

For as long as I could remember, I knew I was a boy.

I'd draw myself with short hair and a shirt like Papa's. I'd dream about swim trunks like my dad and brother wore.

I didn't tell my family until the night before our summer trip to Gigi and Papa's. I was scared they wouldn't believe me. But I knew it was time to be me.

Whenever I have to do something scary, my dad always says: "Take deep breaths and count down from five."

Breathe in. Breathe out. Five, four, three, two, one.

"I'm not a girl," I told my family.

"I'm a boy—a boy in my heart and in my brain."

"We love you if you are a girl, boy, neither, or both. We love you whoever you are," my dad said.

Later, Dad told me the word for how I felt was transgender. Being transgender means other people think you are one gender, but inside, you know you are a different one.

I wondered how Gigi and Papa would react. As we got closer, I squeezed my stuffed lion to my chest. I had already told my family who I was. Now I needed to tell them my name.

"The same name as your favorite stuffed lion?" Dad asked.

"It's why I named him that. It's always been my name to me."

When we got to Gigi and Papa's, Dad told them my new name. He introduced me.

Our summer trip turned out to be the best ever. At the comic convention, Papa bought me my favorite costume. My favorite superhero signed my poster, using my real name.

At Water World, Gigi bought me and my brother matching swim trunks. Even the water slides felt better in them.

In line for popcorn, I made a new friend. I felt proud to tell him my name. We spent the whole day together.

On the last day of vacation, at the big outlet stores near Gigi and Papa's, I picked out new clothes. That night I gave my family a fashion show.

"You look so handsome," Gigi told me.

School was starting soon, and I knew there was only one more thing I needed to feel like me.

When I looked in the mirror, I finally saw me.

Dad said there were other transgender people in the world, but I didn't know any kids like me at my school—and my school started next week.

Being the only one felt scary.

How would everyone treat me?

What if my friends wouldn't call me "he"?

What if, what if, what if?

The first day of school, I dragged my feet to the door. Breathe in. Breathe out. Five, four, three, two, one.

"Welcome back to school! We're glad you are here!"

When the principal said my name, I felt safe and happy.

Violet skipped up to me, calling out my new name, too.

"You know my name?" I asked.

"Yup! Your dad told my mom you are a boy now."

"I have always been a boy inside. Are we still friends?"

"Yes! Did you bring your jump rope for recess?"

When I stepped inside my classroom, I couldn't believe what I saw. The cubby, the lunch chart, the homework station, and the mailboxes, the name tag on the table, my new name was everywhere, everywhere it should be.

I felt my fears start to go away.

"Welcome back, class! For morning meeting, we'll all share about our summers."

I knew just what I would say when it was my turn.

I stood up proudly to share my summer story. But first, I introduced myself. "Hi," I said. "My name is Calvin, C-a-l-v-i-n."

And I felt my what-ifs melt away.

RECOGNIZING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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

Mr. BACON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Black History Month and to honor the 15th anniversary of the Empowerment Network, a collaboration of thousands of residents and leaders and hundreds of organizations working to facilitate positive change in Omaha, Nebraska.

Formed in September 2006 and officially launched on April 27, 2007, the network seeks to collectively improve the economic landscape and quality of life for African Americans, North Omaha residents, and citizens of the greater Omaha area. The network is led by their CEO and founder, Willie D. Barney.

Willie Barney was born on May 15, 1968, in Hollandale, Mississippi, but spent his first years between Arcola and Greenville in the Mississippi Delta along Highway 438. He graduated high school from Mount Pleasant, Iowa, attended St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa, and rose to become an executive in the media industry.

He and his wife, Yolanda, were married on June 27, 1998. Born in Tacoma, Washington, and raised in Kansas City, Yolanda also had a very successful career in the media field, working in major cities, including Kansas City, Dallas, and Atlanta. They both left their corporate jobs to become more directly involved in helping to build strong communities and to become entrepreneurs.

The Empowerment Network Collaborative is one of Omaha's catalysts that has helped produce measurable outcomes and results by working together to reduce gun violence, decrease unemployment, improve graduation rates, increase household incomes, and rebuild the historic 24th and Lake District and other areas of North Omaha, including the Omaha 360, Step-Up Omaha, the Village Strategy, and the Cradle to Career.

