

THE GROWING CRISIS OF AFRICA'S ORPHANS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 2014

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, a hearing that I convened recently in my subcommittee addressed a very important humanitarian crisis: the more than fifty million children orphaned on the continent of Africa.

Indeed, to put this in perspective, as one of our witnesses, Shimwaayi Muntemba, pointed out, with such a number, the orphans of Africa, if grouped together in a single country, would be the fourth largest country in all of Africa—after Nigeria, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The factors contributing to this crisis are varied, starting with war and civil unrest, which have displaced millions—wars that have led to the deaths of parents and other adult relatives, leaving children to fend for themselves. Or sometimes children are separated from their parents in a mad flight for sanctuary, never learning if their mothers and fathers are alive or dead. They may never know if they are orphaned in reality, or if both parents turn out to have survived and are alive in a refugee camp somewhere else. Such parents, too, agonize over what ever happened to their children.

Other children are indirect victims of HIV/AIDS, which has wreaked such devastating havoc on the continent, or other diseases. They could have lost one or both parents to this or some other dread disease. Often being forced into the role of the primary caretaker of younger siblings, their childhood innocence is ended by the burdens of adult responsibility.

As with many of the humanitarian crises that confront the continent, there is a big picture aspect to this one, one which we as Congress certainly need to address. There are important strategic implications of so many children and adolescents left without fathers or mothers. We have all heard of the scourge of child soldiers, how orphaned children are recruited and brutalized, themselves turning into remorseless killers. Terrorist groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army, under the rapacious warlord Joseph Kony, actively recruit child soldiers.

And if humanitarian reasons are not enough to compel Congress to rally behind the efforts to address the issue of Africa's orphans by USAID and countless charitable organizations, many of them faith-based, then strategic concerns and the effect this has on stability throughout the region, should be reason to sit up and take notice of this tragedy.

But behind every statistic about orphaned children, behind the pie charts and graphs, there is also a portrait in miniature: a lonely child who is left without a mother or a father, perhaps dealing each night with the pangs of hunger, or just seeking a place where one can lay one's head down in safety until the morning comes. That child awakes to forage and fend for another day. Behind every statistic, there is a young boy or girl who has to deal with the sense of abandonment, or with the trauma of having seen parents killed before his or her eyes. There is a little soul, a young person, whose inherent dignity has been scarred in a world itself wounded, where there is so much pain, suffering and darkness.

These children are in need of love and compassion, of simple needs being met. Those

who do find loving homes and families are truly the lucky ones.

One remedy for this crisis is inter-country adoption, which sometimes brings children from Africa to our shores to provide them with loving homes. This is, of course, only a partial remedy, because for every child who is given a loving home, there are many more for whom there is never will be such a refuge. At best, they may end up in an institutional orphanage, which is a topic fraught with controversy. While the best ones, again often faith based, help address the developmental and educational needs of children, the worst may abet trafficking. In some cases, such institutions do not even shelter orphans *per se*, but rather children who are placed there by parents who think that their children will get better education and nutrition than what they themselves can provide. Clearly, such institutions can never provide the type of love that a father and a mother, along with any siblings, can give.

An issue that was addressed in the hearing was the role of inter-country adoption in helping address, at least in part, the crisis of orphans. Some of the testimony was critical of the role of our State Department's Office of Children's Issues in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. Such testimony needs to be heard, for we can, and we must, do better.

We also heard about an adoption issue that has received a lot of attention on Capitol Hill and was the topic of a resolution authored by my good friend and colleague COLLIN PETERSON of Minnesota, which I am happy to say was passed by the House, after being marked up by my subcommittee and then the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Last year, the Democratic Republic of the Congo suspended the issuance of exit permits for Congolese children adopted by foreign parents—impacting hundreds of U.S. families. The suspension means that Congolese children adopted by American parents cannot leave the country to go to their new homes—even though the parents have been officially declared the legal guardians under Congolese law.

What's more, despite the exit permit suspension, Congolese courts have continued processing new adoptions, leading to a backlog of adopted children who are unable to leave the country.

More than 900 American families are caught up in varying stages of this adoption limbo—breaking hearts.

This is a deplorable situation for these children, and for their distraught families. Indeed, we will hear about this from one such family that has been impacted, as well as an advocate for families that have been impacted.

