

United States Forest Service firefighters. The fire that cost those men their lives was a result of a despicable act of arson.

Subsequent conversations with firefighters and chiefs in my district led to the creation of this bill. They told me how a central database would provide them with invaluable information in tracking arsonists and, more especially, serial arsonists. Clearly, more help is needed in the tracking of this dangerous crime. Although arson fires account for the majority of the fires in the United States, the arrest and conviction rate is less than 20 percent.

I can share statistic after statistic about the damage caused by arson, the millions of dollars lost and grand totals of people, but what those numbers fail to convey are the stories of individuals; the hundreds of families in Southern California who will have nowhere to celebrate the holidays this year or the veteran who lost his war medals and mementos before he could share them with his grandchildren, the baby pictures, the refrigerator art, the family rocking chair, the things that no insurance policy could possibly replace and that no one else will ever truly understand.

It is our duty as Members of Congress to provide what tools and infrastructure we can to aid in both the prevention of this crime and speedy apprehension of those who choose to commit it.

The MATCH Act combines the efforts of the Federal, State, and local governments to combat the crime of arson by creating a national arson registry. The registry requires criminal arsonists to report where they live, work and go to school. In addition to that information, the database will include finger and palm prints of the arsonist and an up-to-date photograph. This legislation will provide an important tool to law enforcement officers by enabling them to effectively track arsonists regardless of where they live and to share that information across jurisdictions.

I, like all of my colleagues in this House, am anxious to provide what tools and support we can to combat the despicable crime of arson. It is my sincere belief that the MATCH Act will make a meaningful difference in the way we approach and deal with arson offenders.

I would like to especially thank Chairman SCOTT and Ranking Member FORBES of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security. They worked with me and my colleague Adam Schiff to ensure that the legislation was expeditiously moved through the legislative process and that concerns were addressed. I would also like to thank Chairman CONYERS and Ranking Member SMITH, along with their terrific staff and Taryn Nader on my staff for their efforts and hard work in bringing this bill before us today. Finally, I would like to thank my good friend and colleague ADAM SCHIFF for his partnership on this important issue.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure now to yield such time as he may consume to the chairman of the Crime Committee on the Judiciary, my good friend BOBBY SCOTT.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, arson is indeed a very serious problem, costing over \$1 billion in property damage annually and endangering the lives of citizens and especially our firefighters. Arson has also one of the lowest arrest and conviction rates, and law enforcement needs new tools to enhance their capabilities to solve arson crimes.

Unfortunately, the evidence presented in committee was that the State of California already has a registry similar to the one contemplated in the bill and no arsons have been solved by that database.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I would need to point out another concern I have with H.R. 1759 in its current form. That concern relates to the treatment of juveniles under the proposed bill. Juveniles who are charged and convicted as adults for arson offenses would be required to register in the newly created arson offender registry. As research clearly indicates, of all offenders, juveniles are the least culpable due to immature brain development, and they have the greatest capacity for rehabilitation. Branding them as an offender in a State or national register is not only improper, it's counterproductive.

Requiring young offenders to register in a State or national offender database counters the concept of ensuring the proper development of juveniles because it is inconsistent with rehabilitative efforts. Although H.R. 1759 properly ensures that only law enforcement will have access to information on the registries, law enforcement officers will undoubtedly use the information to label and target youth for further arrests. Once law enforcement has certain youngsters on their radar, those youngsters would be targets and more likely to be arrested and prosecuted for even minor nonviolent conduct because law enforcement officials have their names on a list.

In summary, I agree that law enforcement needs effective tools to combat the devastation of arson causes, and I want to thank the gentlewoman from California for her hard work in developing the bill and making many improvements in the bill from its original form. However, I still have concerns about the cost effectiveness of the proposal in the bill as well as concerns, the impact the legislation will have on juvenile offenders.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I would close by holding out my hand of cooperation to my chairman of the Crime Subcommittee because I know he has been working carefully with the leaders of this bill and we have accepted some of his recommendations, and it

will be my pleasure to make sure that we consider the points that he has made here this afternoon.

