

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

COMMISSION TO STUDY THE POTENTIAL CREATION OF A NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 26, 2022

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3525, the "Commission to Study the Potential Creation of a National Museum of Asian Pacific American History and Culture Act."

This bill seeks to create the first national museum dedicated to preserving the history, culture, and accomplishments of Asian Pacific Americans (APA).

As the representative for the 18th District of Texas, which has a significant Asian population, this bill is of great personal importance to me.

Asian Americans are significant contributors of our nation's history as champions of social and racial justice. Yet, Asian Americans have also uniquely suffered in the United States, and those stories should also be told.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the first and only major federal legislation to explicitly suspend immigration for a specific nationality. The basic exclusion law prohibited Chinese laborers—defined as "both skilled and unskilled laborers and Chinese employed in mining"—from entering the country.

Subsequent amendments to the law prevented Chinese laborers who had left the United States from returning. The passage of the act represented the outcome of years of racial hostility and anti-immigrant agitation by white Americans, set the precedent for later restrictions against immigration of other nationalities, and started a new era in which the United States changed from a country that welcomed almost all immigrants to a gatekeeping one.

Another glaring example of their suffering are the internment camps of World War II.

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had identified German, Italian, and Japanese aliens who were suspected of being potential enemy agents; and they were kept under surveillance. Following the attack at Pearl Harbor, government suspicion arose not only around aliens who came from enemy nations, but around all persons of Japanese descent, whether foreign born (issei) or American citizens (nisei). During congressional committee hearings, representatives of the Department of Justice raised logistical, constitutional, and ethical objections. Regardless, the task was turned over to the U.S. Army as a security matter.

The entire West Coast was deemed a military area and was divided into military zones. Executive Order 9066 authorized military commanders to exclude civilians from military

areas. Although the language of the order did not specify any ethnic group, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt of the Western Defense Command proceeded to announce curfews that included only Japanese Americans. Next, he encouraged voluntary evacuation by Japanese Americans from a limited number of areas; about seven percent of the total Japanese American population in these areas complied.

On March 29, 1942, under the authority of the executive order, DeWitt issued Public Proclamation No. 4, which began the forced evacuation and detention of Japanese-American West Coast residents on a 48-hour notice. Only a few days prior to the proclamation, on March 21, Congress had passed Public Law 503, which made violation of Executive Order 9066 a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

Because of the perception of "public danger," all Japanese Americans within varied distances from the Pacific coast were targeted. Unless they were able to dispose of or make arrangements for care of their property within a few days, their homes, farms, businesses, and most of their private belongings were lost forever.

From the end of March to August, approximately 112,000 persons were sent to "assembly centers"—often racetracks or fairgrounds—where they waited and were tagged to indicate the location of a long-term "relocation center" that would be their home for the rest of the war. Nearly 70,000 of the evacuees were American citizens. There were no charges of disloyalty against any of these citizens, nor was there any vehicle by which they could appeal their loss of property and personal liberty.

"Relocation centers" were situated many miles inland, often in remote and desolate locales. Sites included Tule Lake, California; Minidoka, Idaho; Manzanar, California; Topaz, Utah; Jerome, Arkansas; Heart Mountain, Wyoming; Poston, Arizona; Granada, Colorado; and Rohwer, Arkansas. (Incarceration rates were significantly lower in the territory of Hawaii, where Japanese Americans made up over one-third of the population and their labor was needed to sustain the economy. However, martial law had been declared in Hawaii immediately following the Pearl Harbor attack, and the Army issued hundreds of military orders, some applicable only to persons of Japanese ancestry.)

In the "relocation centers" (also called "internment camps"), four or five families, with their sparse collections of clothing and possessions, shared tar-papered army-style barracks. Most lived in these conditions for nearly three years or more until the end of the war. Gradually some insulation was added to the barracks and lightweight partitions were added to make them a little more comfortable and somewhat private. Life took on some familiar routines of socializing and school. However, eating in common facilities, using shared restrooms, and having limited opportunities for work interrupted other social and cultural pat-

terns. Persons who resisted were sent to a special camp at Tule Lake, California, where dissidents were housed.

In 1943 and 1944, the government assembled a combat unit of Japanese Americans for the European theater. It became the 442d Regimental Combat Team and gained fame as the most highly decorated of World War II. Their military record bespoke their patriotism.

