

the housing crisis. It's a multifaceted housing crisis. It's a mortgage crisis for home buyers. It's an inventory crisis for the affordable rentals. It is an investment crisis for public housing.

Two top executives at Countrywide Financial are expected to receive a combined golden parachute totaling \$19 million, and while these top executives cash out their stock options, hard-working Americans are left struggling, trying to prevent the loss of their homes and ultimately their financial ruin.

It is truly incredible how the Bush administration, SEC Chairman Cox, Treasury Secretary Paulson, and Federal Reserve Chairman Bernanke have seen fit to extend billions of dollars for a Wall Street bailout but won't provide additional, adequate aid to borrowers fighting every day to save their properties.

Today, we are looking at one of the biggest financial catastrophes since the Great Depression.

Brooklyn, New York, has five of the top 10 neighborhoods with the highest subprime lending rates, including East Flatbush, which is located in my district.

Madam Speaker, after analysis and examination, the sharp increases in foreclosures are connected to predatory lending practices from abusive lending institutions. New York City will likely see more than 10,000 foreclosures this year, which is roughly double the number of foreclosures in 2004.

But while Washington is concerned about the impact of the subprime mortgage crisis on Wall Street, on Main Street many hardworking people are getting left behind. Hardworking families and individuals like those I represent in central Brooklyn have for far too long been targets of predatory lending practices; yet this administration comes to the rescue of the high-profile executives and leaves the very people who they are sworn to serve, defend, and protect to fend for themselves.

We must not forget that there is another dimension to the housing crisis occurring in communities less traveled by many, in the community where many are suffering from the affordable rental housing crisis. These families are being squeezed out of their homes as landlords convert their apartments to high-priced condominiums, earning double-digit rent increases or opting out of Federal subsidy programs such as Mitchell-Lama or project-based section 8 as more affordable rental apartments are being lost while the demand increases.

Let's not forget as well public housing's vital role in this housing crisis. Public housing is home to more than 400,000 New Yorkers. The New York City Housing Authority, which has a running deficit of more than \$200 million every year, has been severely reducing their spending on security, maintenance, sanitation, and repairs, leaving many residents living in uninhabitable conditions.

NYCHA had to lay off employees and close youth centers in an attempt to preserve its core services, and in housing projects located in neighborhoods such as Brownsville, Brooklyn, crime continues to reach into the lives of our families.

Public housing is essential to New York City, and this negligence simply cannot continue.

So, in conclusion, Madam Speaker, the Bush administration's actions, or lack thereof, clearly demonstrates that instead of preventing the devastating loss to our communities by providing financial assistance to homeowners, providing full funding to reduce the affordable housing stock from dwindling, and preventing public housing units from deteriorating, our President has taken the path of least resistance by bailing out corporate fat cats and turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to the hard-working families of my district and of our Nation.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to working with my colleagues to turn this devastating condition around and restoring the pride and dignity of responsible, thriving communities.

THE MURDER OF TWO TEENAGE GIRLS

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

Mr. POE. Madam Speaker, the year was 1993, 15 years ago, when two teenage girls, Jennifer Ertman and Elizabeth Pena, 14 years of age and 16 years of age, were walking home one evening. Unfortunately for them, when they took a shortcut, they came across a gang by the name of the Black and Whites. Their gang leader was Jose Ernesto Medellin.

He and his fellow gangsters kidnapped these two teenage girls, brutally assaulted them, taunted them, raped them for over an hour, and then with the shoelaces from the tennis shoes of these two girls, they made a noose and strangled both of these girls.

The brutal killing that took place, Madam Speaker, as you are aware being from Houston, incensed the people of the Houston area, especially the way in which these two girls met their death. But 5 days later, Jose Medellin was arrested, and in his possession, he had on his wrist a Mickey Mouse watch that he had stolen from Jennifer Ertman, his token of the murder of a little girl. He was proud of what he had done. He was so proud of it he even bragged about it and confessed to the Houston Police Department of raping and killing these two girls after he was properly warned.

