

the foursome play "Come to the Bower," a bawdy-house love song regarded as quite risqué at the time. As the soldiers marched on to victory, they carried their banner, a flag of Miss Liberty consisting of a partially clad female proclaiming freedom.

The enemy was caught by a stunning surprise. The battle lasted 18 minutes, but the Mexican defeat was devastating. Only nine Texans were killed or mortally wounded. Six hundred thirty Mexican soldiers were killed, and the number of Mexican soldiers taken prisoner exceeded the entire number of the Texas army.

The battle cries of "Remember the Alamo" and "Remember Goliad" were the soldiers' calls for vengeance. This was a soldiers' battle, and they had scores to settle because they had lost brothers and friends at the Alamo and Goliad.

The heroes of the battle of San Jacinto were a diverse mix. The youngest soldier at San Jacinto was Elijah Votaw, a 15-year-old that had been in Texas for about a year. The oldest was Asa Mitchell, a 60-year-old who had been in Texas for about 14 years.

Captain Juan Seguin headed a unit of about two dozen Tejanos, people of Hispanic descent born in Texas, who fought in Houston's army and wore pieces of cardboard in their hatbands so fellow soldiers would not mistake them for the enemy.

If we want to credit the most unlikely of heroes, we have to acknowledge the Yellow Rose of Texas, Emily Morgan. Legend has it that Emily Morgan, the young, beautiful, racially mixed housekeeper who had been captured earlier by Mexican forces, is said to have been lingering with Santa Anna in his tent, causing him to be unprepared for the Texans' attack. Later Santa Anna, when he was captured, was found hiding in a well.

The battle of San Jacinto avenged the massacre of Texan soldiers at the Alamo and the murder of hundreds of Texans taken prisoner at Goliad and gave Texas its independence from Mexico.

Texas claimed the entire area from the Gulf of Mexico all the way to Canada, including not only the State of Texas, but New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado and Wyoming.

So General Sam Houston, his boys took the day, and they defeated the invaders and proclaimed to all, "Don't mess with Texas."

Mr. Speaker, every year a local radio station, KILT, with its morning crew of Hudson and Harrigan and top newscaster in America, Robert McEntire, honor this day by playing a recording of a bunch of third graders from Tomball, Texas, singing the State song, "Texas, our Texas," with an old, out-of-tune piano. It is because of the Battle of San Jacinto, Mr. Speaker, all Texans can sing along with pride, "God bless you, Texas, and keep you brave and strong, that you may grow in power and worth throughout the ages long."

When Sam Houston died some years later, his last words were "Texas, Texas." And Mr. Speaker, the rest, they say, is Texas history.

#### JASON KAMRAS, NATIONAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I come to the House for a joyful moment.

On the front page of the Washington Post today is a very large picture of children of the District of Columbia and one of their teachers, who was entertained yesterday by President Bush at the White House to celebrate the fact that he has been named Teacher of the Year, the oldest and most prestigious award for teachers in our country.

This is a young man who teaches at Sousa Junior High School in Washington, D.C. Jason Kamras is his name. He is a math teacher who graduated from Princeton University. What does he think to do with his life? Come to the District of Columbia to teach disadvantaged children in our elementary and middle schools.

He began teaching in 1996. He took 2 years out because he thought he ought to go and get an education degree, and he went and got a master's degree in education, but came right back to the District of Columbia to teach math at Sousa.

Typical of the way this young man approached his job is the student he first met when he was in middle school at Sousa. His name was Wendell Jefferson. He said, Wendell, you keep trying; you will do well. Wendell Jefferson went on to high school. When he got to high school, no longer under the care of Mr. Kamras, Mr. Kamras tutored him in math. Wendell Jefferson is now studying electrical engineering at Morehouse College.

This story is perhaps emblematic of the way this young man approaches teaching. He lobbied his principal for double the time for students in math, with two teachers for each student. He redesigned the curriculum using technologies so as to adjust the curriculum to all learning styles. He took to heart this notion that every child can learn, those words which have become such a cliche, a cliche because we all know them to be true, but we do not know always how to unlock what makes them true.

In his first year, using his new curriculum, these children went from 80 percent below basic to 40 percent below basic. Something happened to almost 40 percent of them when they got a teacher who homed in on their individual needs. Now, we are talking about a school where all but 40 of about 380 students qualify for the reduced price lunch. It tells us something of the poverty level of the students.