As the war drew to a close, "internment camps" were slowly evacuated. While some persons of Japanese ancestry returned to their hometowns, others sought new surroundings. For example, the Japanese-American community of Tacoma, Washington, had been sent to three different centers; only 30 percent returned to Tacoma after the war. Japanese Americans from Fresno had gone to Manzanar; 80 percent returned to their hometown.

The internment of Japanese Americans during World War II sparked constitutional and political debate. During this period, three Japanese-American citizens challenged the constitutionality of the forced relocation and curfew orders through legal actions: Gordon Hirabayashi, Fred Korematsu, and Mitsuye Endo. Hirabayashi and Korematsu received negative judgments; but Mitsuye Endo, after a lengthy battle through lesser courts, was determined to be "loyal" and allowed to leave the Topaz, Utah, facility.

Justice Murphy of the Supreme Court expressed the following opinion in *Ex parte Mitsuye Endo*:

I join in the opinion of the Court, but I am of the view that detention in Relocation Centers of persons of Japanese ancestry regardless of loyalty is not only unauthorized by Congress or the Executive but is another example of the unconstitutional resort to racism inherent in the entire evacuation program. As stated more fully in my dissenting opinion in *Fred Toyosaburo Korematsu v. United States*, 323 U.S. 214, 65 S.Ct. 193, racial discrimination of this nature bears no reasonable relation to military necessity and is utterly foreign to the ideals and traditions of the American people.

In 1988, Congress passed, and President Reagan signed, Public Law 100-383—the Civil Liberties Act of 1988—that acknowledged the injustice of "internment," apologized for it, and provided a \$20,000 cash payment to each person who was incarcerated.

One of the most stunning ironies in this episode of denied civil liberties was articulated by an internee who, when told that Japanese Americans were put in those camps for their own protection, countered "If we were put there for our protection, why were the guns at the guard towers pointed inward, instead of outward?"

Asian Americans and Asian immigrants also have suffered systematic exclusion from the political process and it has taken a series of reforms, including repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943, and passage of amendments strengthening the Voting Rights Act

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

three decades later, to fully extend the franchise to Asian Americans. It was with this history in mind that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was designed to make the right to vote a reality for all Americans.

Despite this track record of suffering familiar to all minority groups in America, we must not forget the positive history of Asian Americans.

Congresswoman MENG, the sponsor of this bill, put it best when she recalled how:

"Chinese Americans fought for the Union at the Battles of Antietam and Gettysburg during the American Civil War and Japanese Americans comprised the 442nd Regimental Combat Team during World War II, which became the most decorated unit in the history of the U.S. Military."

"While Chinese and Japanese Americans have demonstrated valor and bravery, they have also faced institutionalized disenfranchisement that manifested in U.S. laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and Executive Order 9066 that ordered the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Yet, from the first wave of Southeast Asian refugees on our shores to the Filipino Americans who helped found the farmworker labor movement—AAPIs have left an indelible mark on our American story."

"From these Halls of Congress to every American classroom, our AAPI heroes such as Grace Lee Boggs—a human rights activist for seven decades; Larry Itliong—the quintessential leader for labor rights and justice; Dalip Singh Saund—the first Asian American elected to Congress; and Patsy Mink—the first woman of color elected to Congress, and the original champion of Title IX protections in the Higher Education Act, have fought for human and civil rights and social justice with their every breath. Shamefully, these stories are starkly missing from the narrative of American history."

Mr. Speaker, these stories must not continue to be unknown to so many Americans. This bill would put an end to that shameful practice, so I am proud to support it and urge my colleagues to as well.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE GABRIEL A. RODRIGUEZ AMERICAN LEGION POST NO. 1928

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Madam Speaker, today it is our honor to recognize the contributions and service of the Gabriel A. Rodriguez American Legion Post No. 1928 as they celebrate their first annual dinner this April.

American Legion Post No. 1928 was chartered in 1986 and for the last 36 years has honored the American Legion's foundational pillars of programs and activities that support Americanism, National Security, Children & Youth, and Veteran Affairs & Rehabilitation.

Just a few months after the Post was founded by Hispanic American veterans in Western New York, the Legion was renamed the Gabriel A. Rodriguez American Legion Post No. 1928, in honor of their fallen Vietnam War veteran, friend and brother affectionately known as Gabe.

As a member of the United States Army's 25th Infantry Division, Gabriel Rodriguez spent over a year in the Qui Nhon region of the Republic of Vietnam. But his service didn't stop there. Upon his return home he joined the New York National Guard where he would serve from 1971 to 1977.

