

music is spreading further across the country each day, their roots remain grounded in eastern Kentucky.

I ask that my Senate colleagues join me in recognizing the success of Sundy Best and wishing them well with the recent release of their new album, *Bring Up the Sun*.

Kentucky Monthly recently published an article chronicling the rise of Sundy Best. I ask unanimous consent that the full article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

[From Kentucky Monthly, Feb. 25, 2014]

#### THE BEST MEN WIN

(By Tricia Despres)

When kids grow up with something to prove, they can become stubborn and a bit hardheaded. But when those kids grow up to be adults who want to make a living as musicians . . . well, they just might become superstars.

So goes the story of Sundy Best.

Blending an eclectic mix of acoustic guitar with the beat of the cajón drum and the compelling vocals of Nick Jamerson and Kris Bentley, Sundy Best looks as if they are about to embark on a career many others are often left to dream about. Just last year, the Kentucky-based duo released a deluxe version of their album *Door Without a Screen* and watched as it landed in the Top 10 on iTunes. The video for their single "Home (I Wanna Go)" reached the top of CMT Pure's fan-voted poll for multiple weeks. A brand-new album in 2014 is sure to help the duo prove to the rest of the world that, sometimes, the underdogs win.

"Growing up, I always seemed to have a chip on my shoulder," says Jamerson. "As a kid who loved playing sports, I was smaller than anyone else, so I always had something to prove in everything that I did. It was the attitude I would ultimately have with everything in my life. I was just always super competitive."

It was an attitude Jamerson seemed to inherit from his close-knit family. "Three of my grandparents had a college degree, which, coming from a small mining town in Kentucky, was not at all common," he recalls. "I mean, my grandmother could build anything. Being around those kinds of people all my life and seeing how driven and successful they were . . . it definitely made an impression on me."

As a 5-foot-10 kid basketball player from Prestonsburg, Bentley also was up against his share of obstacles, none of which he hadn't learned to conquer during his childhood years growing up within the sacred walls of the church, hence the name Sundy Best. "I would play drums every Sunday with my dad and brother," recalls Bentley, describing himself as a good kid who "put Mom through the wringer . . . church really was the only outlet to get out there and do music, especially in eastern Kentucky."

Besides sports and a childhood spent within the church, the two also shared a musical foundation formed within their homes, often spending countless hours listening to a diverse mix of rock, pop, and bluegrass. "Everyone would get together at my grandparents' house and play the old bluegrass standards," recalls Jamerson. "The doctor up the road would come over and play the fiddle, Grandpa played the banjo, Grandma played guitar, and my great-aunt played the mandolin."

First meeting in elementary school, Jamerson and Bentley would go on to form a

firm foundation of friendship through their teenage years, which continues to benefit them to this day. "When you know someone as long as we have, you know each other's dynamics," says Jamerson. "He is like a brother to me. It's gratifying to do this whole music thing alongside someone you have known for so long."

After high school, the pair's goal to play sports often competed with the draw they shared to ultimately pursue a music career. "Music was the one passion that I always had, but looking back, I am glad my parents talked me into getting a college degree," says Jamerson, who was on the Pikeville College football team. "The people I met and the experiences I had in college made me the person I am now. That's where songs come from. You need perspective and life lessons as a writer."

The end of college (Bentley attended and played basketball for Centre) brought the beginning of the duo's quick, yet organic, ascent to musical success. After their joint move to Lexington and a brief stint working at the local cable company, the two began performing at patio parties, restaurants and clubs, often playing four-hour sets each night. A regular gig at Lexington's Redmon's helped the two establish a growing fan base eager to find out more about the band.

"Thank goodness for social media," says Bentley, who cut his musical teeth trying to emulate the songs of artists such as Bob Seger and Tom Petty. "Good ol' Facebook was the only way to connect to our fans and tell them where we were going to be every night. We would always have 20 or 30 people from eastern Kentucky who knew us from when we played sports drive up on a weeknight to see us perform. Seeing that kind of support when we were just out there playing cover songs was a huge boost to our confidence."

Then, Sundy Best recorded the song that would change their career: "Home (I Wanna Go)." "That song took off right around the same time when the winter had set in and the patio gigs had shut down," recalls Bentley. "Once people heard that song, the whole thing just grew. People knew we were serious about doing music."

In 2012, the duo recorded some of their songs that they self-produced with friend and filmmaker Coleman Saunders, and independently released *Door Without a Screen*.