Finally, I also want to say a word to those parents who have endured not only burdens that are financial, but ones that are primarily emotional, separated from the children that they have voluntarily welcomed into their lives. Your hardship and pain is deeply noted by my colleagues and I, as well as our staff members, many of whom have worked not only on passing Congressman PETERSON's resolution, but also have pushed our State Department and the Government of the DRC to resolve this issue.

Please continue to persevere, and do not give up hope! We remain in your corner.

PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 2014

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Cummings Foundation, the Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project, Child Justice, and the Courageous Kids Network should be commended for their work combatting child abuse and ensuring justice for abuse victims.

Earlier this year they recognized Members of Congress who work on child abuse issues, but I think these groups are the ones who should really be recognized.

Child abuse is a horrific crime.

And it's made even worse when justice is not served.

Only a monster would harm a child.

It is an inexcusable injustice when a child is ordered by our own legal system back into an unsafe situation.

As a former judge and prosecutor and as co-chair of the Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus with my good friend JIM COSTA of California, I know how important groups like these are in advocating for victims and helping them through court proceedings.

Not only do these organizations serve children and their protective parents, who many times are also victims of abuse, but work to fix the family court system, when justice is not served.

They counsel protective parents and help children who have been wrongly placed with an abusive parent.

These groups work with the parent and courts to bring the child back into a safe situation, some providing pro bono legal assistance.

They work to educate the public on these issues and fight for a justice system that works, striving to bring real change to our society by ending domestic violence and child abuse.

Those that work with children and their families through some of the hardest situations are true heroes.

Our country was founded on the principles of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

The Cummings Foundation, the Domestic Violence Legal Empowerment and Appeals Project, Child Justice, and the Courageous Kids Network want to make sure that victims are able to live that American ideal.

Our country cannot tolerate abuse.

Justice demands that we fight back.

Because justice is what we do.

A society will be judged by how it treats the most vulnerable.

I hope that because of the work these groups are doing, our society will be judged well.

And that's just the way it is.

THE FTO REFORM ACT OF 2014

HON. PETER T. KING

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 2014

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, the United States Foreign Terrorist Organization

List is widely recognized as a powerful tool in the fight against terrorist networks around the world. Designating a terrorist group as an "FTO" makes it clear that organizations that engage in terrorist activity should not be welcome in any civilized society, while the wide-ranging effects of designation can hamper a network's financing and operations. Often, when the United States adds an organization to the FTO List, they are leading the global community in taking on extremist groups willing to murder innocent civilians, and therefore, the value of a credible, potent, and reliable designation process is immense.

The Secretary of State's role in managing the FTO List in accordance with Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act is complemented by consultation with the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Treasury. Each of these cabinet level officials plays a role in enforcing an FTO designation, and their assistance in considering potential additions to the list is absolutely vital. However, since the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—which also has responsibility for many of the enforcement tools of FTO Designations—the role of the Secretary of Homeland Security in the FTO process has not been codified in statute.

As an example, DHS is the only Cabinet-level Department whose first three missions are the prevention of terrorism and enhancement of security; securing and managing borders; and enforcing and administering immigration laws. Each of these is a major component of the FTO List, which is designed to mitigate the terrorist threat and prevent members of designated organizations from entering the United States. Further, DHS already plays a significant role in assisting the Department of State in making FTO designations by providing information gathered by component agencies and DHS' Office of Intelligence and Analysis. The Immigration and Nationality Act should codify the reality of the responsibility DHS has to assist in these designations.

Additionally, DHS personnel have a large presence in foreign countries, and DHS employees interact with individuals attempting to enter the United States thousands of times each day. DHS personnel contribute to screening FTO members who attempt to enter the United States.

Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), an office within U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), is the second-largest federal investigative agency in the country. The National Security Investigation Division of HSI "enhances national security through criminal investigations; prevents acts of terrorism by targeting people, money and materials that support terrorist and criminal activities; and identifies and eliminates vulnerabilities in the nation's border, economic, transportation and infrastructure security." This mission is intimately linked to the FTO list.

Many recent FTO designations have been issued for groups that have already attacked U.S. interests, U.S. citizens, or the U.S. Homeland. At the same time, many of these organizations engaged in terrorist activity and have been viewed as terrorist networks long before their inclusion in the FTO list. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, Boko Haram, the Haqqani Network, and al Shabaab are some such examples. Yet the FTO list was intended to proactively respond to the threat of terrorism, and should be

utilized as a weapon in the fight against all terrorist entities, not merely a declaration of the obvious and measure of last resort.