So with that I am very pleased to urge the support of this measure that's before us. I think it is important and timely and will be very constructive.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1759, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONDEMNATION OF NOOSE INTIMIDATION

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 826) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the hanging of nooses is a horrible act when used for the purpose of intimidation and which under certain circumstances can be a criminal act that should be thoroughly investigated by Federal law enforcement authorities and that any criminal violations should be vigorously prosecuted.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 826

Whereas in the past two months, nooses have been found in a North Carolina high school, a Home Depot in New Jersey, a Louisiana school playground, the campus of the University of Maryland, a Columbia University professor's office door and a factory in Houston, Texas;

Whereas the Southern Poverty Law Center has recorded between 40 and 50 suspected hate crimes involving nooses since September;

Whereas since 2001, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has filed more than 30 lawsuits that involve the displaying of nooses in places of employment;

Whereas nooses are reviled by many Americans as racist symbols of lynchings that were once all too common;

Whereas according to Tuskegee Institute, more than 4,700 people were lynched between 1882 and 1959 in a campaign of terror led by the Ku Klux Klan;

Whereas the number of dead lynching victims in the United States exceeds the amount of people killed in the horrible attack on Pearl Harbor (2,333 dead) and Hurricane Katrina (1,836 dead) combined; and

Whereas African-Americans, as well as Italians, Jews, and Mexicans, have comprised the vast majority of lynching victims and only when we erase the terrible symbols of the past can we finally begin to move forward: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(1) the hanging of nooses is a horrible act when used for the purpose of intimidation and which under certain circumstances can be criminal;

(2) this conduct should be investigated thoroughly by Federal authorities; and

(3) any criminal violations should be vigorously prosecuted.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. FORBES) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker and members of the committee, I am pleased to join my colleagues in support of House Resolution 826, a resolution condemning the hanging of nooses for the purpose of intimidation, violence, and other criminal purposes.

Unfortunately, consideration of this resolution comes at a critical time for our Nation. Many of us had thought the hanging of a noose, a symbol of racial violence, hate, and intimidation down through history was a practice relegated to our past. Since September, however, there have been reports of approximately 50 noose-hanging incidents across this country. It's no coincidence that these disturbing incidents follow in the shadow of the Jena Six case, which documents continuing racial inequity in our Nation even into this century.

As we all know, a hanging noose symbolizes lynching, one of the most shameful, terror-ridden, racial crimes in our history and which, sadly, can be traced back to the very founding time of the United States.

First used to punish African slaves as early as the 17th century, the practice of lynching was commonplace until, I'm sorry to report, as late as 1968. Between 1882 and 1962, nearly 5,000 people, most of them African Americans, were lynched in our country.

There appears to be a resurgence in the hanging of nooses for intimidation or other racist purposes. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, for example, has filed more than 30 lawsuits for hanging nooses in the workplace since the year 2001. The commission observed "a disturbing national trend of increased racial harassment cases involving hangman's nooses in the workplace."

In October, a noose was found hanging, of all places, in the Nassau County New York police headquarters locker room. Last month, hanging ropes were found in the United States Coast Guard Academy in the bag of an African American cadet and in the office of a diversity trainer.

□ 1445

Noose incidents are also occurring with disturbing frequency in schools

throughout our country. At Louisiana's Jena High School, nooses were hung from a tree that white students had regarded as their exclusive domain for socializing after African Americans sat under the tree. This sparked similar incidents in schools across our Nation. In New York City, an African American professor at Columbia University found a noose hanging on her office door. In North Carolina, four nooses were found hanging at various locations at High Point Andrews High School. Universities in Maryland, Delaware and Indiana have reported noose incidents in recent months. In my own State of Michigan, nooses were hung on the Central Michigan University campus weeks after anti-Muslim pamphlets had been distributed.

As this resolution calls upon Federal authorities to investigate noose incidents, I am heartened to note the Justice Department's efforts to address this problem. At an oversight hearing on the Jena 6 incident held earlier by the Judiciary Committee, the Department stated it viewed such noose hangings as possible violations of Federal civil rights law.

I commend my colleague from the State of Texas, our new Member, Al Green, who for his leadership on this issue should be really commended as an important contribution that he has made. And I would like to acknowledge the Judiciary Committee's members on both sides of the aisle who helped advance this resolution with their active support. The Committee on the Constitution chairman, Jerrold Nadler; the Crime Committee chairman, Bobby Scott; also our stellar members from North Carolina, Mel Watt; and from Texas, Sheila Jackson-Lee; from California, Maxine Waters; Wisconsin, Tammy Baldwin; Georgia, Hank Johnson; Tennessee, Steve Cohen; Wisconsin, James Sensenbrenner; and Texas, Louie Gohmert. These and many others have been very helpful in laying the groundwork for us to come together to hearten not just the people in this country but our law enforcement agencies, particularly the Department of Justice, in trying to reduce and indeed eliminate this unfortunate system of hate that is spreading, unfortunately, in our country.

