

Mr. Sommer graduated from Brooklyn College, and, in 1982, received a Distinguished Alumnus Award in recognition of his leadership in the field of education. He earned a Masters in Spanish language and literature from Hunter College in 1960, a second Masters in Russian language and literature from Fordham University in 1965, and completed his course work for a Ph.D. in comparative literature at New York University.

Chairing this event for the fourth time is Alan J. Apfelbaum, who has been an active and dedicated member of the Holocaust Remembrance Day Committee since its inception.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the Annual Bayonne Holocaust Remembrance Day Observance, and honor those that lost their lives, especially during these most difficult times for the State of Israel and Jews across Europe subjected to a new wave of Anti-Semitic violence.

HAPPY VAISAKHI DAY TO THE SIKH NATION

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 9, 2002

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, on April 13, the Sikhs will be celebrating Vaisakhi Day, their most important holiday. I want to salute the Sikh Nation for its contributions to America and wish all the Sikh people a happy Vaisakhi Day.

Vaisakhi Day is the day when the Sikhs were formed by their guru into the Khalsa Panth. It is the anniversary of the founding of their order, and the Sikh Nation has been a very important contributor to every country in which Sikhs live. A Sikh named Dalip Singh Saund served in Congress in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Dr. Amarjit Singh Bhullar of Connecticut is an elected school board member. Sikhs have been very active and successful in this country in virtually every walk of life. They have also made important contributions to India, including giving about 80 percent of the sacrifices for India's independence. Yet India persecutes them. Over 250,000 Sikhs have been murdered by the Indian government since 1984, according to the book *The Politics of Genocide*. At least 50,000 were picked up, tortured, murdered, and then declared "unidentified" and their bodies were cremated. The Movement Against State Repression reports that India admitted to holding 52,268 Sikh political prisoners. Tens of thousands of Christians, Muslims, and other minorities are also being held. Our own State Department reported in 1994 that the Indian government paid more than 41,000 cash bounties to police officers for killing Sikhs. These are just a few examples of the oppression of the Sikhs by the Indian government. I could give a very long list, but I do not wish to take up too much of the House's time.

April 13 also happens to be the birthday of Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the Declaration of Independence. In that document he wrote that when a government becomes tyrannical, "it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it and institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem

most likely to effect their safety and happiness." That certainly applies to the Sikh Nation today, as well as Kashmir, primarily Christian Nagaland, and the other nations living under Indian occupation. It is time for them to claim their own.

America should support these nations' right to self-determination by stopping aid to India and by supporting a free and fair vote on independence. Then the people of South Asia can finally live in freedom and enjoy stability, prosperity, and peace. That is something we should all work for.

Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan, put out an excellent and informative statement for Vaisakhi Day. It really lays out the issues well. With the consent of the House, I would like to insert it into the RECORD at this time.

[From the Council of Khalistan, March 25, 2002]

VAISAKHI MESSAGE TO THE SIKH NATION (By Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh)

This is a time of celebration of our 303rd anniversary of the Khalsa Panth. It is also time to look back at our history. The Guru gave sovereignty to the Khalsa Panth. ("In grieve Sikhin ko deon Patshahi.") Banda Singh Bahadur established the first Khalsa rule in Punjab from 1710 to 1716. Then there was a period of persecution of the Sikhs. Again Sikhs established a sovereign, independent rule from 1765 to 1849, when the British annexed the Sikh homeland, Punjab, into British India.

To regain freedom from the British, Sikhs were on the front line of the fight. The Sikh Nation gave about 80 percent of the sacrifices during this freedom struggle when they formed only 1.5 percent of the Indian population. At the time of the independence of India, Sikhs were equal signatories to the transfer of power from the British. Muslim leader Mohammed Ali Jinnah was very wise and well educated and he did not trust the majority Hindu leadership. He got an independent Pakistan for the Muslims. The Sikh leadership should have gotten an independent country for the Sikhs at that time, but they were fooled by the Hindu leadership of Nehru and Gandhi so Sikhs took their share and joined India on the promise that they would have the glow of freedom in the northwest part of India.

Khalsa Ji, we have seen this "glow of freedom" in the form of the attack on the Golden Temple in June 1984, when over 20,000 Sikhs were killed in Punjab in a single month. The next massacre of Sikhs occurred after the assassination of Indira Gandhi in Delhi. There was a mass murder of Sikhs throughout India, including Delhi. The Sikhs were pulled out of trains and burned alive. Sikh truck drivers were pulled out of their trucks. Tires were put around their necks by Hindu militants and they were burned to death. In Punjab, this genocide continued under Beant Singh's government. Sikhs were arrested, tortured, and then cremated and their bodies were declared "unidentified."

