

power but at the family dinner table, in our houses of worship, in our neighborhoods, and at the ballot box.

Charlie's life is measured in the legacy he leaves. Look at the students who registered to vote because he asked them to. Look at the young leaders who chose to serve their communities because he told them they were needed. Look at the millions who felt less alone because he was brave enough to raise his voice. They had impact. That is real impact. That is a life well lived and a mission faithfully pursued.

To Charlie's wife, Erika, to his beautiful children, and to his family: My and my family's deepest condolences and prayers are with you. May you be sustained by the prayers of a very grateful nation for Charlie's life, and may you take comfort in knowing that Charlie's voice echoes louder than ever.

Charlie Kirk's life is a call to action. Let us honor him not with despair but with dedication, dedication to faith, to freedom, and dedication to the enduring promise of this great Nation. His courage lives on, his message lives on, and his fight for America will always live on.

May God bless Charlie Kirk's memory. May God comfort his family, and may God bless the United States of America.

REMEMBERING CONTRACT DAY

(Ms. PLASKETT of the Virgin Islands was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I rise with deep pride and reverence to honor Contract Day, recognized annually in the Virgin Islands on October 1. This day is one of the most defining in our history, and it honors and also celebrates four women, queens, who led the St. Croix Labor Rebellion of 1878, also known as Fireburn.

After slaves in the Danish West Indies organized, fought, and received their freedom from chattel slavery in 1848, a new type of slavery was formed to regulate the conditions of the now free workers.

The law stipulated a day wage and confined workers to one plantation each year, changeable only on Contract Day, October 1. These contracts offered no true liberty, forcing families into conditions that mirrored the impression of bondage.

Former slaves worked on the same plantations as before with little to no improvement in their living conditions, healthcare, education, even their very movement.

With rumors of improved conditions proving false, on October 1, 1878, the frustration and anger from the past 30 years of unfair treatment and harsh labor practices after obtaining freedom ignited a rebellion in Frederiksted, St. Croix. Our people declared enough is enough. Out of their courage came one of the most powerful labor uprisings in the Caribbean, one that continues to shape our identity and our fight for justice today.

At the center were four extraordinary women who we now revere as the Queens: Axeline "Agnes" Elizabeth Salomon, Mathilda McBean, Susanna Abrahamson, and Mary Thomas. These women, ordinary in their beginnings but extraordinary in their courage, stood as leaders and demanded all plantations improve wages and the repeal of the Labor Act of 1849 that kept workers in serf-like conditions. They gave voice to the pain and determination of an entire people.

□ 1020

The rebellion, the Fireburn, was not without tremendous cost: Fifty lives were lost. Many were injured. Countless homes and buildings were destroyed. Many of the protesters were killed by the Danish Government.

From that protest came reforms that dismantled the labor system. The rights of laborers could no longer be ignored.

The queens have left us a legacy of courage, reminding us that progress is rarely given. It is only through demand. They remind us that the dignity of work, personal freedom, and the pursuit of a better life are not privileges but speak to the very yearning of every human being.

We are now in a time when voices are being silenced by our own government. Those in the public sphere are fearful for themselves, their families, and their constituents. They are afraid to speak up and afraid to speak the truth.

People are afraid of losing resources and government funds. They are afraid of being targeted not just by online thugs but by their own government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk to my people: Virgin Islanders, I am proud to be a Virgin Islander and that my family, my father's and my mother's ancestors, were there on St. Croix during that Fireburn and also during our amazing self-emancipation of 1848. The knowledge of the fact that, for centuries, my deepest roots—or, as we say, my navel string—are in the soil of what is now the Virgin Islands. It is what gives me voice and power.

It is not only those queens, but it is the young boy determined to be a marine biologist, the little girl who writes and dreams of being a poet. They are our history and our future.

Contract Day should give us courage. In the times that we are in, we may be limited and afraid, but we must use our voice to demand more.

BEATING HEART OF DEMOCRACY IS FREEDOM OF SPEECH

(Mr. MCCLINTOCK of California was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, freedom of speech is the beating heart of a democracy. It is the entire reason that this building exists, so that we can talk out our differences.