I think we can head it off, and I hope with the passage of House Resolution 826 that will be, in fact, accomplished.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I support House Resolution 826 to condemn the vicious act of hanging a noose with the intent to intimidate and terrorize. Our country's tragic history of brutal, racially motivated lynchings will be forever associated with the vile symbol of the hanging noose.

The noose was used to instill fear in African Americans during our Nation's struggle to protect the civil rights of all Americans. During our country's

period of reconstruction following the Civil War, the infamous Ku Klux Klan and others used lynching to strike fear into the hearts of African Americans. Lynchings were used to dehumanize their victims, who were often horribly tortured and disfigured before they were hung by a mob.

Today, everyone should recognize that the stark image of a dangling noose, intended to intimidate and terrify, should be condemned in the strongest of terms. And those who are ignorant of the terrifying history of the symbol of the dangling noose must be educated, such that they understand its grotesque history and come to never see its use as a harmless prank.

There have been a disturbing number of recent incidents in which nooses have been found under suspicious circumstances. Those incidents are being investigated, and must be investigated. But we should also be aware that some of these incidents may have been motivated by the perverse desire for publicity. On Sunday, the Baltimore Sun reported on a hoax in which a firefighter who reported finding a knotted rope and a threatening note with a drawing of a noose in an East Baltimore station house last month had placed the items there himself.

We also know of an instance in which another symbol of hate, a swastika, was drawn on the door of a Jewish student at George Washington University, but she later confessed to drawing the swastika herself after she was caught doing so on a security camera.

We should recognize today that those who use symbols of hate for any improper reason, including to get attention for one's own cause, are contributing just as much to an atmosphere of intimidation as those who do so motivated by hate for another group.

Finally, I want to note that while I support this resolution, one of its provisions states that any use of the noose symbol as a means of intimidation that constitutes a crime "should be vigorously prosecuted." That provision should be viewed in light of the Department of Justice's policy on the Federal prosecution of juveniles.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote on this, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Could I ask my colleague, the floor manager (Mr. FORBES), I would like to ask unanimous consent for 5 minutes more on each side if that would be agreeable with the gentleman.

Mr. FORBES. I would be happy to agree to that.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask that we have 5 additional minutes added to each side.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. CONYERS. I thank my colleague the floor manager and my friends on the other side.

I am privileged now to recognize the gentleman from Texas, who came to

me with this idea, Mr. AL GREEN, and I will yield him 3½ minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. I thank Chairman CONYERS. I thank Ranking Member LAMAR SMITH. I would like to also thank the co-lead on this piece of legislation, while it is a resolution, I consider it to be a piece of legislation, and that, of course, would be Representative LAURA RICHARDSON. I thank the floor manager, RANDY FORBES, all of the staff, and I especially thank the 60 persons that signed on as cosponsors of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have sponsored H. Res. 826, the condemnation of noose intimidation. Noose intimidation. It has received bipartisan support, and it has received it because America is a country of hope, not hate. In America, we celebrate our diversity. We love knowing that we can live together and that we can have the kind of harmony and peace that America has always promised all of its citizens. Noose intimidation has no place in America. Noose intimidation is the invidious hanging or displaying of a noose for the purpose of intimidation, humiliation, or denigration. When it is done under circumstances that may constitute a crime, it ought to be investigated. And if a crime has been committed, it ought to be vigorously prosecuted.

Recently nooses have been found in North Carolina at a high school, New Jersey at a Home Depot, Louisiana on a school playground, and in Houston, Texas, at a factory. Fifty to 60 incidents involving nooses have been reported since September 7. This is per the Southern Poverty Law Center. Thirty more lawsuits have been filed by EEOC concerning nooses. Four thousand seven hundred persons were lynched. Many of these were Latinos, Jewish Americans, Italian Americans and African Americans. This was done between 1882 and 1959.

America is a country of hope, not hate. For this reason, we believe in the words of the Pledge of Allegiance "liberty and justice for all." That is why this legislation is important. We believe in the words in the Declaration of Independence that all persons are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That is why this resolution is important.

