

the academy.” The bill directed the Air Force to develop a plan to ensure that the academy maintains a climate free from coercive religious intimidation and inappropriate proselytizing.

As a Coloradan and a Member of the Armed Services Committee, I have been following this matter closely and have noted that Lt. Gen. John Rosa, the Academy’s superintendent, has said that the problem is “something that keeps me awake at night,” and estimated it will take 6 years to fix.

The good news is that several reviews of the situation at the Academy are underway, and a task force report is due this week. I am also appreciative that the Academy has already begun taking steps to address the issue by holding classes on religious tolerance. But it is important to remember that an unwillingness to tolerate other cultures and faiths is not only inconsistent with our constitutional principles, but detrimental to the mission of the Air Force and of the military in general. Our men and women in uniform need to work together to be successful, and can only inspire others to serve and serve well if they are able to demonstrate tolerance toward all.

Representative HUNTER’s amendment removed the language calling for corrective action. His amendment appeared to downplay the seriousness of a problem that Air Force Academy officials themselves have acknowledged. In response, Representative OBEY offered an amendment that slightly revised the language adopted by the Appropriations Committee but retained its essential elements.

I voted for that Obey amendment, and regret that it was not approved and that the Hunter amendment prevailed. I hope that the Air Force does not make the mistake of concluding that adoption of the Hunter amendment means that they should lessen their efforts to respond to the problem they have identified.

CONGRATULATING MRS. DEBORAH BENJAMIN ON HER 50TH BIRTHDAY

HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join the Benjamin family of Glen Head, New York in celebration of the 50th birthday of Mrs. Deborah Benjamin, which will be commemorated this Saturday, June 25th, 2005 at Gotham Hall in Manhattan.

Deborah Ann Coyle Benjamin was born on June 28, 1955, in Peninsula Hospital in Rockaway Beach, New York. Deborah is the eldest of Ken and Gladys Coyle’s three children. Her sister, Denise DeVita, and brother, Ken Coyle, Jr., both live on Long Island in New York.

Deborah spent her childhood and early adulthood in Rockville Centre, New York, where she attended Hewitt Grammar School, and graduated from South Side High School. After high school she attended Elizabeth Seton College in Westchester, New York.

In the years after college, Deborah worked for her father’s insurance company, the Wheatley Agency, for 20 years and retired in 2000 as Vice President of Group Insurance Sales.

In 2000, Deborah married her long-time best friend, Alvin Benjamin of Glen Head, New York. Alvin is the Owner/President of Benjamin Development in Garden City, New York. They currently reside in Glen Head, Manhattan, and Highland Beach, Florida.

Since her retirement, Mrs. Benjamin has devoted much of her time to charitable organizations dedicated to improving the lives of children. She is most actively involved with the Fanconi Anemia Research Fund, which is dedicated to finding a cure for this rare, but serious blood disease. Additionally, Mrs. Benjamin has lent her support to Palm Beach County-based Kids In New Directions, which assists children in making positive life choices and developing leadership skills. Countless children in New York, Florida, and throughout our nation have benefited from Deborah Benjamin’s philanthropy and her generosity of time and spirit.

Al and Deborah Benjamin enjoy spending time with their families, friends, traveling, giving to charities in the New York and Florida area, and remain lovingly devoted to one another after 5 years of marriage.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the entire House of Representatives to join me now in thanking Deborah Benjamin for her selfless contributions to society, in congratulating her on her 50th birthday, and in extending our best wishes for her future success and happiness as she marks this important and joyous milestone.

DEMAND FOR FREEDOM ALIVE IN PUNJAB, KHALISTAN

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take note of the demonstrations in Punjab, Khalistan that surrounded the 21st anniversary of the Indian government’s attack on the Golden Temple. Groups such as Dal Khalsa and others marched through the streets of Amritsar, converging at the Golden Temple for a big rally, according to The Times of India. They carried posters of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a Sikh freedom leader killed in the Golden Temple attacks, as well as posters of the demolished Golden Temple.

As you know, the Indian government also attacked 125 other Gurdwaras—Sikh places of worship—at the same time. Over 20,000 Sikhs were killed. The Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, was shot full of bullet holes. Sikh boys between the ages of 8 and 13 were shot on the premises.