Since 1984, over 250,000 Sikhs have been murdered. 52,268 are rotting in Indian jails under TADA, which expired in 1995. Many of them have been in illegal custody since Operation Bluestar in 1984. Only last month, 42 Members of the U.S. Congress wrote to President Bush to get these political prisoners released. Jaswant Singh Khaira, who exposed the government killing of Sikhs in fake encounters, became a victim of the Indian police himself. He was kidnapped outside his house and murdered in police custody. He documented 6,018 Sikhs who were secretly cremated by the government in three crema-

tion grounds, Patti, Tam Taran, and Durgiana Mandir. Subsequently, Punjab Human Rights Organization (PHRO) chairman Justice Ajit Singh Bains said that about 50,000 Sikhs were secretly cremated in this manner. Even Akal Takht Jathedar Sahib Gurdev Singh Kaunke was murdered by SSP Swaran Singh Ghotna and then his body was disposed of.

The Badal government was forced to conduct an inquiry into the killing of Jathedar Kaunke. It was done by three Punjab police officials under the leadership of DIG Tiwari. He submitted a report to the Badal government, which has not been made public as of today. How could a democratically elected Akali government hide the murder of the Akal Takht Jathedar by not releasing this report, which was conducted by its own order?

The Badal government was the most corrupt one in Punjab's history. They invented a new term for bribery: "fee for service." If you didn't pay the fee, you didn't get the service. There was a fixed amount of money for government jobs. Bags of money were received by Mrs. Badal in return for these jobs. The Punjab economy deteriorated under Badal and the Punjab government its largest debt ever. It is bankrupt now. Badal made three promises to get elected. He promised to free the political prisoners, to punish the police officers who carried out atrocities against the Sikh Nation, and to appoint a commission to investigate atrocities. He did not keep any of them.

The Sikh leadership is completely under Indian government control, whether it is the Akali leadership of Badal, Tohra, Mann, and others or the Congress leadership of Punjab under Captain Amarinder Singh or former Chief Minister Mrs. Bhatthal. Changing parties and faces every election will not solve the problems of the Sikh Nation. Congress is no better than the Akalis and the Akalis proved to be the worst enemies of the Sikh Nation. How could an Akali government keep 52,268 Sikhs in jail without charge or trial for the last 16 years? It is shameful and a black mark on the present Akali leadership. They have cashed in on the sacrifices and good will of the pre-independence Akali leadership.

Khalsa Ji, the only solution to this quagmire is the formation of a Khalsa Raj Party under new, honest, dedicated, and committed leadership. The time is now to do it. Let's not waste time and prolong the suffering and agony of the Sikh Nation under the present corrupt Akali leadership which is controlled by the Indian government and is determined to wipe out the Sikh Nation and the Sikh religion. The only remedy is to sever our relationship with Delhi completely, once and for all, and declare the independence from India and start a peaceful agitation to free the Sikh homeland, Punjab, Khalistan.

The victory of the Congress Party was a massive rejection of the Akalis, who were elected five years ago to reject the Congress Party. However, the Congress Party remains the enemy of the Sikh Nation. In the last two elections, the Sikh Nation has soundly rejected both parties. Neither supports the interests of the Sikh Nation; neither can be trusted by the Sikh Nation. The time has come to discard the present Akali leadership that has betrayed the Sikh Nation.

We must press for action against the police officials who carried out the police kidnapping and murder of human-rights activist Jaswant Singh Khaira. These would be good first steps for the Sikh leadership and for the new government in Punjab. But we must continue to pursue our ultimate goal of freeing the Sikh homeland, Punjab, Khalistan.

The Sikh Nation is sovereign and it must have its sovereign, independent country.

Guru gave sovereignty to the Khalsa Panth. Remember "Raj Kare Ga Khalsa." Sikhs can never forgive or forget the desecration of the Golden Temple. This is the history and tradition of the Sikh Nation. The time has come to form a Khalsa Raj Party to liberate Khalistan. The new Sikh leadership must launch a Shantmai Morcha to liberate our homeland. The only way the Sikh Nation can prosper is to free the Sikh homeland, Punjab, Khalistan. The freedom of the Sikh Nation will bring prosperity, stability, and peace to Punjab and to South Asia.

TRIBUTE TO MR. ASTIN JACOBO

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 9, 2002

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and accomplishments of Mr. Astin Jacobo, a dedicated and determined civic activist who recently passed away. Friends, family and community members gathered to honor his memory on March 23, 2002.

Mr. Jacobo spent the last thirty years of his life in service to his multi-cultural community. Crotona residents already feel the great gap Mr. Jacobo has left behind. As a native of the Dominican Republic, Mr. Jacobo came to the United States with defined goals and ample determination. He saw where his community was seriously in need of change and did not hesitate to roll up his sleeves and get involved. His sense of civic duty was difficult to match and that is just one reason why his passing is such a great loss to the South Bronx.

One look around the Crotona neighborhood, and you will see sufficient proof of Mr. Jacobo's impact on this community. While serving as president of the Crotona Community Coalition, he played critical roles in the launching of the Mary Mitchell Youth & Family Center and the Mapes Avenue ball field, to name a few things. Residents can also be grateful to him for the part he played in improving the Quarry Road Soccer Field and Belmont Park. Mr. Jacobo's accomplishments helped the community feel more like community and instilled a sense of pride in many residents. Throughout his career in public service, Mr. Jacobo was served on the Bronx Community Planning Board #6, and was involved with Save-A-Nation, Inter-Neighborhood Housing Corporation, the Mary Mitchell Youth & Family Center, the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, and various local sports teams. He has been honored by many of these organizations and others for his achievements.