Dr. King reminded us that it is not where you stand in times of comfort and convenience but, rather, where you stand in times of challenge and controversy. I am so proud that my colleagues have stood with us in these times of challenge and controversy to condemn noose intimidation. And I close with these words from Dr. King. He said, "It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me. But it can keep him from lynching me." And I think that's pretty important.

God bless you, and I thank you.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege now to yield 3 minutes to the

gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS).

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you for yielding me time.

There is no doubt in my mind that intimidation by using a noose is a horrible, and must be considered a criminal act. I want to thank Congressman AL GREEN of Texas for offering this resolution because it is critical that the victims who have been targeted, all African Americans, know that the U.S. Congress and all the people of America strongly condemn this outrageous behavior and encourage its vigorous prosecution.

In Jena, Louisiana, we have all seen the case of six black men who were initially charged with attempted murder after a fight that was, in part, prompted by the hanging of nooses by three white students, none of whom were prosecuted.

This blatant form of racism has become more and more common, as the resolution notes, with nooses being found in a North Carolina high school, a Home Depot in New Jersey, a Louisiana school playground, the campus of the University of Maryland, a Columbia University professor's office, a factory in Houston, Texas, and in a police department parking lot in Bridgeport, Connecticut. In my own hometown of Bridgeport, police sergeant Joanne Meekins recently found a noose under her police car.

As the local NAACP Chairman Craig Kelly rightly said in discussing this outrageous incident targeting Sergeant Meekins, "The noose has become the new swastika or the new burning cross in this country and, unfortunately, people seek to relive that horror."

Conduct like this must never be tolerated, which is why I am glad that Congress is passing a bipartisan resolution against these actions and urging swift prosecution and full penalties for those who perpetrate these senseless acts.

Our brothers and sisters throughout the country need to know that all Americans stand with them in condemning the act of hanging nooses as an attempt to intimidate and terrorize and that it must not be just condemned but prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to call my dear friend and newest member to the Congressional Black Caucus, LAURA RICHARDSON, to speak, and I recognize her for 2½ minutes.

Ms. RICHARDSON. Part of what makes this Nation respected is our ability to acknowledge history, both good and bad, and make the conscious effort to not repeat those same mistakes.

Make no mistake about it. The noose is an ugly symbol, and it is a painful reminder of a time period where a piece of rope was used to administer criminal injustice and to intimidate an entire population. Likewise, it is important to note that the lynchings were not

limited to African Americans alone. Historians have noted and documented at least 605 cases of Hispanic Americans who were lynched between 1848 and 1928. According to the Tuskegee Institute, more than 4,700 people were lynched between 1882 and 1959 in a campaign of terror led by the Ku Klux Klan. Also noted is that white individuals were lynched during that same time period, and of that 4,700, it is believed that at least one-fourth were white members.

It is important to understand that the noose can create a memory of pain as noted by my colleague. It is a pain that is often considered similar to viewing a swastika. This is a terrible reminder to us all that intimidation, whether it be done in speech or in action or in symbols, should not be tolerated.

□ 1500

In my own district, just less than 20 miles from my area, we had a recent incident at the Cal State Fullerton campus. This is a State campus where these acts of intimidation surfaced.

Regarding the first amendment, this resolution does nothing to impede an individual's right to think or utilize the right to speak differently than another. H. Res. 826 encourages the Federal Government to investigate vigorously and prosecute any noose hangings when they are done with the purpose to intimidate.

I want to thank my colleague Mr. GREEN from Texas for his leadership on this issue, and also Chairman CONYERS for dealing with this issue in such a timely manner.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. The Chair is pleased to recognize the gentlelady from California, BARBARA LEE, who has graced us with her presence in my district recently, and we yield her 2 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the chairman for his leadership and for his friendship. Also I want to thank our colleague from Texas, Congressman AL GREEN, for introducing this very important resolution and for your spirit with which you have introduced this.

Racism is alive and well in America, regardless of how we try to sweep it under the rug. It is tragic and very sad that we need a resolution like this today, but the rash of noose hangings across America reminds us that it is necessary. Clearly, there can be no better example of these tragic incidents than in the case of the Jena Six.

What does this say about our Nation and the level of racism present when we see an increase in these times of hateful acts? As a child, I remember listening to these horror stories about the Klan and their terrorist acts, and that is what this is. These are terrorist acts against African Americans. And today, I just shiver at the thought of a hanging noose and how intimidating this is for anyone, any community, any family whose race has been targeted and has been terrorized by these acts.

Every act of intimidation in the displaying of nooses must be criminally prosecuted. It is a horrible act. A noose is a racist symbol.

On behalf of the more than 4,700 people who were lynched between 1882 and 1968, let us pass this resolution, H. Res. 826, today, and vigorously prosecute those who continue to harass, intimidate and hang nooses in our country. These acts of hate have no place in America.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you Congressman GREEN for allowing us the privilege to say “no” to racism once again in America.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to recognize the former Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, ELLIJAH CUMMINGS of Maryland, and we would grant him 2 minutes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in strong support of this legislation, and I thank my colleague Mr. GREEN for sponsoring it.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, I was recently outraged about an incident that happened at the Coast Guard Academy that has been referenced here earlier where a noose was left in the bag of an African American cadet, and then a training diversity officer, a noose was left in her bag also.

Following these incidents, I went to the head of the Coast Guard, Admiral Thad Allen, and at my request he and I visited the academy to remind the cadets that despite their numerous accomplishments, they will be judged by their weakest link. I stressed that any attack against our Nation’s defenders weakens and endangers us all.

I also talked to them about the strength of our Nation as a free people and of their decision to put on the uniform of the United States Coast Guard, symbolizing their duty to defend and uphold the right of every person in our Nation to live in freedom, security and respect.

In my own life, I have learned through personal experience more about the devastating impact of racial hatred than anyone should learn. And this is what I know: Racism is an evil that seeks to destroy the possibility that exists in every human being.

Mr. Speaker, in this time of integration and prosperity, some have regrettably forgotten the negative stigma surrounding the noose and why it cannot be displayed in jest. It is important to remind these few that over 4,700 people were lynched in the United States between 1882 and 1959. And while the majority of lynching victims were African Americans, many Italians, Jews and Mexicans have been lynched throughout this Nation’s history as well.

The noose is a symbol of oppression, hatred and intimidation for many racial and ethnic groups, and we cannot tolerate its display. We must respond

to these incidents with determination and clarity, and H. Res. 826 is just one positive step in that direction.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased now to call upon the Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Honorable JOE BACA of California, and I yield him 2 minutes.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 826, and I want to thank the Chair for his leadership on this issue. I want to thank my good friend Congressman AL GREEN for his efforts in raising this bipartisan awareness on this outrageous issue. This is the year 2007, and yet we continue to see the hanging of nooses in America, that is shameful, as a form of intimidation and racial discrimination.

Every child has the right to attend school freely. They should not live in fear. And let me tell you, when this happens, many of our children live in that kind of a fear and that kind of intimidation, and that should not happen to our children, no matter who they are or what color they are.

Every American has the right to a workplace that is free from discrimination and hate. We are all children of God, and the Lord has taught us to love thy neighbor and treat each other with dignity and respect, not with hate or discrimination acts like this, but with kindness and love.

Nooses remind us of the dark chapters of the past; yet they continue to be used to create fear today, to create fear today. There have been over 40 suspected hate crimes involving nooses in the last 4 months.

As Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, I strongly support this resolution, because this type of hate affects all of our communities, not just the African American community, but all of us. We should live without fear or intimidation in this country and allow everyone to have that kind of freedom.

Over the years, more people have died from lynching than there have been victims at Pearl Harbor, and many of them were African Americans, Italians, Jewish and Mexican Americans.

We stand together in solidarity to say the hanging of nooses will not be tolerated by anyone, anymore, for any reason, and I urge my colleagues to do the right thing and support this resolution.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, on this bill that I think is supported by virtually every Member of this house, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased now to recognize the gentleman from Tennessee, a distinguished member of the House Judiciary Committee, Mr. STEVE COHEN, 2 minutes.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the chairman and Mr. GREEN for bringing this legislation.

It is my honor to serve on the House Judiciary Committee, where this mat-

ter had a hearing. It is unfortunate that in 2007 we have to have a hearing on such matters, but as Mr. BACA, Mr. CUMMINGS and others have so well expressed, these are symbols of racial hatred, of intolerance and intimidation and oppressive factors, trying to intimidate people into not exercising their rights. Predominantly, these have been used against African Americans, but also against other ethnic minorities.

Growing up, one of the stories I heard about many times was a man named Leo Frank. Leo Frank was accused and unjustly convicted of a crime in Georgia, taken out of his jail in 1915 in Marietta, Georgia, and hung by an angry mob. Mr. Frank was later found by the courts and the Georgia system of justice to have been illegally, improperly convicted and was given a posthumous pardon, but a little too late.

As with so many incidences with lynchings throughout the South against different minorities that people didn’t understand and they showed their ignorance by employing vigilante tactics to take the law into their own hands, this couldn’t be rectified, because Mr. Frank was dead.

This was an unfortunate part of our history. The Klan was a part of it, but there were people beyond the Klan that engaged in it. And rather than being like the Statue of Liberty and welcoming people to this country, this great land of opportunity where people could pursue happiness and enjoy freedom, the symbol of the noose has told people you are not welcome, you are not to exercise your rights, and you should be weary of trying to speak up and exercise your first amendment rights and be what America is all about.

This legislation needs to pass. When nooses are displayed, they are anti-American. They need to be investigated for criminal enforcement by our Justice Department, and they will, with this resolution’s passage. I thank Mr. GREEN for bringing it. I want to say that, unfortunately, in my jurisdiction in Memphis, there was a situation in Germantown, Tennessee, where three people at the Germantown Performing Arts Center recently in August put a noose out. They were fired. They should have been prosecuted as well. The noose does not belong in America.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased now to recognize the distinguished gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. WILLIAM JEFFERSON, who has worked very hard on matters of racial justice across his career in the Congress, and I yield him 2 minutes.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Speaker, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 826. I commend Representative AL GREEN for taking this timely and necessary step against the heinous act of noose hanging, an act that can only be described

as one of racial discrimination and hate.

Now is the time for the Congress to address the well over 50 incidences of noose hangings that have occurred in the past 2½ months. In my home State of Louisiana, at least three have been reported: One in Jefferson Parish; one in St. Tammany Parish; and, of course, the most infamous of all, one in Jena, Louisiana.

Mr. Speaker, Professor Ogletree of Harvard Law School got it right when in recent testimony before the House Judiciary Committee relating to what happened in Jena, he said in part, "We have failed at basic lessons of history if an American can blithely characterize hanging nooses on a tree as an innocent prank or practical joke, as some officials in Jena have done. This is not an act to be minimized, laughed off or chalked up to childhood shenanigans."

With nearly 5,000 people lynched from the late 1800s to the early 1900s, a noose today is a powerful symbol of pure barbarism. Given the context, the noose to an African American who knows his history is nothing less than an expression of hatred. It is, too, a warning of impending violence and likely death.

Indeed, this is the correct reading of history and the correct context in which to view the importance of this resolution.

The composition "Strange Fruit," Mr. Speaker, written by Lewis Allan and originally sung by Billie Holiday, lays bare the savagery of lynching and therefore what noose hanging means in real terms to African Americans. It reads:

"Southern trees bear strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and at the root,
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,

Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant South,
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,

Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh,
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh.

Here is the fruit for the crows to pluck,

For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop,

Here is a strange and bitter crop."

Professor Ogletree concluded his testimony by saying, "If all that emerges from these unfortunate events in Jena are educators more systematically informing community members and students about the shameful history of lynching, this will be a positive step." I agree, Mr. Chairman, but more is needed.

□ 1515

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise my colleague, the floor manager, that I have only one final speaker. We will be concluded. So if you would like to yield back, we would finish up.

Mr. FORBES. With that advice, I would just like to again encourage all of our Members, and I believe everybody stands in support of this resolution, and I hope they will all vote in favor of it.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Virginia, and I yield finally to the Honorable STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES of Ohio, a distinguished lawyer, prosecutor, judge, and now a chairman in the House of Representatives, to close for us.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the privilege.

They say some things bear repeating. These words bear repeating.

Southern trees bear strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,

Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant South,

The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,

Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh,

Then the sudden smell of burning flesh.

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck,

For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,

For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop,

Here is a strange and bitter crop.