Former Member of Parliament Simranjit Singh Mann said that the only way to assuage the wounds of the attack is by freeing Khalistan, the Sikh homeland. Another speaker said that the movement to free Khalistan is by peaceful means. Khalistan declared its independence from India in 1997. That is now eight years ago.

Police and intelligence operatives were surreptitiously watching this peaceful demonstration. Apparently, 21 years after the Golden Temple attack, the Sikhs’ demand for freedom still frightens them.

India claims it is democratic, Mr. Speaker, yet it sends police to spy on a peaceful demonstration. In January, 35 Sikhs were arrested

for raising the Sikh flag and making speeches. The Movement Against State Repression reports that over 52,000 Sikhs are political prisoners in “the world’s largest democracy.” More than a quarter of a million Sikhs have been murdered, according to figures compiled from the Punjab State Magistracy.

Sikhs are only one of India’s targets. Other minorities such as Christians, Muslims, and others have also been subjected to tyrannical repression. More than 300,000 Christians have been killed in Nagaland, and thousands elsewhere in the country. Over 900,000 Kashmiri Muslims, at least 2,000 to 5,000 Muslims in Gujarat, and thousands of other Muslims, have been victims of India’s tyranny. And tens of thousands of people in Assam, Bodoland, Manipur, Tamil Nadu, and around the country, as well as countless Dalit “Untouchables” have been killed as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable. We must take a stand for freedom for all, as the President committed us to doing in January. The time has come to stop all our aid and trade with India, to end our burgeoning military cooperation, and to demand the peaceful resolution of the situation in South Asia through a free and fair plebiscite for all the national groups there.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to put the Times of India article about the demonstration into the RECORD at this time.

[From the Times of India, Jun. 6, 2005]
KHALISTAN DEMAND RAISED ON GENOCIDE DAY

(By Yudhvir Rana)

Amritsar.—The pent up secessionist emotions of Sikh radicals whipped up on the Genocide Day observed as Ardas Divas at Akal Takht on Monday, as a large number of Sikh youth including women brandishing naked swords raised slogans for Sikh’s independent state Khalistan while passing pejorative remarks against SAD-Badal president Parkash Singh Badal and SGPC president Bibi Jagir Kaur for not coming up to the aspirations of Sikhs and addressing their problems.

The ferocity of slogans multiplied after Sikh radical leader Simranjit Singh Mann, president of SAD (Amritsar) announced that Sikhs’ hurt feelings could only be assuaged when Sikhs independent state Khalistan comes into existence. He suggested that Khalistan could be created on the buffer zone between India and Pakistan.

Baba Harnam Singh, 15th chief of Damdami Taksal joined Simranjit Singh Mann with his arms wielding supporters and announced to observe the martyrdom day of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhinderanwala at Taksal’s headquarters at Gurdwara Gurdarshan Parkash, Chowk Mehta on June 12.

The radical activists including from Dal Khalsa, Dal Khalsa, SAD(A), Damdami Taksal, Sikh Students Federation (Bittu), Akal Federation jointly put up the board of Shaheedee Gallery at the gallery situated outside Akal Takht against the wishes of SGPC. A large number of Sikhs and converged at Akal Takht on the 21st anniversary of Operation Bluestar.

Posters of demolished Akal Takht, Sikh militant leaders and pamphlet on the life of Jarnail Singh Bhinderanwala were distributed among Sikh sangat.

A large number of policemen in plain clothes and sleuths of various intelligence agencies were hovering around the Akal Takht and its surrounding. A police officer of DSP rank remained present among Sikh sangat sitting in front of Akal Takht during the ceremony.

Earlier Parkash Singh Badal and Bibi Jagir Kaur condemned congress government for rubbing salt to the wounds of Sikhs. About the postponement of foundation stone laying ceremony of Yadgara-e-Shaheedan, Badal said the foundation stone would be laid once its design was approved.

Justifying the demand of Khalistan, Jagjit Singh Chauhan, a Khalistan ideologue said that they would peruse their mission through peaceful democratic means.