Actually, the District of Columbia public schools look a lot like every big public school, except the Members of Congress see this one up close. We are very pleased to have a new superintendent, Mr. Janey, who is in the process of restructuring our public schools, but of course, the most basic restructuring of schools has to do, first, with the children in those schools, how the schools are restructured so that they are child-oriented and how are they restructured so as to understand the most important adult in each child's life during the school day is the teacher. Somehow or the other this young man, fresh out of college, understood that.

He works from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. according to his principal. My mother was a schoolteacher, so I want to say that those long hours are fairly typical of how teachers operate. They do not do it at school. They are working that hard because of the hours they put in at home in preparing to teach.

But for Mr. Kamras, teaching in a big city school system was much more difficult than it was for my mother when she taught when I was a child because of the concentration of poverty in big cities today. This city was a much larger city, 200,000 people more than it has today, and it was far more mixed economically. Then, of course, people began to move to larger quarters in the suburbs leaving concentrations of poverty here. We have lots of middle-class people in the District, I am pleased to say, but we have large concentrations of poverty, and this is reflected in the scores.

The fact that Jason Kamras was able not only to reach the children, but to reach the measurement, which I think is the right measurement; there is no way to get around the fact that test scores are the only way to know for sure that children are progressing. I wish there were a better way. I wish there were a more objective way, but that is it.

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This teacher has somehow made these test scores go up.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to quote something that he said, because it tells something of his world view. He said, "My intense desire to see my school excel comes not only from an unwavering belief that all students deserve an excellent education, but also the unique role Sousa played in the civil rights movement."

This young man's world view gives him a sense that justice in the classroom must be done because he believes in justice in our country for African Americans, and he has brought it to bear right here in the public schools of the District of Columbia.

I know you would want to, Mr. Speaker, congratulate him; I know this House would want to congratulate him. We take great pride in his achievement today, and we thank the President of the United States for honoring him.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the article I referred to earlier in my remarks:

[From the Washington Post]

A D.C. TEACHER'S DAY IN THE ROSE GARDEN  
MATH INNOVATOR IS FIRST FROM CITY TO BE  
DECLARED BEST IN NATION

(By Manny Fernandez and V. Dion Haynes)

The sixth-graders were hunched over their desks behind the metal-screened windows of the middle school—still digesting the difference between similes and metaphors—as the limousine carrying their school's best teacher pulled up to the northwest gate of the White House yesterday.

Welcomed at the gate, Jason Kamras made his way up the driveway flanked with red tulips and walked into a limelight that falls sparingly on the weathered urban school where he has taught math for close to a decade.

"My children simply want the opportunity to pursue their dreams," Kamras said as he stood in the Rose Garden beside the president and first lady.

The ceremony recognized Kamras, 31, as the National Teacher of the Year. He is the first winner from a D.C. public school in the contest's 53-year history.

"He's usually at work at 7 a.m., and he rarely leaves before 7 p.m.," President Bush said as bright sunshine streamed down on those who gathered for the event. Kamras receives great joy, Bush told them, "when a student proclaims, 'Mr. Kamras, I get it.'"

Kamras smiled.

At that moment—six miles and a world away—students in Room 120 at John Philip Sousa Middle School had their rulers out, drawing rectangles, some of them quiet and studious, others loud and distracted.

Sousa sits at the edge of a park east of the Anacostia River, on the poorer side of Washington's dividing line between the haves and the have-nots.

With its tall chimney, the 50-year-old, red-brick building looks more like a factory than a school.

The white flag pole has no flag, and a sign near the entrance declares that firearms are banned within 500 feet. Two women were shot to death down the street several years ago, and the metal detector that students walk through each morning has turned up several knives.

All but 40 of the roughly 380 students qualify for a free or reduced-price lunch, a commonly used indicator of poverty. A year ago, 46 percent of the students scored "below basic" on reading tests, and 73 percent scored below basic in math.

Kamras said he doesn't dwell on the negative. His focus is on the faces in his classroom.

"They inspire me every day with their intelligence, creativity and humor," he said in the Rose Garden yesterday. Teachers "can and do make a dramatic difference in their lives every day."

He was fresh out of Princeton almost nine years ago, and the middle school was showing signs of age, when he first laid eyes on it.

Sousa's principal, William Lipscomb, had fetched him from the Minnesota Avenue Metro station in Northeast, and the two men immediately found common ground.

"We both are from New York and we instantly bonded on that," Kamras said.

Two sixth-grade teachers, Carol Taylor and Elaine Stewart, supplied Kamras with construction paper for his classroom and a bit of an introduction to the school.

"Some of the things they raised were the lack of resources. They talked about the socioeconomic challenges that some students at Sousa face," Kamras recalled in an inter-

view this week. "Some students here have encountered violence personally."

