speech I gave to the Columbus Human Rights Commission on April 4, 1998.

ADDRESS TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
ANNUAL DINNER, COLUMBUS, INDIANA, APRIL 4, 1998

(By Lee H. Hamilton)

I want to talk with you tonight about the challenges we face. Our country is in the midst of a national debate about civil rights and race relations, perhaps for the first time since Congress passed landmark civil and voting rights laws in the mid-1960s. I have cast over 5,000 votes in my years in Congress, but few, if any, have given me more satisfaction than to support these laws. Much of the current debate has focused on affirmative action (more on that later). The debate, however, also goes to more fundamental questions about race in America: do we continue to be a nation of one, where everyone has an opportunity to succeed, or do we drift into two Americas, one black, one white? If we do live in two Americas, which is the future of this country?

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Some people ask me the other day how public views on race relations have changed since the Civil Rights Era. Three things come to mind:

a. Public consensus

First, there was broad public consensus in the 1960s on what was wrong in our country and what needed to be done. Americans were outraged by the treatment of Civil Rights marchers in the South, and demanded that Congress take steps to secure basic civil and political liberties for all Americans in every part of the country. Today, we have strong anti-discrimination laws on the books, and an overwhelming majority of Americans agree that racial discrimination is wrong and must be prohibited.

Consensus quickly breaks down, however, once you scratch beneath the surface. Blacks and whites, for example, may agree that racial discrimination is wrong, but they have sharply differing views about how prevalent such discrimination is today in our society. In recent polls the majority of Americans said blacks in their community are treated the same as whites. Only 49% of the blacks agreed. Whites really see very little racial discrimination when it comes to housing, jobs, education, and housing. Many blacks see racial discrimination as a fact of life.

Whites have generally become more optimistic that progress toward equality has occurred and that racial discrimination has declined. Blacks, in contrast, are increasingly disillusioned about race relations and discrimination.

The debate over affirmative action provides another example of the breakdown in the consensus. Supporters of affirmative action say that while the situation has improved, racism persists in this country, and that affirmative action is needed to remedy the effects of discrimination. Affirmative action programs, they note, have provided opportunities for millions of minorities, excluding the American class and strengthening our political system and economy. Opponents respond that affirmative action is fundamentally unfair, that people should succeed or fail based on talent and effort, not race. Either they say that we now live in a colorblind society so race-based policies are unnecessary, or they say that while racism does exist, affirmative action leads to double standards which heighten rather than reduce racial tensions.

b. Sense of optimism

Second, during the Civil Rights Era there was a strong sense of public optimism about tackling problems associated with race. I don't suggest it was a Golden Age. We then lived in a segregated society, where minorities denied political rights as well as economic and educational opportunities.

What has changed, however, is our outlook on the future of race relations. Back then, many of us took to heart Dr. King's vision of an integrated America, where people would be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. We believed that anti-poverty efforts could wipe out the inner city slums and lift poor blacks into the middle class. This view has been replaced—perhaps naively—that anti-discrimination laws would lead to a society with fully integrated schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces.

We have made remarkable progress toward racial equality over the last 30 years. We have made significant progress in the expansion of voting rights and a black middle class, educated and affluent, that has taken advantage of new opportunities. But, in many other respects, this is not the world we dreamed of 30 years ago. While we have been making progress, blacks and whites, for example, may agree that racial discrimination is wrong, but they have sharply differing views about how prevalent such discrimination is today in our society. In recent polls the majority of Americans said blacks in their community are treated the same as whites. Only 49% of blacks agreed. Whites really see very little racial discrimination when it comes to housing, jobs, education, and housing. Many blacks see racial discrimination as a fact of life.

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with relations between whites and blacks. The civil and voting rights laws and affirmative action were a response to the terrible legacy of racial discrimination, particularly toward blacks and other minorities in our country.

