

during those days to go into the capitol and I lived two blocks from the capitol in Tallahassee, and I always looked up at the capitol and wondered if some day I would become a part of it. Who would imagine that I would become a part of the Florida senate, of the Florida house? Who would imagine that I would come here to Washington to be in the Halls of Congress? This is a revered body. It is a body that is well respected.

I grew up during the period of intolerance and strict segregation. It was so unfair, and it left a lasting impression on me, and I knew I had to continue to work. I saw good people held down and prevented from rising to their potential simply because of their color. I knew of good men who were killed for the same reason. I saw that power could be used to build or destroy, and I saw how powerlessness could lead to frustration and anger.

I can only state to this Congress, to every last one of you, how much I respect my blackness and my racial identity. I feel very strongly that there is still a debt we owe to the people who came before us.

When I was a child, I heard Roland Hayes sing. I got a chance to hear George Washington Carver speak. I heard W.E.B. DuBois speak. I heard Marian Anderson sing. I read the poems of Countee Cullen. So that great diversity and love that God has given came from my experience as a black person.

I stand before you today as the granddaughter of a slave. How wonderful. When you look at me, you can see that our Nation's legacy of slavery and racism is not so far removed from our lives today. But we have to keep fighting. One of the reasons that I was elected to this office was to remind you of that, and I have tried to do so to the best of my ability.

In my 10 years in the Congress and over three decades of service to my community, I have tried to live by a commitment every day of my life, and that is service is a price you pay for the space that God has let you occupy.

Because of the love of a strong Christian family, loving parents, protective older brothers and sisters, outsiders who took an interest in me, both white and black, and a strong desire to succeed, I was able to move forward.

Education is the springboard, Mr. Speaker. I have stood for it since I have been here. Improving the quality of life in housing and good health care, these are springboards. So I know it is a vehicle, and that is why I think we should continue in the Halls of Congress to do so.

I wanted to say a few things here today because of what I have lived through. We do not have time for me to go through all of it. One of these days I will write a book so each of you can read it. And other than that I will be coming back from time to time. I have six grandchildren and I have three children, and they all know of my legacy.

And when I go back home, I am not going to sit still.

My colleagues need to know some of the reasons why I am not retiring. I am not retiring because I am so feeble I cannot come up here every day. I am not retiring because I do not feel I can do the job, and I am not retiring because I feel that if I were to run I would be defeated. Mr. Speaker, I am almost undefeatable. I am almost that way in my mind, so that is no reason why I am leaving. But I want to go now, because I have other things to do and other careers to pursue.

I love this country very much, and serving it has been the greatest honor of my life. We need more respect. We need respect of diversity, we need to embrace it, and we have to listen. I fully appreciate now how progress rarely comes in giant steps, but in small, incremental lurches forward. So I will retire from Congress, fully confident that our great Nation will continue to prosper.

Dr. Benjamin Mays, the former President of Morehouse College said, "It isn't a calamity to die with dreams unfulfilled, but it is a calamity not to dream."

Mr. Speaker, I hope all of my colleagues will remember me as someone who tried as hard as she could to do both.

NEVER CAN SAY GOOD-BYE

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I just want to echo the sentiments on this side of the aisle about our sadness regarding the departure from this wonderful institution of our dear colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK).

In my 20 years of elective office, I have served every one of those days with my colleague, CARRIE MEEK. The Congresswoman from Florida has been a distinguished member of every institution I have had the pleasure to serve. In the Florida house we served together. We moved together to the Florida senate, and then we served here in the U.S. Congress.

In those many years, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) has distinguished herself as a dedicated public servant, carrying the water on so many items of interest to south Florida and, indeed, our Nation; because I think her legacy extends far beyond her Liberty City district, far beyond our Sunshine State, far beyond our borders. She leaves a legacy of leadership, of dignity, of dedication, and a real sense of community service.

CARRIE, we are going to have you to kick around for a lot of years. You are not retiring; you are going to be in our hearts and you are going to be in our community for many decades to come. I cannot imagine serving here without you. So every day when we are voting,

you will be a part of this institution, you will be a part of our body, you will be a part of our legacy. Asi que te va vamos a estranoi, mi amiga. You are my friend. We have traveled many a hard road together, and we will continue that struggle together for many more years. You are not leaving, so we are not going to say good-bye. Adios, mi amiga.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, July 8, 2002, I was unavoidably detained in my district on official business, and I missed rollcall votes, numbers 283 and 284. If I was present, I would have voted "aye" on rollcall vote 283 and "aye" on rollcall vote 284.

MANY THANKS TO CARRIE MEEK, A GREAT AMERICAN

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I have had the honor of serving with the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) on the Committee on Appropriations for many years now. We saw the parade of Members from both sides of the aisle, all sorts of ideologies, come and give the gentlewoman a hug. They gave her a hug not for her, although she appreciated it; they gave her a hug for themselves. She is an historic leader of this House, an historic leader of her State, and a great American. She loves this country, and the great news is her country loves her.

The gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) is a person of great depth, of great intellect, of great ability, who is as humble an individual as I know, as effective an individual as I know.

And, CARRIE, all of us will miss you in the day-to-day operations of this body. But as the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) indicated, we know that you are not going. We think you are probably going to be coming here regularly to visit family. Who knows?

