

He had the privilege of speaking to over 20,000 persons in January of 1992, where he spoke to the Baptist General Convention of Texas—Evangelism Division, to an attendance of over 20,000 persons. And in January of 1992, he was guest preacher for the Mississippi Baptist State Evangelism Conference and delivered the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day sermon at the Austin Presbyterian Seminary, his alma mater.

What I would like to say most of all is that, beyond the accolades that he got on the outside, he was an outstanding human being, an outstanding minister, an outstanding civic leader, someone who continued to serve his community even during his time of illness. You never noted a lack of cheerfulness in Reverend Lightfoot. And in the early stages of his illness, I had the opportunity to visit him at home. And again, what a cheerful, believing person who loved America and served America in his capacity, and that was as a faith leader who believed in all persons, reached beyond his doors, helped build a beautiful new sanctuary on that same street, Homestead, did not move, continued to serve the community, and was known as a light to all.

My sympathies to Velma Mitchell Lightfoot, his wife, and his beautiful children and his eight grandchildren, and being a great-grandfather as well. The diversity of his training has led him to be that light, that servant, that special person. I believe it is appropriate to pay tribute to James Lightfoot who remains, even in death, a light to us all because of the great history and the great legacy he has left.

May God bless him, God bless his service, and I know that he would want me to say that God bless his most wonderful and most great Nation, the United States of America.

Pastor Lightfoot, may you rest in peace.

HONORING PAUL RODGERS PIERCE, JR.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I have come to the floor today to honor Mr. Paul Rodgers Pierce, Jr., for his 25 years of service to the State Theatre of Georgia and the Springer Opera House.

Paul was born on January 19, 1953, in Anniston, Alabama, to Mr. and Mrs. Paul R. Pierce. He attended East Rome High School and graduated from the University of Georgia in 1977. After graduation, he developed his passion for theater through working as an actor, director, designer, and booking manager on a number of national touring productions, such as the American Repertory Theater, Flat Rock Playhouse, and Circuit 21 Playhouse. Following his time on tour, he accepted the position of associate artistic director at the American Repertory Theater

under the guidance of Mr. Drexel Riley, who was not only his mentor, but his friend.

Paul's adventures led him across the country when he accepted the position of managing director of Virginia's Wayside Theater, and then as artistic director of the Harbor Playhouse in Corpus Christi, Texas. Thankfully, his travels led him back to Georgia, where he became the artistic director of the Springer Opera House in 1988.

To say Paul was passionate about his job is an understatement. He expanded the artistic mission of the Springer Opera House and took its potential to new heights. Paul created the Spring Theatricals, a national touring company that reaches over 60 American cities annually. He hired Ron Anderson and created the Springer Theatre Academy that mentors and develops over 16,000 children and families through the year-round character education program. With Paul's additions, the audience of Springer has nearly tripled, and the bar for artistic excellence in the community has been held to a higher standard.

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Paul has not only improved the artistic standards in the community, but the physical appearance of the Springer Opera House as well. Paul oversaw the National Historic Landmark Theatre's \$12 million renovation in 1998 and has campaigned for over \$11.5 million for the construction of the McClure Theatre for children's programs and education.

In his 25 years, Paul has helped put the Springer Opera House on the map. In 2008, the Georgia Council for the Arts declared it one of Georgia's top-ranked art institutions. Paul has served on with State Theatre of Georgia as producing artistic director with distinction and dedication and continues to further his mission through the pursuit of selfless innovations to improve the quality of life for the citizens and community of Columbus, Georgia.

I'm proud to stand here today to honor and thank Mr. Paul Rodgers Pierce, Jr., for all he has done for the great State of Georgia, the city of Columbus, and all the children and families he has touched. Paul's devotion and commitment to theater is an inspiration to us all, showing us that with passion and hard work you can make a difference and leave a legacy that will never be forgotten. Thanks, Paul.

START WINNING THE WAR ON MILITARY SUICIDE BY ENDING THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, more than 2,000 U.S. troops have been killed in the line of duty in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, that dramatically under-

states the human cost of this war, a war that is now nearly 11 years old.