Free societies do not fear free speech, even when that speech is hateful or

malignant or stupid. Free societies recognize that the only way to separate fact from fiction, love from hate, truth from lies, wisdom from folly, or good from evil is to put them side by side and to trust the people to know the difference.

No central authority must ever be given the power to take this vital freedom away from the people or to punish anyone solely for expressing their opinions.

We have based our entire form of government on the assumption that, when exposed to all sides and all viewpoints, more than half of the people are going to get it right more than half of the time. This assumption has served us well through the centuries.

The left rejects this premise. For many years, leftists have told us that speech is violence and can be answered with violence. This justifies their shouting down opponents and disrupting peaceful assemblies.

We have repeatedly watched leftist mobs burn our cities, loot shopkeepers, and assault people on the streets while leftist politicians egged them on.

We see the growing physical attacks on law enforcement. The left used the FBI to suppress debate on critical issues ranging from COVID lockdowns to climate hysteria. It has called for government commissions to regulate it. In Europe, leftist governments now criminalize it.

Mr. Speaker, I raise these points because a Member of this House recently made some truly vile and despicable remarks about Charlie Kirk after his brutal assassination. Her words should be loudly and universally condemned.

Last night, on the House floor, a resolution of censure was brought against her in the name of Charlie Kirk to formally punish her for her hateful rhetoric, but what did Charlie Kirk say about hate speech?

He said this 5 years ago: "My position is that even hate speech should be completely and totally allowed in our country. The most disgusting speech should absolutely be protected. . . . The ACLU used to hold this viewpoint. The American Civil Liberties Union, they sued so that legitimate Nazis could march through downtown Skokie. . . . Why would the ACLU do this? Because, they said, as soon as you use the word 'hate,' that is a very subjective term because then, all of a sudden, it is in the eyes or it is in the implementation of whomever has the power. So here is my belief: The more speech, the better."

That was Charlie Kirk.

We must never allow the left to become our teachers. If we ever do, we will lose our country. There will be no moral high ground, no changing of minds, and no rebirth of faith and freedom that we so desperately need.

Free societies do not fear words and thoughts, even those that are hateful, ugly, evil, or obscene, because the same freedom that protects these darkest

impulses of our nature also protects the right of men and women of good will to confront them, expose them, and reject them. The only true way to expose them as wrong is to do exactly what Charlie Kirk did until his last breath and with his last breath.

When the left calls us Nazis, fascists, and murderers, this might be hateful and hurtful, but it is speech, nonetheless. It should be criticized in the strongest possible terms as irresponsible, inflammatory, outrageous, revolting, and wrong. It should be ridiculed and shamed.

Businesses have every right to protect their reputation, and schools have every right to protect their children, but we should defend their right to say what they will and trust that the vast majority of Americans will see it for what it is.

There are only two ways to resolve our differences: There is reason, and there is force. The American Founders gave us a Republic governed by reason and illuminated by freedom of speech.

That is the civilization that Charlie Kirk lived for and died for. He devoted his life and ultimately gave his life to restore, strengthen, and perpetuate a free society based on discourse and reason.

What a tragedy it would be if, in our outrage and grief, we were to throw it all away.

HONORING APRIL VERRETT

(Mrs. RAMIREZ of Illinois was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor President April Verrett, a fighter for working people and a fierce advocate for worker power. She is at the forefront of building a labor movement that unapologetically fights for all workers, no matter where they live and no matter what they do.

President Verrett is deeply committed to justice, solidarity, and democracy. She has made her life's work to end poverty-wage work in America.

Growing up on the South Side of Chicago, she was raised by her grandmother, a proud union steward for SEIU Local 46. Rooted in her values, April carries on her family's commitment to community and collective action.

In May 2024, April was elected president of SEIU International, making history as the first Black person to serve in this role. As SEIU International president, April brings vision, courage, and authenticity to fight for and lift up workers whose voices are often ignored.

April's belief that change is possible when we build worker solidarity across perceived differences has led to transformative work to hold employers and government accountable to ensure that they pay their fair share and protect workers' wages. She works endlessly to ensure access to unions for all.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Illinois' Third Congressional District, it is my

honor to be able to commend President April Verrett today for blazing trails, leading with intersectional solidarity, and building worker power.

