

in the way we thought they would, they pushed the government to starve its people, resulting in vast unemployment and limited opportunity for a generation of Iranians and probably fertile ground for the radicalization of individuals.

They pushed Iran to ally itself with international actors that further hampered our efforts to stabilize this region. They pushed Iran towards total isolation, a situation in which we have no impact whatsoever. At some point, sanctions that have at points been effective become obsolete and counterproductive.

I would not ask any of my colleagues to support a deal that does not achieve our chief purpose, preventing a nuclear-armed Iran, with the ability to wreak havoc on the United States, our allies, and the world.

I will also ask my colleagues to consider the alternative if we fail to ratify a deal that would meet these goals appropriately, pushing Iran further into the shadows; giving us no chance at monitoring how, where, and when Iran is enriching uranium; and sending Iran further into the arms of bad actors or offering Iran even greater motivation to undermine basic international law.

I have one pretty solid idea of the outcome: a dangerous, complicated war that would drag what is likely the most volatile region in the world into complete chaos.

This agreement may be the best chance to put Iran at the table and keep them accountable, to engage the international community in monitoring their activities, to operate in the known and not the unknown of what they are capable of, and to give them a reason to seek the same kind of international peace that every country desperately relies upon.

Further aggression, further sanctions, further isolation can no longer be our answer, especially when we have been given a real opportunity to open the door to peace.

I urge my colleagues to give this agreement real consideration. I urge my colleagues to read this agreement. I urge my colleagues to approach this agreement without partisan or political bias.

It is time to give peace a chance.

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

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, let me start by thanking BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN for leading this important special order and for her leadership on these issues.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, President Obama announced that the United States—along with our P5+1 negotiating partners—had reached a deal with Iran—a deal that if fully implemented, will prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

As someone who has long supported sustained diplomatic engagement with Iran, I applaud President Obama, Secretary Kerry, and our P5+1 partners for their tireless work to obtain a deal which promotes peace and global security.

In the 112th and 113th Congresses, I introduced a bill—the Prevent Iran from Acquiring

Nuclear Weapons and Stop War Through Diplomacy Act—that called on the President to use all diplomatic means to resolve the nuclear issue with Iran. It urged the President to “secure an agreement that ensures Iran does not engage in nuclear weapons work,” through increased safeguards and international Inspections.

Yesterday’s announcement demonstrates just how effective that type of sustained engagement and diplomacy can be.

When fully implemented, this deal—or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—will prevent an Iranian nuclear weapon while ensuring greater stability in the Middle East. The deal is an important victory for diplomacy and America’s leadership abroad as well as for United States national security and of course for global peace and security.

And as the President said yesterday during his announcement—“This deal meets every single one of the bottom lines we established when we achieved a framework earlier this spring. Every pathway to a nuclear weapon is cut off.”

Prior to yesterday’s announcement, negotiations with Iran had already led to a first-step agreement that has significant reduced Iran’s nuclear stockpile and their ability to create a nuclear weapon. Without those negotiations and the framework agreements, Iran’s nuclear program would have been unmonitored, unrestrained and Iran would have continued the production of medium enriched uranium.

Now, we know that more work remains. The deal has to go to the United Nations Security Council—and Congress now has 60 days to review the terms of the agreement.

Mr. Speaker, all of us share the same goal; preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

That is why it is critical—as this process moves forward—that Congress act in good faith and ensure the success of this agreement.

This negotiated deal, between Iran and our international partners, remains the best route to ensuring national and regional security while preventing another war in the Middle East.

We simply cannot afford the alternative to this deal.

Diplomacy is the best way to cut off any potential pathways to an Iranian nuclear weapon.

It is the best way to ensure oversight and inspection.

And it is the best way to ensure regional security.

So I urge my colleagues to support the President, support our negotiators, and to give this deal the chance to succeed.

PORT CHICAGO DISASTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from California (Mr. DESAULNIER) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DESAULNIER. 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 subject of my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, along with my colleagues from the Congressional Black Caucus, to talk today to the American people about the tragedy of Port Chicago, California, and the injustice that marked the lives of 50 African American sailors in 1944 and continues to mark every American today.

On my right is an overview of where the facility is. It is still an existing Naval facility—or a Department of Defense facility—an important deepwater port that allows for munitions to go to strategic assets in the Pacific.

This is the map of the bay area. You can see it is in the Sacramento delta, as the delta comes into the San Francisco Bay. The photograph is an aerial photograph, obviously, of how the facility looked in 1944. You can see where the trains came in and put the boxcars into sidings that had concrete on either side to protect people from explosions, and then you can see where the ships docked.

In this photograph, there is one ship docked. On the night that we will talk about, there were two ships loaded. In continuously operated shifts, those ships were loaded, as witnesses would say, in a manner that sacrificed safety in order for expedience.

The fateful, moonless night on Monday, July 17, 1944, was clear and cool. A slight breeze was blowing from the southwest. Two cargo ships were tied up at the pier, Port Chicago pier. Under floodlights, work was proceeding at full speed, all hours.

Shortly after 10:18 p.m., disaster struck. This is how the day of the explosion is described by Dr. Robert Allen in his book, titled ‘The Port Chicago Mutiny.’

The deadliest homefront disaster of World War II occurred at Port Chicago Naval Magazine, a major ammunitions facility in my district in northern California.

The shipyard site was 2 miles from a little community of Port Chicago, population 1,500. In those days, the greater area was largely wheat fields and had a very small population of under 50,000. The area currently has a population of over 600,000.

Indicative of the discriminatory practices at the time, all of the enlisted men loading ammunition at the site were African American, whereas all of their officers were Caucasian. The explosion killed or wounded 710 people, 435 of whom were African American.

They had no formal training in safe methods of ammunition or explosives handling given to any of the enlisted men. The Navy failed to adequately provide these enlisted men with the tools necessary to be able to operate under safe working conditions, even after the tragedy struck.

When the surviving 258 African American sailors who, understandably, refused to return to work in these deplorable conditions following the explosion, 50 were charged with mutiny and convicted.

During this time, we seek to bring attention to the systemic racial discrimination suffered by these sailors while on duty, in order to bring perspective to the ongoing discrimination against people of color as we enter into the weekend which will note the 71st anniversary of this tragedy.

Prior to the explosion, many officers at Port Chicago had no previous training either or experience in ship-loading, handling ammunition, or commanding enlisted men. Many of them were reservists. They were called to Active Duty from civilian life and given little or no training. They had to, as they said, learn by doing.

Black enlisted men were also untrained. While they were very aware of the inherent danger of their jobs, these African Americans coped by discounting the risks, much by humor.

Weeks before the explosion, the longshoremen's union of San Francisco warned the Navy that there would be disaster at Port Chicago if the Navy continued to use untrained seamen to load ammunition.

The longshoremen's union was doing similar work in either ports on the West Coast and knew how to load these dangerous materials safely and did not sacrifice safety for speed. The union offered to send experienced longshoremen to train Navy recruits in the safe handling of ammunition, but this offer was ignored by the Navy.

Existing policy required the Coast Guard to provide a detail to ensure that safe handling procedures were followed. Navy commanders believed that this was unnecessary and would create confusion and disrupt loading.

When the Coast Guard tried to oversee operations, it rejected the Navy's common practice, including the practice of moving bombs by rolling and dropping them into place in the ship's hold. Alternative methods offered by the Coast Guard were considered "ridiculous" by the Navy and ignored.

In addition, sailors were encouraged to compete against each other to load as much ammunition as possible into the ship, and officers placed nightly bets among themselves as to which division would load more and then pursued their individual enlisted men to make sure that they would win bets as small as \$5.

During the environment of this whole period, 8-day work periods were what were allowed by the Navy. You would have 6 days of loading ammunition, with a sleep break, and with meals and short rest periods; then after the sixth day, you would have what was called a duty day, which you would do duty around the facility. You had 1 day of liberty.

Now, this, at that time, was a very remote facility and was a long way from Oakland, the nearest major city; but many of the enlisted men made that trip anyway and went back to work very exhausted.

□ 1730

Aside from the petty officers, all the officers at Port Chicago were white.

Commanding officers believed Black enlisted men were a major problem rather than an asset.

Captain Nelson Goss, the commanding officer of Mare Island, of which Port Chicago was a subcommand, said the Black recruits "arrived with a chip on their shoulder, if not, indeed, one on each shoulder."

In actuality, these recruits joined the military to defend their country and to fight, if necessary, and put themselves in harm's way overseas. Captain Goss also complained that they were poor workers, capable of only 60 percent of the work compared to White workers.

In turn, Black men resented, obviously, that only they were assigned to essential labor battalions charged with doing dangerous work. They were distressed that they could not receive the rating and promotions that they thought they deserved. For men working under these precarious conditions, the situation amounted to a new form of slavery.

A worker described Port Chicago as a "slave outfit," adding that, "We were considered a cheap labor force from the beginning." They believed their lives were worth less. They were treated as if their lives were worth less, just as their work and abilities were valued less.

A group of men drafted a letter in 1943 setting their grievances and pointing out that the morale among the enlisted men at Port Chicago had dropped to an "alarming depth."

On the evening of 17th, two ships—as I said, the *E.A. Bryan* and the *Quinault Victory*—the *Quinault Victory* was a brand-new ship that was about to embark on its maiden voyage—were both in port being loaded. The *E.A. Bryan* was almost fully loaded as they entered into the graveyard shift.

In the enlisted men's barracks a short distance away, it was quiet. Many men were in their bunks when suddenly an unbelievable explosion occurred shortly after 10:18 p.m.

Survivors in Oakland and San Francisco still remember the explosion from 20 and 35 miles away. People in the nearby rural communities continue to remember this explosion the way survivors of the earthquake in San Francisco did for many years after.

The *E.A. Bryan* was loaded that night with 4,600 tons of ammunition and high explosives. Bombs weighing 650 pounds each and with their activating mechanisms, or fuses, fully installed were being loaded one at a time.

The dock and the ship had disappeared after the explosion. The *E.A. Bryan* was eviscerated. Very few pieces were found of this large ship. The *Quinault Victory* was lifted clear out of the water in an instant by the blast, turned over, and broken into pieces, with very little of it remaining. The 1,200-foot-long wooden pier simply disappeared.

This is the day after the explosion, and this is what was left of the pier.

During the evening, the accounts talk about people in the barracks being

completely in black because all the electricity went out. Not knowing what had happened, not knowing what had happened to their colleagues down at the pier, many of them thought they were under attack by the Japanese.

I have one account from Jack Critten, who was a guard on duty that night. "The barracks had a lot of windows, lower and upper deck, whole side was windows." This is a distance away from this site. "And they were blown to pieces. Some guys lost their sight; others were badly cut. Finally, they got the emergency lights together. Then some guys came by in a truck. And we went down to the dock, but when we got there, we didn't see no dock, no ship, no nothing," just darkness.

Everyone onboard the two ships and the fire barge were killed instantly: 320 men, 202 of whom were African American. Another 390 military personnel and civilians were injured, including 233 Black enlisted men.

This single stunning disaster accounted for more than 15 percent of all Black naval casualties during World War II. Property damage, military and civilian, was estimated at that time at more than \$12 million.

Again, Mr. Critten recounted, "You'd see a shoe with a foot in it, and then you would remember how you'd joked about who was gonna be the first one out of the hold if something went wrong. You'd see a head floating across the water—just the head—or an arm, bodies. Just awful."

Four Port Chicago seamen and one Black enlisted man were awarded medals for their heroic conduct in fighting the ammunition boxcar fire and subsequent fires that broke out that evening after the explosion.

A proposal was presented in Congress to grant families up to \$5,000 in compensation for the loss of their loved ones. However, when Mississippi Representative John Rankin objected to the plan because most of the beneficiaries would be Black, Congress reduced the maximum allowable grant to \$3,000.

Four days after the explosion, a Naval Court of Inquiry convened on Mare Island to inquire into the circumstances of the explosion.

Captain Nelson Goss admitted that a port director had previously warned him that, "Conditions are bad up there. You've got to do something about it. If you aren't careful, something's going to happen, and you'll be held responsible for it."

The judge advocate of the inquiry concluded by addressing the question of the role of Black enlisted personnel in his official inquiry: "The consensus of opinion of the witness—and practically admitted by the interested parties—is that the colored enlisted personnel are neither temperamentally or intellectually capable of handling high explosives."

In short, they blamed the victims because they were African American.

During the weeks after and the days after, the men obviously were in a state of shock, troubled by the vivid memory of the horrible explosion in which so many of their friends had died and so many of them had believed would come to bear and then, unfortunately, saw the tragedy worse than they could imagine.

"Everybody was scared," one survivor recalled. "If someone dropped a box or slammed a door, people began jumping around like crazy."

Many of the Black survivors expected to be granted survivor's leave, as was the custom at the time in the Navy, to visit their families before being reassigned to regular duty.

They waited and waited to get these 30 days off to go visit friends and to start to process what they had seen before they would come back to regular duty, which they were happy to do.

Such leaves were not granted. Even men who had been hospitalized were not granted leaves. All men were to be sent back to work loading ammunition under the same officers before. However, White officers were allowed to go home for 30-day leaves, all of them.

You can see why, under these circumstances and given the tragedy, many of the enlisted African American survivors at Port Chicago were upset in the 3 weeks after the explosion.

They continued to be treated as they were treated before the explosion in spite of their warnings, the warnings of the professionals in the longshoremen union, and the United States Coast Guard.

So some weeks later the men were sent back to Mare Island, a short distance away from where Port Chicago is, across the strait, where munitions were again being loaded for the war effort, an important job.

As the men marched to go back to work 3 weeks after the incident, they still did not know where they were going as they marched.

But they did know that, at a certain juncture in the road, they could be ordered to turn right, which would take them to the parade ground, or they could be ordered to turn left, which would take them to a ferry that crossed the river to the ammunition loading dock, where they would inevitably resume doing the same work they had done before.

There was a young enlisted man from New Jersey who had natural leadership qualities, who we will hear about shortly, enlisted man Small.

He actually directed the cadence as they walked back. And he described what happened next as he delivered the cadence and he marched his division back towards the pier:

"I was marching on the left-hand side of the ranks. When the lieutenant gave the command 'column left,' everybody stopped dead, boom, just like that. He said, 'Forward march, column left.' Nobody moved."

An officer asked Small, "Small, are you going to go back to work?" He an-

swered, "No, sir." The officer asked why. And he said, "I am afraid."

Seen as a leader among the men, others refused to work when he refused to go back. Someone over in the ranks said, "If Small don't go, we're not going either."

Mr. Speaker, 328 followed enlisted member Small and refused to return to work at that moment. 258 were imprisoned as a result. And shortly thereafter 50 were charged with conspiring to make mutiny.

The trial commenced on Treasure Island shortly thereafter. If these 50 were convicted of the charge, the men faced prison terms of 15 years or death.

Mutiny was defined by the defense as "unlawful opposition or resistance to or defiance of superior military authority with a deliberate purpose to usurp, subvert, or override the same."

Mutiny was defined by the prosecution as "collective insubordination. Collective disobedience of lawful orders of a superior. A conspiracy to disobey lawful orders of a superior is mutiny" as opposed to what we described.

One sailor stated that, "We didn't know you could define disobeying orders as being mutiny. We thought mutiny could only happen on a ship."

A refusal to work is a passive act of resistance, without intent to seize power. A mutiny, on the other hand, is an active revolt with the intent of taking charge.

At this point, I yield to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. RICHMOND), the gentleman from the Congressional Black Caucus.

Mr. RICHMOND. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire from the Chair how much time remains?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 35 minutes remaining.

Mr. RICHMOND. First I would like to thank Congressman DESAULNIER for bringing this important issue up and highlighting, one, the contribution made by the sailors; two, the challenges they faced during this ordeal; and, three, the remarkable sense of patriotism that each one of them exhibited and their desire to serve our country.

Not often do we bring up things that happened 71 years ago, especially things that have not gained a lot of media attention. But the sacrifice of every man and woman in this country, whether Black, White, or otherwise, deserves recognition.

So I am honored to be a part of this hour tonight, and I feel really privileged that I get a chance to talk about a few of my constituents' families that really exemplified what is best in America and what is best about the American people.

So the first sailor I will start with is Ernest Joseph Gaines. He was a native of New Orleans. He enlisted in the Navy in 1942, when he was only 20 years old.

Before enlisting, he worked as a helper, doing sheet metal work in a ma-

chine shop. At Port Chicago, he was a winch operator and worked loading the *E.A. Bryan*, one of the ships that was destroyed in the explosion at the base.

At the mutiny trial, Gaines testified that he had "a lot of trouble" controlling the winch he was operating. After the explosion, he said he became afraid of loading ammunition because he knew he could not control the winch.

And just as a side note here, there was a report of trouble with the brake on the number one winch on the *E.A. Bryan* before the explosion, but whether it was fixed is not known to us.

The next person I would like to talk about is Martin Bordenave from New Orleans. And just think about his eagerness to show his patriotism.

□ 1745

Mr. Speaker, he initially volunteered for the Navy in 1942 when he was 16 years old. He wanted to follow in the footsteps of his four older brothers, all of whom had enlisted in the Navy. When they discovered he was underaged, they immediately discharged him, but he immediately re-enlisted in 1944 when he was of proper age. In the meantime, Bordenave worked as a painter helping his father who had a job painting houses. The ultimate thing with Bordenave, although his patriotism is remarkable, he was one of the African American soldiers that was injured in the explosion and hospitalized.

Of the last two, one of which is Miller Matthews, he was born and raised in New Orleans, had 5 years of elementary education before becoming a shoeshine boy, then a busboy, and then a delivery boy, before finally becoming a longshoreman loading and unloading Mississippi riverboats for 6 years. He enlisted in the Navy in 1943 at the age of 27.

Then we have Lloyd McKinney, Mr. Speaker, who was born and raised in Donaldsonville, Louisiana, which is another part of my district, where he completed 1 year of high school and then went on to work as a porter in a hotel and later as a helper in an auto repair shop. He enlisted at the age of 18 in 1942. McKinney, in the explosion, suffered lacerations from flying glass. But imagine this: he declined to be taken to the hospital because he did not want to take up space that other officers would need because they were more seriously injured.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for really bringing up this story, which I am not ashamed to say is a story that was new to me, and I think that every day we learn more and more about our country, about the people who sacrificed to make this country great; and talking about past instances of discrimination and unfair treatment that African Americans went through, especially while serving their country, only makes this country better. It helps us share perspective and gives us the real-life experiences that others went

through, which makes this country stronger, which makes this country better, and it breeds understanding and a love that makes us exceptional.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague again for letting me participate in this Special Order.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Thank you, Mr. RICHMOND.

I yield, Mr. Speaker, to the gentlewoman from New Jersey, Representative WATSON COLEMAN, my friend.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlemen for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join his call for justice for the sailors and their families who suffered in the discriminatory and callous response to the Port Chicago Naval Magazine tragedy.

This is of particular importance to me because I have the honor of representing the district that the alleged leader of that protest, Joseph Randolph Small, had called home. It is also important because of where we are in the arc of history. The events of the past couple months have forced our Nation to do quite a bit of soul-searching on the topic of race and the enduring injustices felt by men and women of color.

From the seemingly inexplicable use of force against unarmed people of color in cases like those of Walter Scott in South Carolina and Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio, to the explicit and disturbing hate crime committed at Mother Emanuel, we know that the bias and discrimination that occurred at Port Chicago is not isolated to the past.

But, Mr. Speaker, if there is any positive outcome to these tragedies, it is in the opportunity to heal long buried but never bandaged wounds. Recognizing one such wound, South Carolina recently voted to remove the Confederate battle flag from the grounds of its statehouse. Exonerating the sailors who were unfairly punished simply for seeking safer working conditions would help heal yet another.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague already described, in 1944, a segregated U.S. Navy used Black enlisted men with no training to do the heavy, dangerous work of loading ammunition onto vessels that would transport them to the front. That lack of training and neglect for the safety of those sailors led to the greatest homefront disaster of World War II and claimed several hundred lives—most of them Black.

Small, who hailed from beautiful Somerset, New Jersey, led the protest because the survivors understood that to return to the same routine would mean risking another explosion. That simple protest of basic rights and consideration led to convictions of mutiny, prison sentences, and dishonorable discharges for the sailors who stood with Small.

Before the explosion, Small had complained to the new commander that he was promoting inherently dangerous behavior by rewarding the sailors who

could load the most ammunition in the shortest period of time. Small was ignored. And after joining his peers in protest, he was kept in solitary confinement during his trial and sentenced to 15 years simply for seeking justice.

Mr. Speaker, exonerating these men would make right a longstanding injustice, and I am proud to stand with my colleagues in this call for action. I thank the gentleman for his work.

Mr. DESAULNIER. I thank the gentlewoman.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT).

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlemen for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Congressman DESAULNIER and Congresswoman LEE for their leadership and drawing attention to this issue and for helping to bring attention to this story of injustice. The story of the Port Chicago 50 isn't in most textbooks or histories of World War II, but perhaps it should be.

While it may not be this Nation's proudest moment, it is a part of our history, and it is a tragic event from which we can learn and we can actually grow, I think, as a nation.

The enlisted men stationed at the Port Chicago Naval Magazine, including the Port Chicago 50, served our Nation proudly, and they served her honorably. For that, they deserve our gratitude.

For those unfamiliar with the story, and I know it has already been talked about, but I would like to talk about it very briefly again.

Following a catastrophic cargo vessel explosion on July 17, 1944, which killed or wounded 710 people, several enlisted men voiced concerns about continuing to handle munitions at the port. Among those voicing concerns were two gentlemen from Cincinnati, Ohio, from the area that I am proud to serve, Mentor Burns and Edward Lee Longmire. Both men enlisted in 1943. They were not lifelong soldiers with extensive training. They were ordinary, patriotic Americans doing their part to help in the war effort. Mr. Burns was a wood-turner in a furniture factory before enlisting. Mr. LONGMIRE worked as a sales clerk selling poultry.

Nothing in their background prepared them for handling munitions, and, unfortunately, the Navy at that time, did not provide adequate training for the men serving at Port Chicago. So it is understandable that the men who survived the explosion were reluctant to continue loading munitions without efforts to make the process safer. For that, they were charged with mutiny.

Reluctance and even refusal to return to unsafe conditions and procedures is not mutiny; it is common sense.

Mr. Speaker, America is the greatest country on the face of the globe, but that doesn't mean we don't at times make mistakes, and that is what happened here. Injustices like the mutiny

convictions for the Port Chicago 50 certainly fall within that category. However, one of the things that makes America great is the freedom of the American people and the people's elected representatives to speak out against injustices, correct past wrongs, and strive for a better future for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, we can't go back in time and prevent the convictions of the Port Chicago 50, but we can correct the record, and we can exonerate those wrongfully convicted and give their families and their loved ones the peace of knowing that they served our Nation honorably and faithfully and that they did nothing wrong.

Mr. Speaker, it is far past time that the Port Chicago 50 received justice. We owe it to Mr. Burns, Mr. Longmire, and the rest of those wrongfully convicted and discharged. We need to set the record straight.

I want to thank my colleagues for making it possible for us this evening to participate in this effort.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his eloquence and to the point of what we asked for today.

I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), my neighbor, my colleague, and my partner in this effort.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, let me just start by thanking my colleague and my neighbor in the East Bay, Congressman DESAULNIER, for organizing this very important and long overdue Special Order.

Since being elected to the House, Congressman DESAULNIER, you have really been doing a phenomenal job working on behalf of your constituents on a whole range of issues as a member of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee. So I know your constituents are thanking you, but I just want to thank you for coming and hitting the ground running on so many issues, including our efforts to eliminate poverty.

Also tonight, it is so important, this special hour, calling for the exoneration of these brave and courageous men. This is an issue, I must say, that I have worked on for many, many years, first as a staffer to my mentor and predecessor, Congressman Ron Dellums, and then alongside your predecessor, Congressman George Miller, who was a true leader on so many issues.

Some, and you may have mentioned this earlier, may know that in 1999 we pulled together a national petition and persuaded President Clinton to pardon one of the few surviving convicted sailors affected by this tragedy. We also worked tirelessly to preserve the Port Chicago National Memorial through legislation, the Port Chicago Naval Magazine Memorial Enhancement Act, which President Obama signed into law in 2009. So I am very pleased to see that we are here tonight once again calling for justice for the African American sailors at Port Chicago.

Mr. Speaker, this story needs to be told over and over and over again, as we are doing tonight. And, once again, thank you for taking that baton, continuing to fight the good fight for justice. Congressman DESAULNIER.

We stand here just days before the 71st anniversary of a national tragedy that is far too often forgotten. Today we remember 320 American sailors—African American soldiers were, I think, 200 of the 320—who lost their lives in the deadliest homefront disaster of World War II. But we also remember how deeply this tragedy was marked by, yes, institutional racism and the solemn duty we have to undue the legacy of that racism today, which Congresswoman BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN talked about very eloquently.

The Port Chicago Naval Magazine, as some may know, is located near Concord, California, right next to my congressional district. On the evening of July 17, 1944, a violent explosion ripped through the magazine, shattering piers, destroying vital ships, and blowing out windows as far away as San Francisco. As I said earlier, all in all, 320 sailors lost their lives; 200 of them were African Americans.

The cause of this tragedy was inadequate training and insufficient safety precautions around handling active munitions. All of the enlisted men who were unloading the active munitions onto a cargo vessel at the time of the explosion were African American. Our Nation's then-segregated military barred African American enlisted servicemen from active naval duty and, therefore, from receiving the proper training to handle artillery.

Nevertheless, White officers at Port Chicago ordered African American sailors to improperly load active munitions into ships resulting in the tragic explosion. These men died serving their country on the homefront and died because their lives and personal safety were not valued by their commanding officers.

But the story does not end there. Three weeks after the tragedy, the more than 300 African Americans sailors who survived the tragedy were once again ordered to continue loading ships in the same perilous fashion. Nearly all of them stood their ground and refused to return to work without proper safety conditions and ammunition training in place. All of those who refused to go back to work in unsafe conditions were arrested, and 208 of them were sentenced to bad conduct discharges and forfeiture of 3 months' pay for disobeying orders.

This is mind-boggling as I recount the history of this tonight. It is so sad.

The 50 of these men who stood up for their rights and spoke truth to power about the value of their lives were charged with mutiny—mutiny, mind you—convicted and sentenced to hard labor, and dishonorably discharged from the Navy. They are now known as the Port Chicago 50.

So we are here tonight, Mr. Speaker, demanding justice for their courage

and recognition for their service. Instead of being cited for mutiny and dishonor, these men should be recognized for standing up to the specter of discrimination and racism in the Armed Forces. As the daughter of a retired lieutenant colonel in the Army, I remember these days very, very vividly as a child.

These naval sailors, these men, showed that their courageous act of defiance really is part of the long history of people of color demanding just basic respect for their rights and their lives, which continues to this day. That is why it is so important for us to stand here tonight and remember their brave actions and how they pushed us towards progress in our Nation and the Armed Forces.

But to date, only one of the Port Chicago 50 has been pardoned—only one. For the remaining 49, their families have been patiently waiting for their names to be cleared of this unjust conviction.

So I urge my colleagues to join us in calling for the exoneration of these 49 sailors. These brave sailors should be remembered for their courage. They were heroes. They are heroes. They stood up in the face of discrimination and the devaluing of Black lives.

□ 1800

We must continue to tell the story, which is far too often left out of our narratives on civil rights; military history; and, yes, California history; and the history of our Nation.

As Dr. King said and, Congressman DESAULNIER, I am reminded of this tonight because you are certainly showing us that Dr. King's quote, the arc of history is long, but it bends towards justice, this is one night that you are helping to bend that arc towards justice.

Thank you again, Congressman DESAULNIER, for your leadership and ensuring that not only we remember those who were lost in this tragedy, but that we move forward and exonerate each and every one of them.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Thank you, Congresswoman LEE. Thank you for all of your support.

I do want to thank and recognize my predecessor, Congressman MILLER and his staff, particularly his former chief of staff, John Lawrence, who put so much effort into this and still has been helpful.

I just want to conclude, Mr. Speaker, with a few brief comments and a quote from Thurgood Marshall and then a brief quote from Mr. Small.

Thurgood Marshall was then chief counsel of the NAACP, and he came West to observe the case. During the trial, Marshall declared:

This is not an individual case. This is not 50 men on trial for mutiny. This is the Navy on trial for its whole vicious policy towards Blacks. Black Americans are not afraid of anything anymore than anyone else is. Blacks in the Navy don't mind loading ammunition. They just want to know why they are the only ones doing the loading. They

wanted to know why they are segregated, why they don't get promoted.

The future Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Mr. Marshall, continued. He said:

I want to know why the Navy disregarded official warnings by the San Francisco waterfront unions—before the Port Chicago disaster—that an explosion was inevitable if they persisted in using untrained seamen in the loading of ammunition.

I want to know why the Navy disregarded an offer by these same unions to send experienced men to train Navy personnel in the safe handling of explosives. I want to know why commissioned officers at Port Chicago were allowed to race their men. I want to know why bets ranging from \$5 up were made between division officers as to whose crew would load more ammunition.

Still, these men were convicted, whereupon Mr. Marshall responded after the trial by saying these men were tried and convicted of mutiny "solely because of their race and color."

He continued:

The accused were made scapegoats in a situation brought about by a combination of circumstances.

He concluded by saying:

Justice can only be done in this case by a complete reversal of the findings.

That is why we are here today.

Mr. Speaker, the events at Port Chicago and their aftermath played a role in the eventual desegregation of the Armed Forces in 1948. That was a good thing.

The rebellion by the Port Chicago 50, like the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the ongoing conversation today on violence against Americans of color, are a part of a continued struggle against social injustice.

Joseph Small described the events, just before his death, in an interview by the author of a book on the incident. Mr. Small said:

So my only way of changing what was an impossible situation was not to work. It wasn't a planned thing; it was brought on by circumstances, working conditions—it was inevitable, just the same way the explosion was inevitable. Something would have happened to set off that explosion because of the way they were handling the ammunition; it had to happen.

What else can I say? It has been more than 40 years ago, but that is more vivid in my memory than the actual court-martial—the conditions under which we were working, because they were so appalling.

That is apropos for many instances that we see today in our society.

Mr. Speaker, as the Nation seeks to heal the deep racial wound that continues to permeate into violent acts of our fellow citizens of color, we must seek to rectify injustices like these in order to continue to forge a better future—as Dr. King said so well: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

America would do well to remember Port Chicago; indeed, America must remember Port Chicago. For Marshall's words are more poignant today than ever before when he said, during the trial: "What's at stake here is more

than the rights of my clients. It's the moral commitment stated in our Nation's creed."

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

EXPORT-IMPORT BANK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. NEWHOUSE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous materials on the topic of my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with friends and colleagues from every corner of our great country to support an American institution that, in its 81 years, has created countless jobs here at home and supported the export of American-made goods around the world.

The Export-Import Bank, while first created under Franklin D. Roosevelt in response to the Great Depression, is an institution that has supported American manufacturers and producers through both good times and bad; it has experienced strong support over the years from both Republicans and Democrats.

President Ronald Reagan, praising the Export-Import Bank, declared:

Exports create and sustain jobs for millions of American workers and contribute to the growth and strength of the United States economy. The Export-Import Bank contributes in a significant way to our Nation's export sales.

Mr. Speaker, the charter for the Export-Import Bank recently expired on June 30 of this year, depriving our Nation of a critical financial tool for growing our economy in an age where we must stay as competitive as possible in the global economy.