Jathedar of Akal Tkaht, Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti presented siropas's to Ishar Singh, Mata Pritam Kaur son and wife of Jarnail Singh Bhinderanwala and relatives of other martyrs. Earlier addressing the gathering he said it was unfortunate that even after 21 years of Operation Bluestar, the central government has not condemned the incident nor those responsible for the 1984 anti Sikh riots have been brought to books and Operation Bluestar was a black chapter in the history of Independent India. The Sikhs had laid down their lives under the aegis of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhinderanwala to protect the sanctity of gurdhams.

Meanwhile Damdam Taksal presented photographs of Jarnail Singh, Amrik Singh, Shubeg Singh and Thara Singh to Jathedar of Akal Takht Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti for displaying them in the gallery. Vedanti however asked them to contemplate over their request. Meanwhile chief spokesperson of Damdam Taksal, Bhai Mohkam Singh said that they also performed ardas at the gallery's gate. He said panth would decide if there was no desirable reply from Jathedar.

On the other hand SAD(A) had demanded to display the photograph of Jarnail Singh Bhinderanwala at central Sikh Museum, handing over of personal belongings of Bhinderanwala by his family, Taksal and Army to panth without any conditions, naming the road between Sri Guru Arjun Dev Niwas to Sri Hargobind Niwas on Sant Jarnail Singh Marg, setting up of a Sant Jarnail Singh Dharmik Vidya Kendar and beginning of Shaheed Bhai Amrik Singh Award for those schools helping to check apostism among Sikhs and General Shubeg Sigh Award to promote traditional sports.

JUSTICE DELAYED, BUT JUSTICE FINALLY SERVED

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of three heroic young men James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, brutally killed in Mississippi exactly 41 years ago today and to welcome today's verdict of the Mississippi jury that found Edgar Ray Killen guilty of three counts of manslaughter in their deaths. I would have preferred the murder convictions sought by Neshoba County district Attorney Mark Duncan in the deaths of these three brave civil rights activists but I recognize the important step Mississippi has taken in finally convicting Killen of the crimes he proudly and publicly took credit for after a jury was deadlocked in his 1964 Federal Civil Rights trial.

Killen was a recruiter and organizer for the Neshoba County Chapter of the Ku Klux Klan during the "freedom summer" in 1964 when Goodman and Schwerner came from New York to work with James Chaney and other civil rights activists in Mississippi to register African-American voters. Schwerner had been in Mississippi but returned with Goodman when he heard of the burning of an African-American Church and beatings of members of the congregation. The night Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner died they had been jailed for speeding by Neshoba County Deputy Sheriff Cecil Price. By the time they were released at 10 p.m., the plan formulated by Killen to kill them and bury their bodies in an earthen dam was in place.

The Klan had used fear, intimidation and murder to brutally oppress over African-Americans who sought justice and equality and it sought to respond to the young workers of the civil rights movement in Mississippi in the same way. The murders of Chaney, Goodman

and Schwerner were intended as a message to civil rights activists that the Klan was to be feared in Mississippi. It was a message to stay out of Mississippi. The failure of the State of Mississippi and the local district attorney's office to charge a single person in the killings of Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner offered the same message and another even more chilling message. Not only was the state uninterested in killings of African-Americans, a fact well known in that state, but it was uninterested in the killings of white people trying to help them. The failure of the State of Mississippi to prosecute Killen and others was a sign of the influence of the Klan in the state.

Everyone involved in reopening and retrying this case should be proud of this success. I would particularly like to thank Representative BENNIE THOMPSON of Mississippi for his leadership in the House on this issue. Hopefully, the parents and families of Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner will find solace in the fact that, in the end, justice has defeated intimidation and fear.

While the verdict is an important sign that this Nation can and will face the ugliness of its past, it is also a reminder that we have far to go in creating a just and equal society. The verdict today shows Mississippi is changing. I agree with Ben Chaney, brother of James Chaney, that today's verdict is "recognition of the terrible thing that happened." I hope, as he does, that this conviction helps "shine some light" on what has happened in Mississippi. However, I also agree with Rita Schwerner Bender, widow of Michael Schwerner when she said: "I would hope that this case is just the beginning and not the end."

This Congress should lead the effort to reverse the centuries of discrimination and racism that has so long held us back and apart. We should close the inequalities in education, employment, civil rights and health care that impacts the poor and minorities of this country on a daily basis. We should not take another 41 years to achieve justice for all Americans.