I thank April for her hard work.

□ 1030

HONORING MARIA CORREA

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Maria Correa, a constituent of the Illinois Third Congressional District, a "poderosa"; "powerful" Latina who remembers her roots, and a community leader in the fight for immigrant rights.

A resident of West Chicago, Maria's work in the community connects residents with vital resources such as food, housing, and medical support. She is a trusted source of information and counsel, ensuring her neighbors have access to their elected officials and government resources. She organizes and equips her community to engage civically, from helping people to register to vote to promoting participation in the census.

Maria makes sure each person she comes into contact with knows that they are seen, that they are loved, and they are valued, and that their voice is heard and recognized. Her dedication, courage, and compassion remind us what true leadership is, rooted in service and action.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Illinois' Third Congressional District, I am proud to commend Maria Correa for all she does to build power in her community, especially with her Latino neighbors, and for fighting for a more welcoming and just society.

I congratulate Maria.

HONORING MARIA DEL CARMEN CASIMIRO

Mrs. RAMIREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Maria del Carmen Casimiro, who exemplifies the entrepreneurial spirit and the strength and resilience of immigrant communities.

Since 1993, Maria's small business in Illinois' Third Congressional District has been an anchor for Latino families in the changing communities of Logan Square and Avondale. In the face of gentrification, her commitment to keep her culture alive through the sale of traditional Mexican foods and home goods is, in itself, commendable.

For decades, Maria and her family have brought more than just food to our homes. They have brought cultural pride and a sense of belonging to our community. Maria reminds us that small businesses can make big contributions to strengthen us and unite us.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Illinois' mighty Third Congressional District, I am proud to commend Maria del Carmen Casimiro for her decades building community, sustaining cultural identities, and feeding the soul of our neighborhood.

"Gracias y felicitaciones"; "thank you and congratulations" to Maria.

RECOGNIZING THE FUNKY BUFFALO COFFEE HOUSE AND TRADING COMPANY

(Mr. ALFORD of Missouri was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. ALFORD. Mr. Speaker, I highlight a special place in Camdenton, Missouri, in the Fourth Congressional District of Missouri: The Funky Buffalo Coffee House and Trading Company, a weird name, but a great place. It is our September Small Business of the Month.

Now, this just isn't an ordinary coffee shop. It is where community happens, families gather, students study, friendships are built, and real conversations are had like we used to do back in the day.

We had the opportunity to stop by there and have some of their great coffee and see firsthand during one of our townhall tour stops in August. Yes, we actually did townhall tours. I know a lot of you are surprised by that. We got out there and listened to people.

From seasonal fall specialty coffees to strawberry lemonade smoothies, the Funky Buffalo is always offering new drink recipes.

The Funky Buffalo is run by Kendra. She is a wife, a mom of three, and now a bold small business owner. She and her husband, Chris, have poured their hearts into this place creating not just a business but a blessing for our district.

Their family is directly affected by "22 a day," the number of veterans who take their own lives each and every day. Uncle Ry, Kendra's husband's younger brother, was just 26 when he lost his battle to post-traumatic stress on U.S. soil. Ryan was a son, a brother, a best friend, and an uncle.

This is why 100 percent of their shop's net proceeds of coffee, awareness bracelets, and awareness shirts are donated to suicide prevention programs and other veteran organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I am more than proud to recognize the Funky Buffalo as our small business of the month, and I thank them for investing in people, investing in our community, our district, and in the American Dream.

SEPTEMBER VETERAN OF THE MONTH: DALE KARST

Mr. ALFORD. Mr. Speaker, today, I am honored to recognize our September Veteran of the Month: Mr. Dale Karst.

Dale proudly served in the United States Air Force, entering service on September 16, 1966. After basic training, he was stationed at Whiteman Air Force Base with the Air Police Squadron before deploying to Vietnam with the 377th Combat Defense Unit.

He was stationed at Tan Son Nhut during the Tet Offensive, one of the most dangerous moments of that war. When he returned home, Dale was stationed at Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota.

Dale told me his most cherished memory of service was returning from