Our civil rights agenda has changed over the years, first in response to the demand for women's rights and, more recently, in response to the demand for immigrant rights. Now, more than ever, we have become more diverse, ethnically and racially, in the last 30 years as immigration from Asia and Latin America has swelled. According to the most recent Census estimates, our population is roughly 25% non-white; that figure is projected to reach 40% by 2050. This is a new world, and we are only beginning to understand the implications of this for our culture and society. I also find a lack of understanding now that racial issues cannot be resolved by laws alone. Inequalities, rooted in the legacy of racial discrimination, particularly in our schools, cannot be bridged by laws alone. 

The U.S. Supreme Court has worked to limit the use of race-based preferences in the workplace, on contracts, in legislative redistricting, at all levels of government. The federal government is in the process of retooling its affirmative action programs in response to these Court decisions. The overall effect of these changes will likely be to curtail efforts to assure outcomes in hiring, contracting, and admission for higher education.

b. integration vs. separation

Affirmative action and other government-led efforts may provide opportunities to blacks and other minorities that will not bridge the divide between the races. Blacks and whites may work in the same workplace, but will not necessarily be able to intermingle and socialize in different circles. Some of this separation can be traced to discrimination, but increasingly, I think it is driven by fear and doubt about our fellow citizens, and the willingness to see others as different from us.

Recently, I read a comment of a black woman, a professional who works with women's rights and, more recently, in response to the demand for immigrant rights. Now, more than ever, we have become more diverse, ethnically and racially, in the last 30 years as immigration from Asia and Latin America has swelled. According to the most recent Census estimates, our population is roughly 25% non-white; that figure is projected to reach 40% by 2050. This is a new world, and we are only beginning to understand the implications of this for our culture and society. I also find a lack of understanding now that racial issues cannot be resolved by laws alone. Inequalities, rooted in the legacy of racial discrimination, particularly in our schools, cannot be bridged by laws alone. 

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comments and concerns, to debate the issues in a frank manner, and to find solutions which will make our community more inclusive and more just.

**CONCLUSION**

Our success in meeting these challenges will depend—in large measure—on our commitment to human rights. This evening has been a success if it causes each one of us to renew our commitment to human rights and to act in specific ways on that commitment.

The stakes are high. This country has been dedicated to the cause of human rights from its inception. If you and I do not lead in human rights, who will? Surely those of us who have been given so much—good parents, good education, good health, a marvelous country—and all of our many blessings—must lead for human rights into the 21st Century.

So when you leave here in a few minutes, what are you going to do? May I suggest you and I renew a simple pledge: We stand for justice. We combat injustice wherever we may find it—at home or abroad, in our own community or across the world. Leaders and legislation may be important, but what happens in your life, in your home, in your heart is more important than what happens in the White House.

We join hands in support of the Human Rights Commission in Columbus in a noble cause: contributing to the direction and success of a free society and a humane world.

**TRIBUTE TO DR. JOEL FORT**

**HON. GEORGE MILLER**

**OF CALIFORNIA**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Thursday, April 23, 1998

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to invite my colleagues to join me in recognizing the accomplishments and contributions of a truly remarkable man, Dr. Joel Fort.

Dr. Fort was an early visionary in the field of public health. He was one of the first professionals to understand that social problems such as disease and violence were not going to be solved by the criminal justice system alone, but rather required a collaborative approach which included public health expertise. Dr. Fort's personal commitment to this field brought about the creation of the San Francisco Department of Health's Center for Special Problems and the Center for Solving Special Social and Health Problems. These Centers have reached thousands of individuals, and serve as a model for replication throughout the United States and abroad. Not satisfied to stop there, Dr. Fort influenced a generation of public health and social service professionals by taking his philosophy into the profession by taking his philosophy into the classroom—teaching at several universities on subjects of drug abuse, criminality, ethics and conflict resolution. Dr. Fort's many achievements have earned him numerous accolades, most notably the recent completion of the Oral History of Joel Fort, M.D.: Public Health Pioneer, Criminologist, Reformer, Ethicist, and Humanitarian by the Regional Oral History Office of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Throughout his rich and varied career, Dr. Fort always held his family as his top priority. