

Mr. Speaker, history has already recorded that the President of these United States of America, George W. Bush, revealed his true feelings about equal opportunity for all of America's children when, in fact, on January 15, Martin Luther King's birthday, 2003, the President of the United States, using divisive language claiming the Michigan program was a quota program, announced his support for the lawsuit against the University of Michigan, opposing the most reasonable affirmative action program ever implemented in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States, who claims an education policy of leave no child behind, a President who claims to have a program of outreach to minorities, a President claiming to want to attract African Americans to the Republican Party, is actually a President who wants to have it both ways. I say this to the President this evening, using his own words as he described the United States' allies, in his preemptive strike against Iraq, he said to the allies, "You're either with us or you're against us." Mr. President, I say to you this evening, You're either with us or you're against us. And, Mr. President, you cannot be with us as you destroy our chances to access education and better our lives, the lives of our children and the lives of our families and our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I will close by just sharing this with you. The Supreme Court unanimously agreed that segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race did, in fact, deprive minority children of equal education opportunities. Their answer was the right answer, the only moral answer, the answer that has driven the progress of the civil rights movement for the last 50 years. As we recognize and commemorate this important milestone in the civil rights movement, we must remain forever vigilant to ensure that we will continue our progress towards equal educational opportunities and not allow conservative zealots to return us to the days of separate but equal.

COMMEMORATING 49TH ANNIVERSARY OF BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION DECISION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 49th anniversary of the historic Brown v. Board of Education decision. On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court unanimously declared that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal and as such violate the 14th amendment to the United States Constitution which guarantees all citizens equal protection of the law.

This is one of the most important legal decisions for human rights in

American history. This battle, however, did not occur overnight. The struggle for equality for African Americans began over three centuries prior to Brown v. Board of Education. In the United States from the early 1600s to the 1860s, peoples of African descent sought the most fundamental of rights, individual freedom. Despite the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation and gains made by the 13th amendment, which outlawed slavery, African Americans remained in economic and social bondage enforced by segregation. Even the passage of the 14th amendment, which guaranteed equal protection under the law, and the 15th amendment, which afforded African Americans voting rights, did little to abridge de facto segregation policies.

In 1849, the father of 5-year-old Sarah Roberts initiated the legal battles for equality in education. Sarah would walk past five white elementary schools to Smith Grammar School, a segregated school in Boston. Smith was badly run down, so Sarah's father unsuccessfully tried to enroll her in one of the white schools. He selected African-American attorney Robert Morris, who was joined by noted abolitionist Charles Sumner, to represent his case, Roberts v. City of Boston. Similar cases occurred throughout the United States involving American children of African, Asian, Hispanic and Native descent in the wake of Roberts v. City of Boston.

Not until 12:52 p.m. on May 17, 1954, did a court decide in favor of the plaintiff in any of these cases. On this day, the Supreme Court rejected the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision ruling, stating, "We conclude that in the field of public education, the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Segregation and Jim Crow were legally dead.

Yet as we celebrate this victory, we must acknowledge that we are still making strides to attain equal opportunity in education. As de jure segregation faded, pre-Jim Crow economic conditions remained which perpetuated de facto segregation that continues in many cities to this day. These conditions continue to negatively affect the educational opportunities of many of our Nation's African-American children. We cannot deny that Brown v. Board of Education afforded African Americans a better chance to receive a quality education. We cannot deny the rising statistics of African Americans going to college and obtaining postgraduate degrees. We also cannot deny the ever-increasing median income of African Americans or the rise of African-American business owners and professionals, all of which are directly related to educational opportunities. However, we also cannot deny that the gap between white and African-American achievement remains substantial. Black people continue to graduate from college at half the rate of white people.

It is unfortunate that after all these years, we are still in an uphill battle over full inclusion in our Nation's society. This is why we must do more than commemorate this decision. We are obliged to be forever proactive in ensuring that the last vestiges of Jim Crow are extinguished and do not return.

Mr. Speaker, on April 1, 2003, over 50,000 people, including 10,000 from Michigan alone, rallied in front of the U.S. Supreme Court in favor of the University of Michigan's affirmative action policy.

Mr. Speaker, we hope that we are on the brink of a new day when it comes to quality education.

Affirmative Action in higher education was put in place to not only encourage diversity, but to be a minor step in the direction of justice after hundreds of years of institutional and social discrimination against women and people of color in the United States. Similar to the 1954 case, the justices recognized in the 1978 Bakke case that the most effective way to cure society of exclusionary practices is to make special efforts at inclusion, which is exactly what affirmative action does.

Mr. Speaker, as we reflect on the half century mark of Brown v. the Board of Education, I encourage all of my colleagues to take note of the fact that this court victory was not just a victory for African-American and other minorities. It was a victory for all Americans. Fifty years later we must remain mindful of these hard-won freedoms and vigilant in our protection of these hard-won gains.

COMMEMORATING 49TH ANNIVERSARY OF BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION DECISION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise today to commemorate the 49th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, which struck down the separate but equal doctrine of Plessy v. Ferguson of 1896.

A young girl by the name of Linda Brown attended the fifth grade at public school in Topeka, Kansas. After being denied admission to a white elementary school, the NAACP took up her case along with similar ones in Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia and Delaware. All five cases were argued together in December 1952 by Thurgood Marshall, who headed the NAACP Legal Defense Fund at that time. Mr. MARSHALL, born in Maryland, educated at Douglass High School, went on to Lincoln University, a small black college in Oxford, Pennsylvania, and then graduated with honors and applied to the white University of Maryland law school. He was denied admission. Howard University accepted him, and he graduated at the top of his class, passing the bar exam, taking up private practice and specializing in civil rights cases.

At 26, he was hired by the Baltimore branch of the NAACP, and one of his

first civil rights cases was a successful effort to gain admission for a young black man to the University of Maryland, the very institution that denied Thurgood Marshall admittance 2 years earlier.

The unanimous 1954 decision ruled all school segregation unconstitutional. W.E.B. du Boise wrote, "I have seen the impossible happen. It did on May 17, 1954." The Brown decision did not come out of nowhere, and it was far from the end of the story. The decision was a climax of a long series of NAACP court victories, many won by chief counsel Thurgood Marshall, that had slowly laid the legal groundwork for school desegregation. In some schools it had an immediate powerful effect. By 1958, desegregation was under way in a number of Southern school districts. Both white and black peoples were going to school together. Black children in Wilmington, Delaware; Baltimore, Maryland; and Washington, D.C., sat in classrooms beside white children as did African-American students in certain counties in Missouri, Arkansas and West Virginia.

□ 2145

In Louisville, Kentucky, the school system became a national model of school desegregation.

But most southern jurisdictions strenuously resisted desegregation, encouraged by the Supreme Court ruling a year after the Brown decision that the transition need only to take place with all deliberate speed. States and counties passed more than 145 laws to hold off desegregation altogether. The Georgia legislature, for example, decided to withhold State funds from any school that enrolled students of both races. Prince Edward County, Virginia, closed all public schools from 1959 to 1964 when it was forced to reopen the schools by the Supreme Court.

And yet the clock could not be turned back. From the late 1950's to the mid 1960's, one previously white school after another grudgingly admitted its first black students, from nine black teenagers in 1957 who endured harassment and threats to attend Central High School, where Federal troops were brought out by President Eisenhower, to Air Force veteran James Meredith who in 1962 became the first black student to enroll in the University of Mississippi.

School segregation based on race received its final blow in 1969, when an exasperated Supreme Court overturned its "all deliberate speed" ruling and ordered full desegregation immediately. A few years later, Federal courts began ruling that school segregation based on residential patterns, de facto segregation, should also be remedied as de jure was done by law. Sometimes the way this was done was by busing of students to other schools. In some cases, though, buses filled with black students became magnets for mob violence, especially in South Boston where white residents stoned buses carrying little black children in 1974.