Is the words of a songstress, but the words of the South, the words of African Americans from across this country and other ethnic groups. Seeing somehow in America we have begun to believe that this conduct is acceptable, that we can hang nooses, we can do crosses, we can do all kinds of things against people without believing that it has some impact or that it can hurt. It hurts like a knife. It cuts like a knife. My mama from Alabama, my daddy from Alabama, my in-laws from Georgia, Alabama; the stories go on and on about how terrible nooses can and have been.

America, this is the Congress saying our sense is that this is terrible conduct and that it should be criminalized. But, America, wake up. What if it were you that got the noose. What if it was your grandfather or grandmother that was hung. What if they were required to hang on a tree and let the blood suck and sip from them and crows gnaw at them. It would be a terrible situation for you. As one American to another, you should cry for us, too.

Let's pass this legislation, ladies and gentlemen. Let's tell our country, let us tell the world that we will never, ever allow such a thing or such conduct to happen again. No more nooses.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3845, introduced by my distinguished colleague from my home state of Texas, Representative AL GREEN. Through this important resolution, the House of Representatives will explicitly go on record against a form a racial hatred that has plagued this country for far too long.

As a senior member of the Judiciary Committee, I have been an outspoken advocate for civil rights and the vigorous prosecution of those who violate our Nation's laws that protect the most vulnerable amongst us. Though we cannot stop acts of racism, ignorance and

intolerance, we must speak with a clear and loud voice and say the time has come for our Nation to no longer turn a blind eye to acts of hatred and intolerance.

This legislation comes at a time when the hanging of nooses is making a resurgence around the country. We all know about the case in Jena, LA, where a noose was hung in a school yard and resulted in the division of a town along racial lines, and where six black teenagers were arrested for beating a fellow white student after a series of racial disturbances. One of those students, Mychal Bell, just yesterday pled guilty to lesser charges after one of the largest civil rights protests in years and the largest march in the South since the 1960s.

This October, the Judiciary Committee held hearings on the matter, to address those responsible for administering the laws governing hate crimes. Unfortunately, as we have seen since the events of Jena, nooses are being hung in the halls of some of our country's most distinguished institutions and businesses. At Columbia University's Teachers College, a noose was left on the doorknob of an African American female professor. In Chicago, a noose was found at a Home Depot construction site. In Queens, New York, a woman was arrested after hanging a noose in her yard and threatening to hang her African American neighbor's child from it. In my own home state of Texas, two students in Pearland hung a noose in their school parking lot.

It is unfortunate that this Congress is taking up this issue only after companies such as Home Depot and Verizon, as well as colleges and universities across the country and numerous other institutions, have already spoken against these acts with a loud and clear voice. The time has come for the United States Congress to speak just as loudly and say we will not tolerate these heinous acts.

The symbol of the noose is powerful and offensive. Thousands of African Americans have been lynched in this country simply for being the "wrong" color. The incident of noose hangings of Black America was not aberrational or occasional. At any moment in time, an African American could lose their life at the hands of an angry white mob, and the symbolism of the noose still hangs over this country like a black cloud. The noose has come to symbolize white supremacy and the subjugation of an entire race of people. It has been used as a weapon against those who dared to challenge their condition. It has been used as a weapon to silence the voice of those who dared to speak out. The ritualistic, brutal, and public murders that took place with a noose were done specifically to terrorize the African American community. The threat of lynching was used to prevent people from voting, marching, protesting, getting an education, and even starting a business. The noose as sign of intimidation dates back to 1896 as a means of voter suppression. Today, we see the noose used to intimidate educational and business institutions, teachers, workers, community leaders and now our children.

With the passage of this resolution, our country and this Chamber will say, in no unclear terms, that we will not be intimidated and we will not allow our children to be intimidated.

I applaud this important resolution for the message it sends to the country and the world, that we do not tolerate hatred and bigotry against anyone.

Let me remind those who regard the hanging of a noose from a tree in Jena, Louisiana or anywhere else in this country as a harmless act: it is not harmless and it is not just a juvenile prank. It is a frightening and symbolic play for power, as was captured so poignantly by Billie Holiday in her unforgettable rendition of Southern Fruit:

Southern trees bear strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

While the use of this racist tool continues, we must not forget that over 4,700 people were lynched between 1882 and 1959 in a campaign of terror led by the Ku Klux Klan. Nor should we forget that more people died at the hands of lynch mobs than died in the attack on Pearl Harbor (2,333) and died during Hurricane Katrina (1,836) combined.