But we certainly want to say to the gentlewoman that we thank her. We thank her for being her, for being our friend, for being such a great Member of this House. She has brought honor to this House, she has brought humanity to this House, and she has brought great service to her district.

EXTENDING DEEP LOVE AND APPRECIATION

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I wish to add my words to that of the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) and the Florida delegation in extending our deepest love and appreciation to our treasured colleague from the State of

Florida (Mrs. MEEK). Without question, her spirit carries this institution, and she has given hope, not only to her district, but to the people of our entire country. Each of us here in the House knows we are serving with an historic figure, and we thank her family, we thank the people of Florida, of Miami, for sending her here in order that our country be a better place in which to live.

I think every single Member here whose life she has touched is a better person for knowing her. She has strengthened us when we were at our weakest, she has made us laugh when we were taking ourselves too seriously, and even as recently as this afternoon she was fighting for the weakest and the poorest among us in the Committee on Appropriations in a several-year effort that she has fought to get rid of usurious lending and check-cashing facilities across this country that prey on the poorest among us.

I will never meet another person like the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK), and I say to the gentlewoman, I hope that you will come back to us as often as you wish, because you have a seat in the office of every single person on both sides of the aisle of this Chamber. You are held in the highest regard, and you truly have fulfilled the oath that you took to represent the interests of our country.

It has been my great privilege to serve with you, and I thank you for your work on behalf of the citizens not just of your district or mine, but our entire country and the world. You are one of a kind. God bless you.

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TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE CARRIE MEEK, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

(Mr. TAUZIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to rise, too, to let the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) know that, from this side of the aisle, the feelings that have been already expressed about her personally are shared broadly across this body.

I say to the gentlewoman from Florida, we have shared a lot of time together, I have shared time on both sides of the aisle, and we have come through a lot together. We came through Hurricane Andrew. When it got through messing with the gentlewoman's folks, it came down to Louisiana and messed with mine, and we share the horrors of those tragic days with our constituents together, and helped rebuild together.

More importantly, I say to the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK), she has been a dear friend, a dear friend to so many of us. We have come to love and admire her in so many ways.

I have often said that this House is filled with real people who represent

real people. In a real sense, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) has literally represented the best of what the House of Representatives is all about. It is about people coming from the bottoms, the small places of America, and representing them with dignity and honor and respect; and she has done that in a magnificent fashion.

She has honored this body by her presence. She will be remembered a long time by more than those grandchildren who love her so much. She will be remembered with honor and love by all of us in this House for the time we have been privileged to share with her here.

I wish you bon voyage, CARRIE. I hope you have a great time in whatever you do.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE CARRIE MEEK, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

(Mr. McDERMOTT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I am here to speak on behalf of guys with white hair, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN), the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER), and me. The gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) used to play the game with us all the time; and we knew she knew who we were, but she would play like she did not. But her sense of humor and her ability to reach down into people's souls really makes the difference.

Many Members come here and we all think or we all try not to lose touch with where we came from; but there is no question, when the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) speaks on this floor, there is no question that she has not forgotten where she came from or the people around her, who they were, and what they struggle with.

Her voice has been a consistent and solid voice for the people in this society we try to give a hand up to, but the gentlewoman from Florida would never let us get away with just trying. She insisted that we do it. We are going to miss her, and they are going to miss her. All of us are going to miss her coming up the aisle saying, "the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. MORAN." We are going to miss her a lot.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE CARRIE MEEK, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

(Mr. DIAZ-BALART asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, as one reads history, many times it seems as though the figures that one encounters are larger than life. It is uncommon to be absolutely certain that, during one's life, one has met someone who is like the greatest of the characters that one has met in history.

That one person that I know, and am absolutely certain that she has already come to be known not only as one of the greatest orators in the history of Florida, one of the greatest public servants in the history of Florida, but one of the greatest Floridians, is the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK).

I have had the honor, the profound honor and privilege, to know her and to be her friend since we served together in the Florida legislature; and her wisdom and her fairness and her compassion and her goodness and her strength and toughness on behalf of those in need are legendary, and will be more legendary each day.

I join all Floridians, all who have known her, in thanking her, in wishing her well, in wishing her and her family and her son, who will be here with us soon, Godspeed. Thank you, CARRIE.

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE CARRIE MEEK, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I know that I will have an opportunity to pay tribute to the distinguished gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) at a later time, but I simply wanted to not have this RECORD close, after she has made such an eloquent statement to her colleagues, without commenting on what she means to those of us who have had the privilege of serving with her and on what she means to Florida and to the Nation.

The gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK) is a renaissance woman. She is one who will come to the floor with passion, but also with knowledge. She is one that is unbeatable in debate because she is not one who memorizes or tries to recapture facts she does not know. She speaks both from the heart, but as well, from an internal, deeply embedded sense of knowledge of humanity and the needs of our people, no matter who they are.

I have heard her quote from those who many of us only read about, and we will miss the eloquence of a stateswoman who can turn heads and minds on issues that they thought they would come to the floor and vote in the opposite way.

It is well known that we expect to be fortunate enough to be able to serve, those of us who may get reelected, with her distinguished son. But what I would say, Mr. Speaker, that I want the RECORD to be able to account for as she gives her remarks this evening, is that she is a great woman, a woman of affection and love, and that we love her; and, as well, she has been someone who has, in the deepest of need, she has gone there and responded to the need, but also she has solved the need. That is for her constituents in Florida, that is for the people of the United States of