,” and “Vibraphone Blues” were immediate hits and will always remain classics in the jazz annals. Hampton formed his own band in the early 1940's. “Sunny Side of the Street,” “Central Avenue Breakdown,” his signature tune, “Flying Home,” and “Hamp's Boogie-Woogie” all became top-of-the-chart best-sellers upon release and the name Lionel Hampton became world famous overnight.

The Lionel Hampton Orchestra had a phenomenal array of sidemen. Among those who got their start with Hamp were: Quincy Jones, Wes Montgomery, Clark Terry, Cat Anderson, Ernie Royal, Joe Newman and Fats Navarro. Among Lionel's protégés were singers Dinah Washington, Joe Williams, Betty Carter and Aretha Franklin. Over the years, jazz giant Hampton has received innumerable prestigious awards, which keep coming to the distinguished musical master. Among them: The title, American Goodwill Ambassador, bestowed by Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon, The Papal Medal from Pope Paul I, Sixteen Honorary Doctorates, and in 1992 the highly esteemed Kennedy Center Honors Award, in which he shared the musical distinction with Mstislav Rostropovich.

Also a celebrated composer, Hamp's original ballad, “Midnight Sun” (with Johnny Mercer and Sonny Burke) has become a beloved classic in American Jazz and popular music. His talent in the symphonic field is highly respected. Two major symphonic works, “King David Suite” and “Blues Suite” have been performed often by leading orchestras throughout the world.

Despite the rigors of his hectic calendar, Hampton continues to amaze those in the music business with the care and time he devotes to many public service projects. A “dream” of his would be to aid in the creation of a university in Uptown New York “. . . where young Black kids can learn to be Doctors, Lawyers, IBM technicians, and, maybe even musicians.”

Mr. Speaker, Lionel Hampton has established himself one of our nation's greatest cultural heroes and ambassadors. Therefore, I urge all Members to join me in paying him this well deserved tribute.

STOP THE VIOLENCE AGAINST SIKHS

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 24, 2001

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I was distressed to hear that on Saturday, September 15, a Sikh named Balbir Singh Sodhi, who owned a gas station in Mesa, Arizona, was murdered at his place of business. It appears that he was killed because of his turban and beard, which are required by the Sikh religion. Apparently, his killer thought that Mr. Sodhi was a follower of Osama bin Laden.

This was just one of well over 100 acts of harassment or violence against Sikhs in the week since the terrorist bombings of the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. A list of these acts can be found by visiting <http://www.sikh.org/hatecrime>.

This past Tuesday, just one week after the terrorists carried out their brutal acts, the

Council of Khalistan held a press conference at the National Press Club to denounce these crimes against Sikhs and other minorities. Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, the President of the Council of Khalistan, made some excellent remarks. He called on the Attorney General to investigate and called on the victims of these crimes to contact their local prosecutors and police. At this time, I would like to insert Dr. Aulakh's remarks into the RECORD so that we can all have a better understanding of this problem.

REMARKS OF DR. GURMIT SINGH AULAKH

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media: Thank you for coming today. I want to talk to you about a very important issue. Then I will be open-for questions. Sikh Americans, Muslim Americans, Christian Americans, our neighbors and countrymen, are being harassed and acts of violence are being committed against them merely because of their religious or ethnic heritage. All Americans should join together to condemn these cowardly acts.

On behalf of the 2 1-million strong Sikh Nation and more than 500,000 Sikhs in the United States, I strongly condemn these acts of violence. I condemn the violence against Muslim Americans and I condemn the attacks on Sikh Americans. There have been over 100 acts of harassment or violence against Sikhs. A Sikh man was murdered in Mesa, Arizona, a suburb of Phoenix, over the weekend. Balbir Singh Sodhi, who owned a Chevron gasoline station, was shot to death at his business. Some time later, the same gunman shot a Lebanese gasoline station owner. We demand that the man who killed Balbir Singh Sodhi, be prosecuted and punished to the fullest extent of the law.

Attackers threw a brick through the window of a local Sikh, Ranjit Singh of Fairfax, Virginia. Another local Sikh, Sher Singh, was arrested by police in Rhode Island after the attack, but was released the next day. A couple of young Sikhs were attacked in Brooklyn, New York. Sikh businesses have been stoned and cars have been burned. An Egyptian Christian man was shot in San Gabriel, California. A Pakistani Muslim who owned a grocery store was shot in Dallas.

What a group of terrorists did Tuesday was a terrible crime and an act of war against America, but it was done by a group of individuals who are no more typical of their religion than Timothy McVeigh is typical of Christianity. Members of minority religious communities are being targeted for violence, and this is unacceptable, especially in America.

Sikhs are not Muslims. We are not Hindus. Like Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and any other religion, we are an independent, monotheistic religion with our own symbols. Among those are a turban and beard. That does not make us followers or associates of Osama bin Laden, yet we are being targeted for violence in the wake of the atrocities last Tuesday.

We appreciate the support of Congressmen Dan Burton, Edolphus Towns, and all our other friends in the Congress who condemned the acts of violence against the Sikhs and other minorities. Their statements in the Congressional Record are available here.

I call on Attorney General John Ashcroft to look into this nationwide pattern of violence and I urge the victims of these attacks to call their police departments and their local prosecutors. This is the best way to ensure that those who perpetrate this violence are appropriately punished. Let's not let America descend to the level of those who attacked it.