

gala celebration April 13 in Woodcliff Lake, NJ.

I have always believed one of the noblest undertakings is to care for those less fortunate than ourselves. In northern New Jersey, we have an outstanding group that has been involved in such an effort for half a century.

This year, the Bergen-Passaic chapter of ARC celebrates 50 years of service to people who suffer from mental retardation. For half a century, ARC has brought help and hope to retarded children and adults and their families. It has given retarded children the early help they needed. It has given retarded adults the vocational and self-help skills they need to function as independent citizens in society.

Before 50 years ago, there was no national advocacy group to advance the rights and needs of the retarded. State institutions existed to provide care for the mentally retarded, but there were no community programs except the few conducted by religious and charitable groups. These were few in number and depended upon good will rather than legal rights.

In State institutions, the physical needs of the residents were generally provided at a reasonable level. But there was little in the way of meaningful daily programs that would improve the psychological well-being of the residents. In short, State institutions were designed primarily to offer custodial care.

Parents with retarded children at home were in a difficult situation. They had the burden of providing daily care of their children but were offered little or no support from the community. By law, these children could be excluded from the right to a free public education. Recreation programs, vocational training, and support counseling as we know them did not exist. There was little public awareness or public sympathy for the retarded. In most instances, they were invisible in the community, existing only behind the doors of their family homes.

On October 12, 1946, however, a letter to the editor appeared in the Bergen Record—the newspaper in Hackensack, NJ—suggesting formation of a group for the parents of retarded children. The writer, Laura Sparks Blossfeld, suggested that the group might be the first chapter of a national organization.

On June 10, 1947, 41 parents from across the region gathered at the Paterson YMCA and voted to form an organization.

From the beginning, the goal of the organization was to assist all parents of retarded children, regardless of the degree of retardation or where the child was located—at home or in an institution. In addition to helping the parents, the work of the group was, of course, intended to benefit the children.

In rapid succession, chapters were formed in Essex, Union, Monmouth, Hudson, Mercer, Camden, Gloucester, and Burlington Counties. Eventually, National Association for Retarded Children was formed in October 1950. Some 400 chapters were chartered across the United States within 6 years.

In the past 50 years, there have been vast improvements in the lives and fortunes of the mentally retarded. Where they once were scorned and rejected, they are now afforded human rights and fundamental freedoms. Where once they were hidden away in State schools or parents' homes, they have now been granted the right to live in the commu-

nity. Where once they were looked upon with fear and aversion by a society ignorant of the facts, they have gained acceptance.

But none of this happened overnight or without effort. The work of thousands of volunteers and professionals contributed to the advancement of the mentally retarded. These efforts, at considerable sacrifice of time, personal convenience, and financial security, have resulted in the expansion of services we see today. And the fact that new volunteers and new professionals join in the effort each year gives confidence that this progress will continue.

Mr. Speaker, I invite you and the rest of my colleagues to join me in saluting the ARC for its outstanding service and loving care of the mentally retarded. These people of vision and humanitarian drive have not only given hope and life to generations of retarded children and their families but they have enriched and enlightened our State and our Nation as well. God bless the memory of Laura Sparks Blossfeld and all who followed her inspired advocacy.

THE LEGACY OF ADAM CLAYTON  
POWELL, JR.

SPEECH OF

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, February 11, 1997*

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to pay special tribute to the more than 30 million Americans for whom it has become a tradition to pause during the month of February to celebrate black history in the United States.

I want to thank my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus who each year set aside a time during February for a special order to which all of my colleagues are invited to reflect on the significance of black America's contribution to our history. My special commendation goes out to my colleagues, Representative LOUIS STOKES of Ohio and Representative MAXINE WATERS of California, the new chairperson of the Congressional Black Caucus, for convening this special order.

Thirty years ago this month, the House of Representatives was preparing to take one of its most infamous actions. On March 1, 1967, the House voted to exclude from the 90th Congress Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., my predecessor as the Congressman from Upper Manhattan and Harlem, and one of this body's greatest Members.

Two years later, that action was overturned by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional, and Representative Powell returned to his seat, stripped of 22 years seniority.

I recall this incident not only as a commemoration of an injustice committed against one of the greatest figures in black history. During this period in which President Clinton has designated education as a national security issue, it is again fitting to recall the career of Adam Clayton Powell. Much of Powell's greatness is attributable to his support of education as well as his urgings to our Government to pay greater attention to Africa and the developing world.

During Powell's first term as chairman of the Education and Labor Committee, which he assumed in 1961, the committee passed not only the minimum wage bill, but legislation creating training programs for practical nurses, student loans, and manpower and training development programs. All of these were enacted into law.

Years earlier, in the 1950's, Powell was a lonely crusader for increased U.S. involvement with Africa and the developing world, going against the grain of U.S. policy, which was obsessed with the rise of communism around the world.

Powell was a man of many dimensions, in ways, ahead of his time. A vocal warrior on the forefront of our struggles for racial and economic justice, and education at home, he at the same time preached a gospel of international involvement. Even before our Government recognized that our destiny in trade and commerce was moving away from Europe, he understood that we continued to ignore Asia and Africa at our own peril.

Today, as we prepare for the challenges of the 21st century while reappraising the gains of the civil rights movement, we find that we are riding the shoulders of those great leaders, such as Powell, who came before us. Through their efforts, we have overcome the legal segregation and discrimination that dehumanized us as a people. Through their efforts, a viable black middle-class of successful professionals, homeowners, and college graduates has emerged.

But many challenges remain, some in the very areas in which Adam Clayton Powell made a mark decades ago, working toward the eradication of poverty, joblessness, drug addiction, crime, and sickness.

If we are serious about addressing those challenges, and maintaining our competitive edge in the global economy, we must refocus our attention on the goal of providing the best education possible for all Americans of every race. In the environment of budget balancing and tax cuts in which we exist, that challenge cannot be met by Government alone.

The private sector, which has the most to gain from an educated work force, must join in partnerships with Government, the schools, and the communities to see to it that our young people are qualified to compete in the high-technology marketplace, that they are trained to take their place in the 21st century economy.

As a nation, we must admit that our future as a worldwide economic leader is no longer tied to Europe, but increasingly to the economics of the Pacific rim, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa.

And even as we recognize the importance of people of color around the world, we must also recognize the folly of failing to utilize the talents of America's black and brown people who have contributions to make in international business, in foreign affairs, and diplomacy.

More than anything, America must continue the work of our past leaders, including Adam Clayton Powell, all of whom recognized that education was the key to social, economic, and racial justice.