Last year, they were asked to play the jewel of all venues: the Grand Ole Opry. "As a musician and performer, I don't think I will ever be the same," says Jamerson. "I cried when I found out we were playing there. It was like being at church and feeling something on your heart and you don't know what it is. We had been touring all year, so sharing it with our families was an unbelievable feeling. I mean, what else could top that? I was watching Netflix the other night and they were doing a two-day concert special on Neil Young and were showing this concert he did at the Ryman Auditorium, and I mean, he was walking through the same doors we did when we were playing there for the Grand Ole Opry. Every time we get the chance to play there, it ends up being quite the spiritual experience."

The year 2014 brings Sundy Best fans the much-anticipated new album *Bring Up the Sun*, a collection of songs that just might take their longtime fans a bit by surprise. "Our first album was quite Kentucky-centric," says Jamerson, who spends any spare time he has at home in Lexington with his two dogs and cat. "The music just feels good in our bones. It's a really broad album, which everyone we work with has a hard time explaining. But everyone will find something different in it. It's good music, but it's coming from a bit of a different

angle now, so I suppose people are going to be surprised. Some people want every record to sound the same, but once your fans think they know you, you are done. You won't grow as musicians if they think they have you figured out."

"We definitely have a vision of where we want to be," says Bentley, who with Jamerson played more than 190 dates out on the road in 2013. "I would never have expected to be where we are today just one year ago. I think 2014 is going to be another growth year for us. A lot of people still don't know who we are, so we want to definitely continue to play new markets. We are excited to see what happens with this new record and then determine what happens next."

No matter where their musical journey might still yet lead them, one thing is for sure: These two will continue to give credit where credit is due.

"You hear people all the time talking about how they are Texas proud or Georgia proud or even Tennessee proud," says Bentley. "When you are from eastern Kentucky, you are automatically proud. You can be anywhere in the world, and if you meet someone from eastern Kentucky, you are immediately friends. Plus, they are the craziest fans ever. We love Nashville and all, but we would just rather stay right here in Kentucky. The people here have been the biggest driving factor in our career, and we can never be too thankful."

"Before I moved to Lexington, my whole life had been spent living in eastern Kentucky. I had never had a chance to miss living in the country. And as we have begun touring more, I now know it was something I myself took for granted," says Jamerson. "We love Kentucky and will always want to carry that flag . . . but we can't wait to spread the word to everyone else, too."

#### SYRIAN WAR CRIME TRIBUNAL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Senators RUBIO, MURPHY, KAINE, and I recently introduced in the Senate a concurrent resolution on the need for the investigation and prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide committed by any groups involved in civil war in Syria. Congressman CHRIS SMITH has introduced the House version of this concurrent resolution. It calls for President Obama to have our Ambassador to the U.N. use the influence and vote of the United States to promote the establishment of a Syrian war crimes tribunal. The need is stark. Quite simply, the terrible crimes being committed in the civil war in Syria call out for justice. As such, the U.N. should establish a tribunal similar to the ones created in response to the charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in the former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda.

As the Syrian conflict entered its fourth year this month, the horrific violence there continues unabated. The losses from the conflict are staggering. According to some estimates the death toll has reached more than 146,000. There are an estimated 6.5 million internally displaced persons in Syria and millions of Syrian refugees have fled their country.

Last week I had the privilege of meeting with a number of dedicated

Chicago-area members of the Syrian-American Medical Society who recently returned from a medical mission to treat Syrian patients in the north of Lebanon. They shared heartbreaking stories of the Syrian refugees they met and treated and appealed for continued international help for these millions of innocent victims. As a hearing I chaired in January on Syrian refugees illustrated, this humanitarian catastrophe has created grave challenges for neighboring countries that are hosting the vast majority of the refugees. Additionally, the fighting in Syria is inflaming sectarian violence in neighbors such as Iraq and Lebanon.

A staggering 9.3 million Syrians inside the country are estimated to be in need of assistance due to the conflict, and even more barbaric, starvation is being used as a weapon of war, with an estimated 220,000 people trapped in besieged areas in Syria. The Assad regime and, to a far lesser extent, some opposition groups have blocked humanitarian assistance in a deliberate effort to increase pressure on besieged civilians. If the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime wasn't horrific enough, it has also utilized so-called barrel bombs, mixes of explosives and shrapnel stuffed into barrels, that helicopter gunships drop in civilian areas controlled by the opposition such as Aleppo.

The Syrian conflict has devastated even the most innocent members of Syrian society. I was deeply moved by the plight of the children when last year I visited Kilis, a Syrian refugee camp in Turkey. Yet sadly their plight continues. In January the U.N. issued a report which estimated that more than 10,000 children have been killed. UNICEF said in March that the real number is likely to be even higher. The January U.N. report stated that children in Syria experienced suffering which was "unspeakable." Some of the reports of terrible abuses include sexual violence against children held in Syrian Government detention as well as minors being used in combat and as human shields. In addition, UNICEF released a report in March that estimated there are up to 1 million children who live under siege and in hard-to-reach areas that UNICEF and its humanitarian partners cannot access on a regular basis.