A recent Time magazine cover story details the silent killer of our brave servicemembers—the tragically high suicide rate among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and other members of the service. The article describes how one Army helicopter pilot, who had flown 70 missions in Iraq over 9 months—70 missions over 9 months—waited on the phone for 45 minutes to speak to the Pentagon crisis line when he was in severe distress. The last communication his wife received from him was a text in which he said, “Still on hold.” Several hours later, she found him in their bedroom with a fatal gunshot wound to the neck.

A second victim, an Army doctor who wasn't deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, wrote an email to his wife minutes before hanging himself. It read:

Please always tell my children how much I love them, and most importantly, never, ever let them find out how I died.

Mr. Speaker, we can no longer deny the devastating mental health impact of repeated deployments, of continued exposure to explosions, horror, carnage and destruction. Of course, in an institution like the U.S. military that values courage and toughness, there's a reluctance to admit to depression and anxiety.

Sometimes that manifests itself in the worst possible ways. For example, one Army major general wrote an angry diatribe on his blog about the selfishness of troops who killed themselves or were leaving others to “clean up their mess.” He admonished:

Act like an adult, and deal with your real-life problems like the rest of us.

It's about time, Mr. Speaker, that we lost that attitude because we're losing brave Americans at a terrifying clip. In fact, according to the Time article, more soldiers have taken their own lives than have died in Afghanistan. While veterans make up 10 percent of the adult population, they account for 20 percent of the suicides.

We are starting to see more awareness of this problem, thank Heavens. Secretary Panetta says the right things, but it's time to back up rhetoric. It's time to back it up with more resources because the fact is only 4 percent of the Pentagon's medical budget is devoted to mental health, about the same amount that we spend on the Afghan war every day and a half. We spend \$2 billion a year to treat servicemembers suffering from psychological trauma, but we spend \$10 billion a month on the war that is the root of much of that trauma in the first place.

Even if the Afghanistan war ended tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, so much damage is already done. We would still be left with a huge crisis that will require more resolve than we are seemingly prepared to muster. I would expect every Member who has enthusiastically supported this war to just as eagerly support what it takes to fight the suicide epidemic this war has caused. It's

time to stop the bleeding to make sure our heroes are removed from the conflict that is inflicting so much damage. We can start winning the war on suicide by ending the war in Afghanistan.

Let's bring our troops home now.

NATASHA'S STORY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Natasha's life changed because she was the prey of a sexual predator.

Here's the beginning of her dramatic story:

In 1993, I was violently raped, sodomized and robbed at gunpoint by an unknown assailant. When I escaped and thankfully found myself in my apartment, my roommate insisted that I go to the hospital.

I agreed to wait for an ambulance, even though my first instinct was to take a shower. I'm so grateful today that I made that choice to go to that hospital.

Mr. Speaker, Natasha is one of many victims of this barbaric and dastardly crime. According to information released by the Centers for Disease Control, nearly one in five women in America has been raped at some point in their lives. As both a former prosecutor and a judge in Texas, I was involved with the criminal trials of rape cases for 30 years.

I learned firsthand the devastation that sexual assault victims experience, and I understand and learned that sexual assault does not just physically harm the victim; it harms their entire being both physically, emotionally, and mentally; and the pain sometimes lasts forever. Mr. Speaker, rapists try to steal the soul from their victims, and they try to destroy the self-worth of victims, and sometimes they do.

One of the most critical pieces of evidence for rape trials is the rape kit, a tool that gathers forensic evidence, including DNA evidence, to link the rapist to the crime. But, unfortunately, rape kits often languish in evidence rooms across the United States, some untested for years, some discarded before ever being tested, and some gather dust so long that the statute of limitations on the crime of rape has expired and the criminal can never be prosecuted. This ought not to be.

Mr. Speaker, Natasha's story did not end in that cold hospital examination room. She says further:

Ten years later, in 2003, I received a call from the New York City District Attorney's office. My rape kit, which unbeknownst to me had been sitting on a shelf for almost 10 years, had at last been finally processed. I had long since reconciled the fact that my perpetrator would never be held accountable for his actions. But now there was hope.

After a long trial, Victor Rondon was tried before a jury of his peers in 2008 and was found guilty on all eight counts of violent assault against me. He's in jail now for a long time. The best part for me is that he can never hurt anyone else.

My rape kit sat on a shelf for many years. It was not just a number in a police department. My rape kit was me—a human being.