In addition to Willie's leadership, he and his wife are founders and owners of SMB Enterprises, LLC, a company that provides positive events, media, and entertainment in the greater Omaha area. SMB is the parent company of Revive Omaha Magazine, Revive Black Business Network, and the Revive Center Omaha. They also co-own the new Carver Legacy Center, a Black-owned financial institution.

Willie also serves as the president of WDB Resultants, LLC, a national consulting firm that specializes in strategic planning and marketing, communications, research, community building, and facilitation.

Willie's passion for improving communities is heavily influenced by his late grandmother, Leeanna B. Collins; his mother and stepfather, Betty and Willie Mullen; and his father and stepmother, Willie and Bertha Murry.

He is incredibly thankful and grateful for his wife, son, and daughter and for the influence of his family from Mississippi, friends in Iowa, and partners in Omaha.

Yolanda honors the memory of her late parents, Morris and Mayumi Coppage, through her work ethic and passion for helping others.

Willie and Yolanda are parents to Nehemiah, an aspiring film director studying at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln; and Priscilla, a student at Central High School in Omaha, who plans to graduate in 2025, with keen interest in international business.

Mr. and Mrs. Barney walk in faith and highlight it as one of their most important priorities and the reason for their many blessings. In fact, they are associate ministers at Launch Church International and continue to live a life of purpose and serve the community. They are committed to seeing individuals reach their full potential.

In recognizing Willie Barney and the Empowerment Network, we shine a spotlight on entrepreneurship, hard work, and the will to transcend and achieve success within our communities through unity and collaboration.

Congratulations to Willie and Yolanda Barney, along with the Empowerment Network, on 15 years of service and being a major force for change in our community for the better.

□ 1115

CELEBRATING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MARGO CARLIN

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

Ms. SCANLON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate an outstanding female athlete and native of Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania, for her service to our community.

Margo Carlin currently plays field hockey at Boston College, where she has won multiple awards and played in the NCAA Final Four. But her accomplishments go far beyond the field hockey turf.

Last year, after a new rule allowed college athletes to raise money from the use of their names and likenesses, Margo saw an opportunity to make a difference in our community. She used her platform as a college athlete to partner with Covenant House and raised nearly \$30,000 to help that charity house and feed young people who are experiencing homelessness in our area. That successful partnership allowed Covenant House to seek out similar partnerships with athletes in other parts of the country.

Margo's approach to community service is an example of how each of us has the power, with a little creativity, to use our unique talents to make a difference. I am so proud to recognize Margo Carlin today, and I look forward to all she will accomplish in the future.

SUPPORT WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Ms. SCANLON. Mr. Speaker, since coming to Congress, my office has focused on forging closer connections between the jobs that we are developing in our region and the people who live here.

I have been proud to support a number of workforce training programs that bridge that gap, particularly for the jobs that are revitalizing the Philadelphia Shipyard, thanks to a contract we helped secure for the building of five national security multi-mission vessels.

Another sector of our local economy that is going to benefit immensely from investments in workforce training and public-private partnerships is biotech and life sciences.

Last week, the U.S. Economic Development Administration announced that the Wistar Institute in Philadelphia is receiving a STEM Talent Challenge Grant, one of only eight such grants awarded in the entire Nation.

The Wistar Institute will use this grant to support workforce training to address the demand for skilled workers from the life sciences industry which has been growing by leaps and bounds in our region.

For over 20 years, the Wistar Institute has been pioneering workforce training for young people attending high schools and community colleges in our region to enter this exciting field. And I am delighted that this new program is training students from Cheyney University, the oldest HBCU in the country, which is also located in my district.

The Quality Science Pathway Apprenticeship offers an earn-and-learn, hands-on training curriculum, taught by experts to uniquely address the critical need for a highly skilled, quality science labor force based in the Philadelphia region.

For the last decade, our regional economy has been driven by dynamic eds, meds, and tech sectors. Life sciences is a key part of that economy, so I am grateful that the EDA chose to invest in this model program at the Wistar Institute to help people from our region win these critical jobs and the opportunity to have careers in an expanding, in-demand industry.