Gabe suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a result of his wartime experiences which led to his passing in 1981. To honor his legacy, the Gabriel A. Rodriguez Post serves as a place of comfort and community for all veterans including those experiencing PTSD today.

The Gabriel A. Rodriguez American Legion Post members' commitment to serving veterans and the community is impactful and unwavering. They helped lead the national push to award the Borinqueneers the Congressional Gold Medal, organized food distribution events during the pandemic, and regularly reach out to help fellow veterans receive the benefits and medals they've earned.

Madam Speaker, for the members of the Gabriel A. Rodriguez American Legion Post No. 1928, a commitment to service didn't end following their honorable discharge from duty. It continues today and our community and country are better thanks to their ongoing care and efforts.

CELEBRATING ODESSA'S 120TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

Mrs. RODGERS of Washington. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 120th anniversary of the founding of Odessa, Washington. To outsiders, Odessa may seem like a small rural town in Eastern Washington, but to those of us who know it well, it is a town full of entrepreneurial spirit, love for America, and passionate people—past and present.

First settled in the 1880s by cattlemen, Odessa is nestled in the Channeled Scablands of Eastern Washington, which is one of the seven wonders of the Evergreen State. Shortly after, the Great Northern Railroad was built, and railroad officials sought to attract immigrants to buy up land, grow wheat, and ship the crop by rail. This transformed the town from a painted sign to a booming economy.

Homesteader George Finney, seeing the potential for greatness, donated his land to establish Odessa in 1899. He was right. In just a few short years, more immigrants arrived, participating in the local economy and growing the town culturally and spiritually.

Today, Odessa is a vibrant community that more than 1,000 residents call home. The town's rich tradition of hard work and grit makes it a shining example of small town America and the hope of a better future. With approximately 80 percent of Odessa residents able to trace their ancestry to the Black Sea and Volga Germans, the town will celebrate their 51st annual Deutschesfest this September with authentic German food, live music, a city-block large biergarten, parades, and a street fair.

As the representative in Congress for this one-of-a-kind town, I am so inspired by Odessa's dedication to keeping its heritage alive

through education. The residents are committed to ensuring their kids become the next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs, just like their ancestors. On this most special day, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Odessa's 120 years of remarkable history and celebrating their personification of the American spirit.

IN CELEBRATION OF HENRY THACKER "HARRY" BURLEIGH

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 27, 2022

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the contributions of Henry Thacker "Harry" Burleigh of the great state of New York. The newly christened Harry T. Burleigh Place in Gramercy Park celebrates a man who dedicated his life to enhancing lives through music singing, composing and social justice. This well-deserving recognition honors the indelible impact Mr. Burleigh, known widely as the Father of Spiritual Music, left on New York and communities around the world.

Born in 1866 and growing up in Erie, Pennsylvania as a young African-American baritone singer, Harry Burleigh traveled to New York City and applied to the National Conservatory of Music to study with well-known Director and composer, Antonin Dvorak. His exceptional talent was recognized, and a scholarship awarded to Mr. Burleigh in 1892 enabled him to gain experience editing recordings and developing his classical spirituals. One of these was "Deep River" a spiritual composition from 1917 which is recognized all over the world to this day.

Tragically, Mr. Burleigh's life was spent under the heinous abuses of Jim Crow, and the systemic discrimination of "separate but equal" endemic to it. Yet in the face of these challenges to his rights and liberties, Mr. Burleigh always led with his talents and tireless work ethic, earning him many glowing accomplishments throughout his life. In 1894, Mr. Burleigh auditioned at St. George's Episcopal Church at 4 Rutherford Place in Manhattan, which still stands proudly today within my district and holds concerts celebrating Burleigh's compositions annually. Church member J.P. Morgan insisted that St. George's hire Mr. Burleigh, and so became the church's Choral Director. He would continue to introduce and play his classical spiritual music there for 52 years. Concurrently he integrated Temple Emanu-El, now Congregation Emanu-El, for a quarter of a century. In 1895, Mr. Burleigh made it a point to personally test the strength of newly passed civil rights laws in New York by asking for service at 25 establishments.

From 1908 onward, he sang for King Edward VII in London, performed on Mayor La Guardia's weekly radio show Talk to the People, and composed over 200 pieces encompassing the classical spiritual music genre. The renowned Dvorak Symphony No. 9 (From the New World) credits the incorporation and soulfulness of Burleigh's spiritual works. Mr. Burleigh was also a distinguished chartered member of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) bestowed with great public honors. He received