Mr. Speaker, we must act now to stop the use of this racist and evil symbol of America's bitter waters. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 826.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENOCIDE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2007

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 888) to amend section 1091 of title 18, United States Code, to allow the prosecution of genocide in appropriate circumstances.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The text of the Senate bill is as follows:

S. 888

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Genocide Accountability Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. GENOCIDE.

Section 1091 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by striking subsection (d) and inserting the following:

"(d) REQUIRED CIRCUMSTANCE FOR OFFENSES.—The circumstance referred to in subsections (a) and (c) is that—

"(1) the offense is committed in whole or in part within the United States;

"(2) the alleged offender is a national of the United States (as that term is defined in section 101 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101));

"(3) the alleged offender is an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States (as that term is defined in section 101 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101));

"(4) the alleged offender is a stateless person whose habitual residence is in the United States; or

"(5) after the conduct required for the offense occurs, the alleged offender is brought into, or found in, the United States, even if that conduct occurred outside the United States."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. FORBES) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker and members of the committee, the United Nations approved the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948. It was in response to Nazi Germany's policy of systematic murder. The Convention, to which the United States is a signatory, established genocide as an international crime which signatory nations undertake to prevent and punish. It's the duty that we address in the Genocide Accountability Act before us at this moment.

We must remember that genocide affects all humanity, not just the direct victims, and not just the perpetrators, but all those who stand by and by their inaction allow those horrible acts to take place. These are the lessons of the Holocaust, of Cambodia, of Bosnia and, more recently, of Rwanda. In Rwanda, we shrugged our shoulders and waited until 800,000 people were killed before we were willing to call that atrocity by its rightful name, genocide.

Sadly, even after Rwanda, the world has mostly stood by while yet another genocide has unfolded before our eyes. The genocide in Darfur has thus far claimed 200,000 lives, and maybe going up to as many as 400,000 lives. Two and a half million people have been displaced as a result of the conflict in Darfur. Both President Bush and Congress have correctly described the situation in Darfur as genocide.

As history repeats itself in Darfur, it seems that we have to learn to say the right things about these atrocities, but too often we cannot seem to muster the consensus and strength of will in the United States and the international community to make our deeds match our words. Along with an increased United Nations peacekeeping force, and a long-term political agreement among its many factions, we need to explore every avenue available to stop this massacre from continuing and prevent similar ones in the future.

The Genocide Accountability Act is an effort to ensure that our United

States laws provide adequate authority to prosecute acts of genocide. We should not have a situation where perpetrators of genocide are allowed to enter the United States and use this country as a safe haven from prosecution. What an untenable thought.

But under current law, genocide is only a crime if it's committed within the United States or by a United States national outside of the United States. In contrast, the laws of torture, material support for terrorism, terrorism financing, hostage taking, and many other Federal crimes allow for extraterritorial jurisdiction for crimes committed outside the United States by non-United States nationals.

So there's a gap in the law. This has led to real-life consequences. I understand that the Justice Department has identified individuals who have participated in the Rwandan and the Bosnian genocides and who have entered the United States under false pretenses. Under current law, these individuals can be deported but they can't be arrested or prosecuted for committing genocide.

And so we bring to you on the floor today a measure to allow us to do more than send them off to another country, not knowing whether they will ever be prosecuted. This measure will allow us to bring them to justice. Amending our laws to allow for vigorous prosecution of genocide is a first, a small, but very, very important step toward ending the impunity under which those who commit genocide currently operate.

I am so proud of my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee who have worked with us on this: LAMAR SMITH; the floor manager for the Republicans, Mr. FORBES; and many others. We must remember that it cannot be the last step, this measure. If we are going to fulfill our role as the beacon in the world for basic human rights and freedom from persecution, we must continue to develop the humble legislative beginning that we have begun today.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 888, the Genocide Accountability Act of 2007. I want to commend Chairman CONYERS and Representatives BERMAN and PENCE, the sponsors of the House version of this legislation, H.R. 2489, for their dedication and commitment to this issue.

Perpetrators of genocide have committed some of the most heinous crimes ever carried out. Genocide is a crime not only against specific victims targeted for extermination, but it is also a crime against humanity. History is replete with horrible images of human suffering, where victims targeted were based on their human characteristics. In the modern era, we have technological advances used for carrying out heinous acts of genocide.

The idea that individuals, hundreds, thousands, and sometimes hundreds of