FIGHTING GUN VIOLENCE IN OUR COUNTRY

Ms. SCANLON. Mr. Speaker, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen an unprecedented rise in gun violence across the entire country.

While most conversations about gun violence are quickly overwhelmed by extremist rhetoric, one of the strategies to reduce gun violence that has widespread support is to make sure that law enforcement has the resources needed to investigate and clear cases

that get criminals and guns off of the streets. That is why I am proud to support an important piece of legislation introduced by former police chief and our colleague in Congress, Representative VAL DEMINGS.

The VICTIM Act targets resources to the things we know can help reduce gun violence. Grants would support the hiring, training, and retention of detectives and victim services personnel. These grants will also fund training, equipment, and personnel needed to process and analyze evidence in gun crimes.

In Philadelphia, our Police Department would like to use such funding to support a new unit dedicated to investigating non-fatal shootings.

One of the reasons I came to Congress was to fight for an end to gun violence, to protect our children, our families, and our communities.

In our country today, gun violence is hitting ever closer to home. Several of my employees have lost relatives to gun violence. In November, a constituent was killed in a carjacking near his college campus. A month later, I became the victim of carjacking, though I am extremely lucky that no one was injured in my case.

Then, just last week, I found myself embracing a mother devastated by the death of her daughter after she was struck by gunfire at a playground. This has to stop.

There is no one solution. But as a legislator, I want to pass laws to tackle the underlying issues driving this epidemic of violence, as well as providing the means to end it. That means commonsense gun safety reform, resources for law enforcement, support for mental health services, and investments in education and employment opportunities for all Americans.

The VICTIM Act can be an important part of this effort, and I hope we will soon be able to bring it to the floor for a vote.

HONORING THE LEGACY OF MASTER SERGEANT ROBERT MAYNE

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

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the legacy of Master Sergeant Robert Mayne, who impacted lives of countless Lynchburg students throughout his nearly 40-year career at E.C. Glass High School.

Sarge, as he was known to those close to him, joined the military in 1941 and served as a tail gunner in the Martin B-26 bomber, where he flew 70 combat missions. After more than 27 of years of service, he retired from Active Duty in 1968.

That same year, Sarge joined E.C. Glass to teach and lead the school's newly formed Air Force Junior ROTC program. After spearheading the program for 20 years, he continued his work at the high school for another 19 as a special education teacher and as

an assistant to school administrators. Even after retiring in 2007, Sarge continued to serve as a role model, sharing his experiences with students.

Master Sergeant Robert Mayne passed away last week at the age of 98, and our community mourns his loss and thanks him for his many years of service.

AMERICA CONCEDES ACT

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the America COMPETES Act, which would more appropriately be called the America concedes act. At 2,900 pages, and with a price tag of \$325 billion, the Democrats' legislation does nothing to counter China's malign actions and, instead, lines the pockets of the country's Communist Party.

The bill appeases Chairman Xi, fails to hold China accountable for its role in the COVID-19 pandemic, and is even being used by the left to push their Green New Deal agenda.

There is \$8 billion for the UN Green Climate Fund, \$2 billion for a new Climate Leadership in International Mitigation, Adaptation, and Technology program, \$2 million in foreign aid for other countries to address climate change, and the list goes on.

In fact, the bill mentions climate change 156 times, and it mentions coral reefs more times than it does China.

This bill is not only weak on China, but it is harmful to the United States, and I urge my colleagues to oppose it.

AMERICA IS COMPETING WITH CHINA

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

Mr. RYAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the COMPETES Act. And quite frankly, I am stunned to hear some of the rhetoric coming from the other side around a bill that finally, after decades, recognizes that we are in a very stiff competition with China, and for the longest time America didn't know it.

China was in this competition. China was doing everything they could to dump steel in our country. They spend 7 to 9 percent of their GDP on infrastructure every year. They got islands in the South China Sea. They told us they weren't going to militarize them; now they have.

They have bases in Africa, long-term raw material contracts in African countries to solidify their control of precious metals so that our phones, our weapons systems, our computers, they have a plan.

This is not complicated. But it is being seen through the prism of our current, broken, insane political system.

And so what we are trying to do here is recognize that they are winning. Seventy percent of chip manufacturing comes out of China. The cargo ships along the California ports, those aren't coming from Kansas. They are coming