Every rape kit that sits on the shelf somewhere is a human being.

Mr. Speaker, Natasha's story humanizes rape kits ignored in evidence rooms throughout the country. Victims of sexual assault deserve justice, and their perpetrators deserve to be punished by courts and juries in America.

Stories like Natasha's compelled Congresswoman CAROLYN MALONEY from New York and me to introduce the Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Registry Act, the SAFER Act, in the House, and Senators CORNYN and BENNETT to introduce the same bill in the Senate. This bill would allow existing funds to be used to provide grants to States and localities to audit their rape kit backlog and also would call upon the Attorney General to create an Internet-based rape kit registry for sexual assault evidence testing. Estimates of untested rape kits are as high as 400,000 in America according to Human Rights Watch.

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According to the DOJ's National Institute of Justice, 43 percent of the Nation's law enforcement agencies don't even have a computerized system to track forensic evidence, either in their inventory or after it is sent to a crime lab. The SAFER Act would allow criminal evidence to be prosecuted and processed, and these do-bads to be held accountable for their dastardly deeds.

Mr. Speaker, the insensitive say there's no money for these exams, these rape kit tests. Well, Congress needs to find the money. Maybe, instead of sending money to foreign countries to help them, keep some of that money in America to help American rape victims like Natasha. Help them get justice. Because, Mr. Speaker, justice is what we do in America.

And that's just the way it is.

FEDERAL RESERVE TRANSPARENCY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, later today, we will vote on H.R. 459, the Federal Reserve Transparency Act of 2012. Because this legislation comes to us on the suspension calendar, it will require a two-thirds vote in favor of passage.

I rise today in support of a full audit of the Federal Reserve. I have thought for many years that there's too much secrecy and too much power vested in our Federal Reserve. This is an effort that I first joined in June of 1991, in the 102nd Congress, when I cosponsored a bill introduced by Congressman Phil Crane of Illinois to audit the Federal Reserve.

Even back then, before our most recent major financial recession, Congressman Crane's bill had 56 bipartisan cosponsors. That support has grown over the years, and in the 111th Con-

gress, the last Congress, Congressman RON PAUL's "audit the Fed" bill gathered an overwhelming 320 cosponsors from both parties. Now that support, I believe, is at 270 in this Congress.

Thomas Jefferson was one of our Founding Fathers who was concerned about putting too much power into a central bank, and he wrote in a letter in 1816 "that banking establishments are more dangerous than standing armies." That was not me; that was Thomas Jefferson.

Listen to what people are saying about this bill today from both ends of the political spectrum.

Matt Kibbe, president and CEO of Freedom Works, said:

Many economists have found that the central bank's loose monetary policy played a major role in the current economic crisis. It is more crucial than ever that the Federal Reserve's monetary decisions be examined. Without a comprehensive audit, we will never know how the Fed is manipulating our money behind closed doors.

The National Taxpayers Union, one of our most respected organizations, said:

American taxpayers deserve to know more about the workings of a government-sanctioned entity whose decisions directly affect their economic livelihood.

Arnold Kling, an author and scholar at the Cato Institute, said:

If an audit were to uncover serious flaws and decisions made by the Fed, it is difficult to see why we are better off remaining ignorant of such flaws.

Journalist and columnist Rick Sanchez said:

For an entity that wields so much power, we know relatively little about the Fed. Would you trust an unknown banker to decide what happens with your paycheck every week? Why do we accept this for our country?

And Brent Budowsky, a very liberal political opinion writer, wrote in support of an audit and said:

In my years of experience in politics, media, and business, I have learned that secrecy is usually the enemy of common sense, fairness, and sound policy.

Another liberal economist, the famous John Maynard Keynes, said this:

There is no subtler, no surer means of overturning the existing basis of society than to debase the currency.

And a very conservative—one of the most respected conservative economists, F.A. Hayek, said this:

When one studies the history of money, one cannot help wondering why people should have put up for so long with governments exercising an exclusive power over 2,000 years that was regularly used to exploit and defraud them.

I have heard over the years, Mr. Speaker, people say that we need to have a Federal Reserve and a Federal Reserve system in order to prevent depressions and recessions. Well, that is certainly a very, very dumb statement to make because the Federal Reserve was created in 1913, and 16 years later,