

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING THE DISTINGUISHED
ETHIOPIAN POET LAUREATE
TSEGAYE GABRE-MEDHIN

HON. ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 15, 2006

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and work of Ethiopian Poet Laureate Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin who passed away on February 25, 2006 at the age of 69 in his New York home.

Mr. Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin left behind a legacy of poetry and literary works that continue to inspire generations.

Tsegaye was born in 1936 in the town of Boda during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. As a youth, he showed great promise as a writer. In elementary school he wrote and produced "King Dionysus and the Two Brothers," a play that was attended by Emperor Haile Selassie.

Tsegaye grew to become one of his country's most prominent literary figures and an international voice for African culture and peace. A prolific writer, he created more than 30 plays and numerous poems. Many in Ethiopia have claimed him to be that nation's "Shakespeare". For Tsegaye, poetry and theater were paths to inspiring hearts and condemning violence.

After completing secondary education in Ethiopia, he attended Blackstone School of Law in Chicago where he graduated in 1959. But, theater, not law, was his lifelong calling. In 1959 and 1960, he studied experimental drama at the Royal Court Theater in London and the Comedie-Francaise in Paris.

Tsegaye revolutionized theater with his portrayals of the poor and the forgotten, war, imperialism, human failings, and courage. While his work delighted the public, 18 of his 33 plays were banned by one government or another. He put into words what many could not say. Tsegaye's poem, "The Day's Hunger Consumed," voiced an Ethiopian public's outrage at the news of famine raging in the north.

From 1961–1971, he was artistic director of the Ethiopian National Theater. In 1964, "Oda Oak Oracle," a play written in English about Ethiopian country life and lore was produced around the world thrilling audiences in Africa, Great Britain and the U.S.

In 1971, Tsegaye was awarded a fellowship to the University of Dakar to study African cultural antiquities. That research led to a Fulbright Scholarship which enabled him to tour the U.S. lecturing on Ethiopian art and literature. During the 1970s, he helped found the department of theater at Addis Ababa University. He also worked as an Oxford University Press editor and in 1975 served as Vice Minister of Culture and Sports.

Tsegaye's contributions to art and history are recognized worldwide. In 1966, he was awarded Ethiopia's highest literary honor—the Haile Selassie Prize for Amharic Literature. Other awards include the Gold Mercury Ad

Personam Award in 1982; Fulbright Senior Scholar Resident Fellowship Award at Columbia University in 1985; Human Rights Watch Free Expression Award in New York in 1994. In 1997, the Congress of World Poets and the United Poets Laureate International conveyed on him the title of Poet Laureate. The Norwegian Author's Union, along with the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Cultural Affairs, conferred its Annual Freedom of Expression Prize on Tsegaye in 2005.

Poet Laureate Tsegaye held membership in many distinguished organizations, including the African Writer's Union and the African Researcher's Union. While Tsegaye received many honors, one of his most prized was when the African Union selected one of his poems for its anthem. In the poem, Tsegaye wrote, "Let us make Africa the tree of life."

Ailing health forced Tsegaye to leave his beloved Ethiopia in 1998 to move to New York for medical treatment that was not available in Ethiopia. Undeterred by illness, weakened eyesight, and an exhausting regimen of medical procedures, he continued to educate and inspire through his art, his unwavering social consciousness, and his sense of purpose and humanity.

Through his literature, Tsegaye's pride in Ethiopia and love for Africa will live with us forever.

I close with one of Tsegaye's more famous quotations, "I crave for knowledge. I envy tolerant, peaceful folks. I am frightened by ignorance. I loathe violence."—Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin

HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF
ALAN F. CLAYTON

HON. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 15, 2006

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to Alan Clayton, who recently retired after more than 24 years of distinguished public service. His leadership in numerous advocacy efforts has helped to improve the life of Latinos in the United States, especially for my constituents in the 38th Congressional District and throughout California.

Alan Clayton has been working in public policy and civil rights since 1985. Over the next two decades, he held a wide and lengthy variety of positions fighting for equal opportunity, advocating fair representation, and defending key programs. He has most recently worked as the Director of Equal Employment Opportunity for the Los Angeles County Chicano Employees Association since 1994. His work has been recognized by civil rights organizations, Latino employee groups, and many local agencies.

In 1985, while he was a State civil rights representative for the California League of United Latin American Citizens, Alan filed a

petition with the Governor and legislature over the lack of representation for Latinos in California State Government. His work led to a joint legislative task force on the issue, and further efforts resulted in a redistricting for Los Angeles that better reflected representation for the Latino community.

On behalf of the Los Angeles County Chicano Employees Association, Alan filed a complaint against the California Department of Health Services in 1987 for their systematic discrimination against Latinos in their hiring and promotions. The complaint was settled in 1992, resulting in the successful allocation of funds towards equal opportunity recruitment.

Alan has also been a leader in advocating for Latino empowerment in the redistricting of the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Unified School District. These redistricting efforts in 1991 led to the election of a second Latino to the Los Angeles Unified School District Board and a third Latino to the Los Angeles City Council.

His work on civil rights continued in 1997, when he began a five year effort fighting for a state senate bill that would allow extended outreach to minority groups and women in recruitment programs conducted by public sector agencies.

Through his role as Director of Equal Employment Opportunity at the Los Angeles County Chicano Employees Association, Alan co-drafted and was the principle advocate for the Schiff-Cardenas Juvenile Justice Act of 2000. It has since provided over 550 million dollars of new money for juvenile programs administered both by probation departments, governmental agencies, and community based organizations. Since 2001, Alan has played a leading role in increasing representational fairness in Los Angeles County, both through ballot efforts to expand the Board of Supervisors, and through work that has increased the Latino community's ability to elect candidates of their choice for both the school district and city council.

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to personally acknowledge and congratulate Alan Clayton for his many years of dedicated work. I ask my colleagues to join me and the many organizations in applauding his important efforts on behalf of California's Latino community. I wish him and his wife Diane continued success, health and happiness in the future.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DAVID G. REICHERT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 15, 2006

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, on May 11, 2006, I missed rollcall vote No. 141, an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for FY07 offered by Congressman GOODE (VA). I was unavoidably detained. If I had been present, I would have voted "aye."

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