Today, my colleagues and I will explain the role of the Bank, clear up any misconceptions surrounding it, and explain that, like any institution, it should be reformed to make it leaner and more competitive; this is still a very worthwhile institution that we should support and reauthorize as soon as possible.

I urge House leadership to allow a vote to reauthorize the Export-Import Bank and let the members of this Chamber weigh the merits of the Bank for themselves.

I would like to extend a special thanks to my colleagues, Congressman COLLINS from New York and Congressman FINCHER from Tennessee, who helped organize today's Special Order.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. FINCHER) for his thoughts on the Export-Import Bank.

Mr. FINCHER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Washington for yielding on this important subject and the rest of my colleagues for coming tonight to hopefully shed light on why the Export-Import Bank is so important.

I have a few stats I just want to read. My comments will be brief. The Bank supports about 200,000 jobs each year at no cost—let me repeat—no cost to the U.S. taxpayer, including 8,315 jobs in my home State of Tennessee. That is around 1.4 million American jobs in the past 5 years.

In fiscal year 2014, Ex-Im Bank supported \$27.5 billion in exports and 164,000 U.S. jobs. The Bank returned \$675 million to the U.S. Treasury in fiscal year 2014, reducing the deficit. In fiscal year 2013, the Bank sent back more than \$1 billion. Small businesses accounted for nearly 90 percent of the Bank's transactions in 2014.

Last year, the Bank had a historically low active default rate of less than one-quarter of 1 percent. Its default rate for the past quarter was .167 percent.

We have a very, very serious obligation to our constituents that we represent back in our districts. I serve the Eighth Congressional District of Tennessee—a wonderful State and a wonderful district—and my constituents send me to Washington to make the government more accountable, to make it better, to make it smaller, to make it more transparent, and to make it work for them back in their districts.

They don't send me to Washington—I don't go home every week to my district, and my constituents come to me and say: Stephen, we wish you would shut down the government this week. We wish you would end, Stephen, the only good government programs that work. We want you to abolish them.

They send us up here to make these things work. The Export-Import Bank is in need of serious reforms, and that is why, a few months ago, we started to work on a reform package, our bill to reauthorize with reforms, with 31 reforms, to fix the Bank and to make it work better and more transparent and more accountable.

For some reason, some of my colleagues in the House have taken a very different approach. They have taken a political approach that this is going to be the hill, so to speak, that they are going to die on and the facts don't matter; all that matters are the political outside groups calling for whatever is in their best interest, not the best interest of our districts and our constituents back home.

Think about this. I go home to my district and my constituents come up to me and say: Congressman, have you been able to get rid of Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae?

I will say to them: Well, we are working on it.

They say: Well, Congressman, have you been able to reform Medicare and

Social Security and make sure it is solvent for future generations?

I say: Well, we are working on it.

They say: Well, Congressman, have you been able to do tax reform?

I say: Well, we are getting there.

They say: But, Congressman, let me make sure I understand that the only thing that Congress did do was get rid of the only thing that worked that helped create my job, and now, I am on the unemployment line because I don't have a job.

Surely, surely, we are better than this and that we can work for our constituents all over this great country.

I look back at history, and I look back a few years ago. In 2006, this was voice voted. My chairman, who is on opposite sides with me on this issue, was here in 2006. Now, if this was such a big deal, why in 2006 was this issue not raised? We are doing more in the way of reforms probably than Ronald Reagan did many, many years ago.

Plain and simple, this is about jobs; this is about making sure that we are working for our districts; this is a serious reform bill that moves this Export-Import Bank in the right direction by making it work.

I urge my colleagues—hopefully, we get a chance to vote on this in the next week to 10 days, but that we pass this, and we do what is right for our constituents.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Thank you, Mr. FINCHER. I thank you for bringing forward the legislation to reauthorize the Bank and for your compelling arguments. Those are great strong statistics on the benefits that Ex-Im has given our country, the manufacturers, and employees all over the United States.

Mr. Speaker, next, I yield to the gentleman from the State of New York (Mr. COLLINS).

Mr. COLLINS of New York. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend from Washington for his work organizing this Special Order and certainly thank the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. FINCHER) for his steadfast work to ensure the reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank, and his impassioned speech that he just delivered pretty much sums it up.

I rise today in support of the Export-Import Bank, which supports hundreds of thousands of jobs and returns a profit to the U.S. Treasury and ensures that U.S. exporters can compete on a level playing field in the global market.

My chart here says it all. The Ex-Im Bank equals jobs.

Not too long ago, I said I was befuddled by why the majority of my own Conference seemed focused on ending the charter for the Export-Import Bank—and I got to give them the credit for this—they did that.

Well, we are here to say that we can reauthorize this Bank, get back to supporting small business, and growing jobs because that is what this is all about.