Mr. Speaker, beyond Mr. Jacobo's ceaseless civic work, he managed to be a loving and involved husband, father of four, and grandfather of three. To be well-known as not only a giving and determined individual, but also as a devoted family man, is a remarkable honor. I am sure that his family is very proud of the wonderful life he led.

The civic organizations to which he belonged throughout his 75 years, like the honors and awards he has received, are almost beyond counting. Mr. Jacobo was a wonderful individual who showed us the beauty and power of dedication, leadership, and wisdom. He was truly an inspiration to all who knew him.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in commemorating the life of Mr. Astin Jacobo.

HONORING THE REVEREND AND MRS. JAMES (MARY) FUNCHESS

HON. RONNIE SHOWS

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 9, 2002

Mr. SHOWS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Reverend and Mrs. James (Mary) Funchess of Georgetown, Mississippi.

On April 13th, friends and relatives and parishioners of the Greater Mount Olive Baptist Church of Jackson, Mississippi, will turn out to celebrate the 13th anniversary of Rev. Funchess' being the Minister of that great church.

The son of John and Alpha Funchess, James Funchess has lived his whole life in Georgetown, Mississippi. He attended schools in Copiah County and theological seminaries throughout the Great State of Mississippi. He accepted the ministry more than 25 years ago and today is the Dean of the Copiah County Ministerial Alliance. He has established himself as an esteemed community leader in Copiah County and Greater Jackson.

It is quite an accomplishment, offering ministry to so many people for 13 years as Minister at Mount Olive Baptist Church. But the kindness, the wisdom, and the leadership of Reverend Funchess extend far beyond those 13 years. His family and friends are gathering to celebrate the blessings that James and Mary Funchess have bestowed upon thousands of people whose paths have crossed theirs during their lifetime of ministry throughout Mississippi.

Indeed, his favorite saying is "I will let nothing mess up my day. This is the day the Lord has made me." These are words to live by, and give me great comfort. So I am happy to join the celebration honoring James and Mary Funchess, and to lend my voice in praising and thanking them for their good work.

HONORING DONALD CRIPE

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 9, 2002

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Donald Cripe on the occasion of his retirement as Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights & Measures. A dinner will be held in his honor for his contribution to the community.

Donald Cripe attended Grace College in Winoona Lake, Indiana, then traveled to California to attend CSU Chico, and received his A.A. Degree from Modesto Junior College in 1976. He started his career with Stanislaus County as an Inspector from 1969–1976, then became Agricultural Commissioner for Madera and Mariposa Counties. He gained much experience while working in these areas, and he brought what he teamed home with him to Stanislaus County. His main duties included pest management, fruit and vegetable quality control, crop statistics, petroleum program, and standards certification, among many oth-

ers. Don believes that success will come by creating a mission, rather than rules, driven department in which the customer is the focus. He has strongly promoted teamwork and collaboration while working for Stanislaus County.

Donald has been married to his wife, Sharon, for 39 years and they have four children and eight grandchildren. Don has served his community, but has also led an active life with his family.

IN HONOR OF DR. DEBORAH MANDELL AND BERNARD KERIK

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 9, 2002

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Dr. Deborah Mandell, the National Police Defense Foundation's "Woman of the Year," and Mr. Bernard Kerik, the National Police Defense Foundation's "Man of the Year." Dr. Mandell and Mr. Kerik were honored on Thursday, April 4, 2002, at Russo's on the Bay in Queens, New York.

Dr. Deborah Mandell is the Director of National Police Defense Foundation Psychological Services. Following the tragic events of September 11, Dr. Mandell headed the National Police Defense Foundation's emergency response team. This team provided grief counseling and support to many survivors, family members of victims, and rescue workers. In addition to her tireless work with the National Police Defense Foundation, Dr. Mandell is also a psychologist in New Jersey and volunteers her time to United Way.

This year's "Man of the Year" is former New York City Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik. A New Jersey native, Mr. Kerik has dedicated his life to public service. His leadership and dedication proved invaluable following the World Trade Center disaster. As New York City Police Commissioner, Mr. Kerik coordinated the rescue efforts and ensured the City's safety. Prior to becoming the City's 40th Police Commissioner, Mr. Kerik served as a New York City police officer, an undercover detective, and a commissioner of corrections.

Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Dr. Deborah Mandell and Mr. Bernard Kerik for their dedicated service on behalf of our nation and the citizens of New York and New Jersey throughout these challenging times.

IN TRIBUTE TO PRIVATE FIRST CLASS MATTHEW A. COMMONS

HON. BOB CLEMENT

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 9, 2002

Mr. CLEMENT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay a special tribute to Private First Class Matthew A. Commons, an American hero.

PFC Commons died on March 4, 2002 in Afghanistan while trying to rescue another American soldier. He was one of eight servicemen killed that day during an intensive battle with the Taliban and al Qaeda. PFC Matthew A. Commons was a professional soldier, a man who had earned the respect of his fellow