He was tried for capital murder. The State was seeking the death penalty, and 12 jurors in a court in Houston, Texas, convicted him and gave him the death penalty, which he earned and deserved for what he did to these two teenage girls. He appealed his case all

the way to Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court of the United States upheld his conviction saying it was lawful. But that was not the end of the story.

Because, you see, 15 years later Jose Ernesto Medellin is still alive. And back when this trial occurred 15 years ago, I met the families of these two teenage girls, and they to this day continue to suffer and wonder if justice will ever be served. And the reason that he has not met his just reward is because he appealed his case again to the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court right down the street last week upheld the conviction for a second time.

His second appeal was somewhat unique because, you see, it turns out Jose Ernesto Medellin, who was fluent in English, apparently is illegally from the nation of Mexico, and he was an illegal immigrant when he committed this homicide. Back in the days of 1993, the Houston Police Department didn't even ask people what nationality they were when they arrested them, but be that as it may, the Mexican Government then decided to sue the United States of America in the World Court, claiming that the State of Texas should have told Jose Ernesto Medellin that he had the right to consult with the Mexican consulate before he confessed. Of course, the Houston Police Department never told him he couldn't consult with the Mexican consulate. He was warned properly under Federal law and under State law.

But the Mexican Government was not satisfied with that after the conviction was upheld, and 10 years later, they filed this lawsuit in the World Court. And the World Court ruled that the State of Texas had to retry Jose Ernesto Medellin for capital murder because he was not told he should have been allowed to talk to his Mexican consulate.

Of course, this gets more complicated because, you see, the President of the United States intervened on behalf of the nation of Mexico. After this decision was made in the World Court, the President of the United States told the courts in Texas to follow the World Court order, retry Jose Ernesto Medellin for capital murder, and the Texas courts, in all due respect to the administration, ignored the President's request because, as they said, the judicial branch is independent of the executive branch, and the President has no jurisdiction over telling any court, much less Texas courts, what to do.

It turns out that Jose Ernesto Medellin is not the only Mexican national on death row in the United States. There are 54 others who have been tried throughout the country, most of them in Texas, and have been given the death penalty for heinous crimes committed against people in the United States.

So, after that second case came before the Supreme Court, the issue was, after being sued in the World Court by

Mexico, whether or not the State of Texas must abide by a World Court decision telling them to retry a case. And the second issue was, does the President, any President, have the authority, as the executive branch of government, to order a State court to do anything, including retry somebody for a case where they have been found convicted.

Well, the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that the World Court opinion has no bearing in Texas courts and that the President of the United States, the executive branch, has no jurisdiction over Texas courts to tell them what to do. The International Court of Justice, as the World Court is called, lacks jurisdiction in this case to order the courts of Texas to do anything because, you see, part of the problem was Jose Ernesto Medellin never complained for over 10 years that he didn't have the chance to talk to his Mexican consulate, and as most lawyers know in the legal profession, and as a former trial judge, if you don't object at the trial, you've waived that right indefinitely.

So, Madam Speaker, maybe justice will be served in this case if Jose Ernesto Medellin will meet the fate he deserves, and maybe our Federal Government will stop taking the wrong side of this issue of supporting illegal immigrants over people in the United States, like little girls who are murdered.

And that's just the way it is.

IMPORTANCE OF ISSUES DEBATED IN SUSPENSIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. CLARKE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, as we debate various issues here in the United States Congress and in this House, it is sometimes important to remind Members of the history of this Nation and the importance of matters that Members discuss. They are called suspensions, but they're no less important and speak eloquently to the history and the diversity of this Nation.

I would quickly like to acknowledge my support for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 commemorative coin and support my colleague JOHN LEWIS for offering this very important initiative, for a country that does not remember its history is doomed to repeat the past. We've gained much from the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and I support the legislation.

As we speak today about honoring our history, I am also reminded that this is the week of the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. This past Friday, I was able to stand in front of the hotel in which he was assassinated, walk out on to the balcony and be reminded of this peaceful giant. And so it is important for us

to take a moment, of which we will do on this coming Thursday, to remember not so much his death and the violence of his death, but his love for humanity and the ability to bring people together. He truly was a leader of a movement.