Even within seemingly integrated public schools, subtle mechanisms often continued to divide race. Standardized tests, for example, are thought by many educators to be culturally biased in favor of white middle-class students. Yet groupings by ability or tracking was often based on that such test or on sometimes faculty teachers' expectations. In addition, so-called white flight became a pattern in urban centers as white students left suburban areas and went to private schools.

So as we are here, we fight for integration even in my State of New Jersey where a thorough and efficient education was granted by everyone. Our governor, Jim McGreevey, is attempting to turn the clock back to ask the courts to relieve the State from the thorough and efficient education, and we will fight to see that that law is not overturned.

THE OPPRESSION OF JEWS IN SYRIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to draw attention to the historic and continued oppression of Jews living in Syria. At the start of the 20th century, it is estimated that there were approximately 40,000 Jews living in Syria. However, by early 1947 only 13,000 were left, with 20,000 having fled through the course of the previous decade as Nazi zeal permeated the region. Immediately after Syria gained independence from France in 1945, vitriolic anti-Semitic propaganda was broadcast on television and radio, inciting the Arab masses to violence. In December, 1947, 1 month after the Partition Plan's acceptance, a pogrom erupted in the Syrian town of Aleppo, torching numerous Jewish properties including synagogues, schools, orphanages, and businesses.

A flurry of anti-Semitic legislation passed in 1948 restricted, among other things, Jewish travel outside of government-approved ghettos, the selling of private property, acquiring land or changing their place of residence. A decree in 1949 went a step further, seizing all Jewish bank accounts; and under threats of execution long prison sentences and torture, most Jews were able to depart between 1948 and 1962.

Due mainly to U.S. influence in the context of the Madrid Peace Process, the majority of the members of the Syrian Jewish community have fled, with only about 1,000 still remaining. Most have chosen to settle here in the United States, including a sizable number in my district in New Jersey.

Mr. Speaker, the situation for those few who remained has deteriorated dramatically over the last few decades. A report published in 1981 indicated Syrian Jews were subject to the Mukhabarat, the Syrian secret police,

who conduct a reign of terror and intimidation, including searches without warrant, detention without trial, torture and summary execution.

The few synagogues still open in Syria are considered by authorities as "centers of sedition," with services held under surveillance. Nightly curfews have been established in Jewish communities, and Jews have been required to carry special identity cards.

Jews are barred from employment in government offices, public bodies, or banks. Jews have been arbitrarily dismissed from jobs without compensation, and their licenses to conduct foreign trade have been revoked. Jews have been forbidden the ability to obtain driver's licenses or to even have telephones in the homes. The only exceptions have been for doctors and a handful of merchants that have been given preferential treatment. Syrians are officially advised not to buy in Jewish shops, and government and military personnel are expressly forbidden to even enter them.

Mr. Speaker, the mail of Syrian Jews is even censored. I have been told by Jews here in the United States who still have family in Syria that the relatives request not to be sent any letter or message because they will face interrogation by the state police.

Some would like to think that the number of Jews in Syria is insignificant compared with the millions who are oppressed elsewhere. However, the political implications of the thousands of scapegoats held captive in Syria are beyond comparison to their number.

Syria is listed on the State Department's list of countries who harbor and support terrorism. Syria has proved to be a destabilizing force in the Middle East, continuing to develop and stockpile chemical weapons and the missiles to deliver them and remains the occupying power in Lebanon. Syria offered support to Iraq even as U.S. and coalition forces were engaged in combat in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Yet Syria is subject to fewer U.S. sanctions than any other country considered a state sponsor of terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to commend my colleagues, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL), for introducing the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003. This legislation, which I have cosponsored, holds Syria accountable for its support for terrorism, occupation of Lebanon, and possession and continued development of weapons of mass destruction and would give the President the tools to impose penalties on Syria unless it corrects its behavior immediately.

Mr. Speaker, Syria's mistreatment of its Jewish citizens is one more reason that Congress cannot remain silent on Syria. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act. Congress cannot allow these activities in