

there is no substitute for participating in the governmental process, no substitute for the investment of our lives and our time. I commend all of you for your hard work and for the long hours of preparation, and commend you for a victory well earned, well deserved and bringing honor and credit to the Fourth District of Kentucky.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MALONEY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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IMMIGRANT SOLDIERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GONZALEZ) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity today to rise and speak on a subject that has been conspicuously absent from legislative debate over the issue of immigration reform. Over the length of this debate, the proponents of the enforcement-only approach, some of which you heard earlier this evening, have repeatedly referred to immigrants as dangerous to the American economy, as dangerous to our society and dangerous to our culture.

A number of my colleagues argue that immigrants take away jobs from American citizens and that immigration has a net effect of shrinking the middle class. They suspect immigrants generally of bringing crime, drugs, and even terrorism into our country. And they suggest that immigrants weaken our patriotic culture by failing to assimilate into American society.

Fear characterizes all of these sentiments and arguments. Fear of change, both economic and social change. Fear of new contributions to the fabric of American culture. Generally, a fear of the "other."

Fear can be a powerful and dangerous force. It can motivate hate. It can impede toleration and understanding. Fear can paralyze us with paranoia and blind us to reasoned and logical argument. Fear in the media and in the Halls of Congress have distorted the image of immigrants in this country.

Much as sensationalist TV programming can make us believe that our communities are more dangerous than they really are, sensationalist characterizations of the immigrant population based on anecdotal examples or predictions of worst-case scenarios can falsely lead us to negative, reactionary, and unfounded opinions about immigrants.

I can no longer tolerate the blanket generalizations used to cast our Na-

tion's immigrant population in a universally negative and threatening light. They do not reflect reality. They misrepresent our national interest with respect to immigration. These arguments polarize the public and prevent reasoned and productive dialogue, and they promote a legislative climate that distracts us from our national interest in reforming our broken immigration policies.

We can all agree that we need comprehensive immigration reform, but we must also come to an understanding that demonizing immigrants will not get us there. Ostracizing immigrants in this country with venomous and inapt rhetoric will not move us toward the integration of newcomers into our economy, or the promotion of safe streets for our children to play in, or assimilation of the immigrant population into American society.

It can only delay the time when the immigrant population becomes a fully functional and participatory component of our American society. It can only set back the day when we can guarantee the security of our borders and documentation of all individuals that cross those borders.

Like my colleagues that emphasize tough border enforcement, I, too, believe in reform that provides security for our country and documentation for all the individuals that enter American territory. I think that we speak with a common voice regarding our homeland security goals. Our approaches to talking about the issues of immigration and the methods for solving the problem may differ, but we share common goals in promoting our national and economic security. Debate over approaches to immigration reform is a topic for responsible legislative discourse.

Today, my colleagues and I speak on a related topic about some of the immigrants that are the subjects of our larger debate over immigration. The immigrants we want to talk about are not threats to our national security, they are not threats to our economy, and they are not threats to our people. They, in fact, have demonstrated their solidarity with our Nation. Unquestionably, they wish to contribute to our security and to our economy. And the individuals we speak of cannot be considered separately as friend or foe to the American people, because they demonstrate daily that they are, in fact, Americans in their own right.

The individuals we rise to speak of today are the tens of thousands of brave men and women in the American Armed Forces that were not born in the United States. Like the courageous sons and daughters born and raised in my home State of Texas and throughout this country, these individuals have taken an oath to defend the United States of America with their very lives if necessary.

These immigrant soldiers may differ from their native-born brothers and sisters in terms of location of their

birth and even in their citizenship status; however, on the battlefield, they are united by a common purpose.

Among the soldiers in the United States military, there is no distinction between those that are born in Texas, in the Philippines, or in Mexico. They all take an oath. They all assume the same risks. They all make the same sacrifice. All are worthy of honor and distinction, and we must thank them all equally for giving so generously that we, living in communities across this great Nation, may do so peacefully.

Mr. Speaker, it is my great privilege tonight and a true honor that the first member of the United States Armed Services that we are about to honor is Lance Corporal Jose Antonio Gutierrez, and this is the photo of Jose Antonio when he was a little boy, an orphan and I will be a little more specific in a minute, to the time he put on this uniform of the United States Marine.

He was the first member of the United States Armed Forces killed in Iraq. He was not a citizen of this country.

Marine Lance Corporal Jose Antonio Gutierrez, like most Guatemalans, was born into poverty. He was orphaned in 1983 at the age of 9 and taken in by Casa Alianza, or Covenant House, in Guatemala City. The causes and dates of his parents' deaths are unknown to us today.

For the next 10 years, Lance Corporal Gutierrez led a tragic and tumultuous life, bouncing from the orphanage to the street and back again. His adulthood, like his childhood, was characterized by hardship. He worked for a time in a maquila plant, a sweatshop, operating a sewing machine. Even as a single person, making ends meet at such a job was incredibly difficult for this young man.

In early 1997, Lance Corporal Gutierrez made a decision to travel to the United States to seek a better life. He arrived in California an undocumented immigrant. He attended North High School in Torrance, California.

In March 2002, Lance Corporal Gutierrez enlisted in the United States Marine Corps because he wanted to become a citizen of this great country. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion of the Expeditionary Forces of the United States Marines 1st Division.

Lance Corporal Gutierrez was killed a year later, close to the city of Umm al Qasr in southern Iraq, on March 21, 2003. He was 28 years old.

This man's sacrifice, the first life laid down in the sands of Iraq on behalf of the United States, is testament to the belief of immigrants in the promise of America. It is a symbol of patriotism, of commitment to defending a dream that we all share.

In May of last year, according to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service, nearly 69,000 foreign-born soldiers, 5 percent of the entire military, are on active duty. Five percent are foreign born.