With this in mind, it is important to balance the diplomatic concerns of the State Department with the law enforcement concerns of the Departments of Justice and Treasury, and the security concerns of the Department of Homeland Security. Terrorist groups, and their members, should be identified as terrorists and barred from the United States according to the threat they pose. Adding the Secretary of Homeland Security to the formal designation processes in statute will help achieve that goal.

The FTO Reform Act of 2014 will strengthen the FTO process and ensure all relevant considerations are taken into account when considering potential FTO designations. Lastly, the bill enhances Congressional oversight and creates greater visibility into the impacts of these designations and how they are used.

RECOGNIZING PHILLIP V. SANCHEZ

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 2014

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Phillip V. Sanchez as he celebrates his 85th birthday. His many years of dedication to civil service deserve both acknowledgement and appreciation. Sanchez was a pioneer for the Mexican American community; he was the first Latino to serve in a Presidential administration as the Director of the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity, an impressive feat.

Sanchez was born on July 28, 1929. He is the son of Mexican migrant workers, who settled in the small town of Pinedale in California's San Joaquin River Valley. A student at the nearby Clovis High School, he founded and edited the school newspaper. Graduating salutatorian in 1946, his accomplishments garnered the superlative "Most Likely to Succeed," an obvious indicator of his future successes. Sanchez went on to earn both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in political science at Fresno State, where he chartered the school's chapter of the Sigma Chi Fraternity and wrote for the school's paper, The Daily Collegian. After graduating from Fresno State, he took the position of Fresno County Chief Administrative Officer, his first government position.

It was in 1971 that Sanchez was appointed as director of the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity under the Nixon administration, making him the first Latino to serve in a Presidential administration and thereby cementing himself in history. He served admirably in this position until 1973, when President Nixon appointed him as the U.S. Ambassador to Honduras. Sanchez also served as Ambassador to Colombia under President Ford's administration.

Phillip V. Sanchez serves as a prime example of an exemplary citizen. Although not currently active in politics, he continues to contribute to his community, recently reading to children at the Mexican Consulate in honor of Children's Day. His accomplishments have inspired numerous individuals, and his name

now graces the halls of the Ambassador Phillip V. Sanchez Public Charter School.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great respect that I ask my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives to recognize Phillip V. Sanchez on his 85th birthday. He serves as shining example of outstanding public service, and I thank him for both his dedication to the Mexican American community and to this nation.

RECOGNIZING ORGANIZATIONS LIKE YMCAS THAT PROVIDE CHILDREN WITH SAFE SWIM- MING SKILLS

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 31, 2014

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to remember the three children who die every day as a result of drowning—and to recognize organizations, like YMCAs across the country, that are working to give children and youth the skills to prevent these tragic accidents from happening.

Drowning is the leading cause of death nationally for children aged 1–4, and is the second leading cause of death for children aged 5–9. For children between 5 and 9, the drowning rate for African American and American Indian children is roughly 3 times that of white children, and African American children aged 11 and 12 are 10 times more likely to drown in pools than their white counterparts. Regardless of race, lower income populations disproportionately bear the burden of drowning in their communities.

During 2013, 7 children drowned in the Dallas metropolitan area. In Texas, 82 children were victims of drowning. During 2012, 66% of child drowning victims in Texas were male.

Both in Texas and across the country, there is an opportunity and a need to save these children's lives—to reach out to communities that historically have not had access to swimming and drowning prevention programs. Many low-income children live in housing complexes with unguarded swimming pools, and in hot summer months, these pools may be the only way to cool down, as many of the housing units lack air conditioning.

The YMCA is one example of an organization that is changing statistics for children across the country. The YMCA is bringing swimming safety and drowning prevention programs to these community sites. YMCAs also partner with schools to bring kids to the Y for lessons and offer swimming lessons year-round. I am thrilled that the YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas is one of the 15 YMCAs across the country piloting a program to reduce youth incidences of drowning. The YMCA makes an effort to go into underserved communities to teach drowning prevention and water safety to children who otherwise would not have access to these life-saving skills. Moreover, the YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas is one of 103 Ys providing additional scholarships to children in their community that may not otherwise have access to swim lessons as part of a nationwide data collection project on effectiveness of skill instruction in all communities.

I would like to congratulate the YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas on its innovative efforts to save the lives of all our children, and to join