As my colleague Senator MCCAIN mentioned in his remarks in February on the Senate floor, respected former war crimes prosecutors issued a report in January based on evidence they obtained regarding torture and murder by the Syrian regime. The report stated that the evidence—largely provided by a Syrian defector and which includes 55,000 photographic images of approximately 11,000 detained persons who had been tortured and killed by the Syrian regime—was credible. Additionally, these war crimes prosecutors noted that such evidence could support findings of war crimes as well as crimes against humanity against the Assad regime.

In 2011, I was joined by Senators BOXER, CARDIN, and MENENDEZ on a letter to then-U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice urging that Assad be referred by the Security Council to the International Criminal Court. Now, 2½ years later, with so many further atrocities in Syria, the need for holding those accountable for war crimes is as strong as ever. We, and other concerned countries, have an interest in seeing justice served. Those who commit war crimes and crimes against humanity must be put on notice that the international community will strive to hold them accountable for their unlawful acts.

Unfortunately, establishing a Syrian war crimes tribunal may face opposition from other members of the U.N. Security Council, most notably Russia. Particularly given the widespread condemnation of Russia illegally violating the territorial integrity of another state, it seems that Russian President Putin does not care about the laws or views of the international community. The hypocrisy of Putin stating that other countries should not intervene in Syria where there is an undisputed humanitarian catastrophe, while he illegally annexes the territory of another state, in part on false humanitarian ground, is staggering.

Nevertheless, if Putin wants to block establishing a Syrian war crimes tribunal, let us have Russia go on the record to say why it opposes justice for those who have suffered so much in Syria. Let them explain how Russia, having suffered its own horrific siege of Leningrad during which 800,000 people—one-third of the city's population—died of starvation during the almost 900-day siege by the Nazis, continues to support the same brutal starvation techniques of its client autocrat in Syria, Bashar al-Assad. With these types of brazen actions and statements, Putin will never earn the global respect and credibility he so desperately demands by invading neighboring countries, while at the same time continuing to support and arm butchers such as Assad.

In February the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution, which Russia finally supported, demanding greater humanitarian access as well as calling on all parties to immediately cease attacks against civilians and lift the siege of populated areas. Yet 1 month after the Security Council ordered all parties in Syria to allow aid workers into besieged areas and stop indiscriminate attacks on civilians, a soon-to-be-released U.N. report says that the Syrian Government has essentially ignored the Security Council. Food supplies have been held up at government checkpoints, medical supplies removed from aid convoys, visas stalled for U.N. officials, and key supply routes cynically kept closed. And Assad's forces persist in using brutal barrel bombs, causing horrific indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians. The international community should not let this obstruc-

tion stand and must enforce the Security Council resolution.

Ultimately, as President Obama has stated, this conflict needs to be resolved politically. Last year, I did support the limited use of military force when Assad broke a long-established global taboo against the use of chemical weapons but also agree that a political solution must ultimately be pursued in Syria. But for a long-term and stable political solution to the war there must also be justice for those who have suffered so much, and a Syrian war crimes tribunal would play a vital role in such a process.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR OBJECTION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I intend to object to any unanimous consent request at the present time relating to the nomination of Carolyn Hessler Radelet to be the Director of the Peace Corps.

I will object because I am inquiring into the circumstances related to the refusal of the Peace Corps to grant the Peace Corps inspector general full and timely access to records to which the inspector general is entitled under the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011 and the Inspector General Act of 1978.

At a hearing before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform convened on January 15, 2014, Peace Corps inspector general Kathy Buller detailed difficulties she has encountered in accessing records which she deemed were directly relevant to her review of Peace Corps' handling of reports from its volunteers who claim that they have been sexually assaulted.

According to Inspector General Buller's testimony, records were withheld based on reasoning that directly contravenes the Kate Puzey Act and the Inspector General Act.

In addition, Inspector General Buller testified that even when limited access to records was later granted, most of the relevant information was withheld under an overbroad interpretation of what constitutes "personally identifying information" under 22 U.S.C. §2507a(f)(1)–(2). Inspector General Buller did clarify that, following objections from Congress, Peace Corps narrowed its interpretation of "personally identifying information" which allowed her to access slightly more information relating to the subject sexual assaults but not everything to which the inspector general is entitled.

In order to exercise the oversight function envisioned by the Kate Puzey Act and the Inspector General Act, it is critical for the Peace Corps inspector general to have full and timely access to all Peace Corps records which she deems relevant to her review.

The Peace Corps apparently withheld records from the inspector general during the nominee's tenure as the Acting Director, and I would like the opportunity to understand the circumstances more fully.