But from the start, he said, he was determined to "never use the negative factors as predictors of ability or potential."

During his first year of teaching, Kamras said, he sought to get to "know the students as individuals, taking the time to learn who they are, what they care about, what their needs are as learners."

Kamras made bridging the inequities in staffing and other resources between urban and suburban schools a priority. He got creative. He brought a cookie with colorful frosting to class to illustrate circumference, diameter and radius. He took his students to outings at the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials and made time after school to encourage their hobbies. He encouraged his students to take photographs of community life, and their prints were put on display in city offices at Judiciary Square and other places in the city.

And he played chess with student Wendall Jefferson once a week. "He would routinely defeat me, and I was trying my hardest," Kamras said.

During those games he learned about the student and his family, and he sought to inspire him to "focus in class and tap into the fullness of his potential."

"I think I was learning as a first year teacher how to engage students and bring their natural love . . . for their hobbies into the classroom," Kamras recalled. "I wanted to use that as a catalyst."

Jefferson graduated from Sousa in 1999 as valedictorian, and Kamras regularly tutored him in math and science when he went on to high school. Now Jefferson is studying electrical engineering at Morehouse College in Atlanta. He is the first in his family to go to college.

"He said, 'Wendall, you have great potential,'" recalled Jefferson, 20, who attended the Rose Garden ceremony yesterday. "I said, 'I'm destined to do great things.' He said, 'Always keep that dream.'"

Kamras began "early bird" advanced math classes before the regular school day began, working to prepare students for the standardized test known as the Stanford 9.

He also came up with an idea that doubled the amount of math instruction by providing two teachers—teaching separate classes—for every student. The program was started for seventh-graders and then expanded to other grades.

"Our Stanford 9 scores went from approximately 80 percent below basic to 40 percent below basic in one year," he said.

Though the program continues in other grades, it was discontinued for seventh-graders because there weren't enough qualified teachers.

Kamras said he steadfastly refused to let "negative factors shape my perspective."

At the White House, Kamras, who with his boyish looks could have been mistaken for a student all dressed up, heard Bush say, "Your students are fortunate to have you in their lives."

He shook hands with Bush and—holding his teaching award, a glass apple on a plaque—posed for photos with the president and first lady Laura Bush.

Next year, he plans to travel the country to promote innovative teaching techniques. He's taking today and tomorrow off. But he plans on being back in the classroom, as usual, first thing Monday morning.

TRAGEDIES IN FLORIDA REQUIRE  
STRENGTHENING OF LAWS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SCHWARZ of Michigan). Under a pre-

vious order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I read with horror, outrage, and disgust the news accounts of the death of Jesse Lunsford in Florida. Little 9-year-old Jesse Lunsford was buried alive in garbage bags at the hands of a sick, depraved, and despicable John Evander Cooey, a convicted sex offender who has admitted to raping and killing God's little angel, 9-year-old Jesse.

I am more than troubled by this and other murders, including the death of Sarah Lunde, a 13-year-old, again in Florida, killed by David Ostott; David Ostott being another convicted rapist, a violent rapist convicted in 1997 for violently raping a woman and walking the streets in Florida a few short years later.

What is wrong with our system? We made a Federal case out of Martha Stewart recently, and we have ankle bracelets on Martha Stewart's legs as she goes around her \$20 million mansion in upstate New York. Hardly, hardly a threat to anyone in society. But David Ostott, a convicted rapist, and John Cooey, a convicted sex offender, are free to roam the communities in which our families live and who are subjected to the violence and demonic and desperate behavior of these perverted and sick individuals.

The tragedies that have happened in Florida recently are inexcusable. The fact that families have to be frightened is a sad commentary on our system. I must tell you, Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely determined to change the fate of the laws of this Nation. As cochairman with my good friend, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. CRAMER), of the Congressional Missing and Exploited Children's Caucus, we are working and have been working for some time on a fundamental rewrite of the laws governing the way we conduct both investigations, hopefully sentencing, as well as registries to try to make these issues and these systems more effective for our constituents and for our communities.

We have to get a handle on and our hands around this significant problem. We cannot allow another life to be wasted in such a vicious and malicious fashion, buried like garbage. We treat our pets better. We have had foster kids abused, we have had problems rife throughout the system, and it has to stop.

I am encouraged that so many in Congress and so many in the State legislatures who have heard these dramatic cases are working aggressively to try to change the laws and to strengthen the laws. We have to do more. We can do more. We can do better. I am embarrassed beyond belief that these type of people could be wandering the streets.

There is a 90 percent likelihood of recidivism for sexual crimes against children. Ninety percent. That is the standard. That is their record. That is