Today, I stood with my colleagues, Congressman BACA and others, to support the national holiday for Cesar Chavez because they were brothers, Martin King and Cesar Chavez.

I think it is important as we look at Women's History Month that we recount not only our national figures as I support the debate that reminded us this past month, March 2008 was Women's History Month, how exciting it is to see the historic opportunities that women have had and are increasingly having, knowing that they just gained a vote in 1920.

I was very honored to be able to bring to the attention of my colleagues Ramona Tolliver, a champion and a fighter for empowerment of those in the Fifth Ward area; Nellie Joyce Punch, again from Houston, a fighter for those in the Fifth Ward area and educator and a lover of providing equal opportunity to young people; Dr. Deason, a long-standing principal in Houston of the High School for Health Professions. There is certainly no greater lover of education and helping our children than Dr. Deason. And certainly I think it is important to acknowledge Commissioner Sylvia Garcia in Houston who has turned the corner as the first woman commissioner in Harris County. Then, of course, I salute Shirley Chisholm and Carole Mosley Braun, women who ran for President, and my former predecessor Barbara Jordan.

Women are on the move, and it is certainly important to acknowledge their history in this country, and it should not be ignored that women have struggled to overcome, and that is, of course, the women who get up every morning and ride the buses and teach the schools and work for us in restaurants and in hospitals and are doctors and lawyers and others. Women deserve the honoring of this month.

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And one who certainly deserves it is a Civil Cross winner, a young 19-year-old from Texas, Monica L. Brown.

Which brings me to the upcoming testimony of General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. Having just come back from Iraq, let me simply say that the legislation that I have offered, which I will discuss over the next couple of days into the testimony of the two individuals that will be coming, first of all, let me thank them for all of their service and offer my concern for the public servants and U.S. personnel in the Green Zone, of which we have stayed, who have been bombed in the last couple of days. It is the very clarity of what I saw that says to me it is time to bring our troops home. We serve no large purpose to engage in, if

you will, the civil war that may be going on in Iraq. We can serve as technical advisers and counselors, and we can bring other nations together to assist in a peaceful transition. We can, as my bill says, bring our soldiers home in honor and begin a diplomatic surge; make the Maliki government engage in nonsectarianism, as the Sunnis told me face to face; eliminate the sectarianism, Shiite and Shiite, Kurds and Sunnis; and begin to talk about a stable Iraq. That is not America's task; it is a task of the Iraqi government, the Iraqi people. And it certainly is a task that we must charge Iran for them to stop sending mortars and ammunition to create the havoc that is going on. But that is not the war. That is not the resolution. That is not the war of America. It is clearly a time to transition.

Those are the hard questions that we will pose to our heroes, Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus. We appreciate that they have been trying to serve America in the best way possible, but it is now time to serve not only America and our sons and daughters but the American people who deserve an investment in their country, a rebuilding of the military, and an acknowledgment and celebration of the heroes of the Iraq War and certainly a recognition of those who still fight in Afghanistan for it is time now to focus our attention there.

With that, Madam Speaker, we look forward to saving America.

THE NATIONAL RAMIFICATIONS OF U.S. AIR FORCE'S DECISION TO AWARD TANKER CONTRACT TO EUROPEAN AEROSPACE CONSORTIUM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. INSLEE. Madam Speaker, Mr. TIAHRT of Kansas and I, and others may join us later, have come tonight to talk about an important issue with large national ramifications, and that is the decision by the United States Air Force to decline a contract for our next extremely important tanker and to give it to a consortium, a very significant portion of which will be manufactured in Europe through a consortium in part with EADS and the Airbus company in Europe.

I represent an area north of Seattle with thousands of Boeing workers; so obviously this is an important issue in my district. Certainly the hometown team is Boeing.

But our discussion tonight will be about why all America ought to be very concerned about this decision for several reasons. And it is an obvious situation where there is very significant employment in my district that any Congress person would be concerned about that, but what we want to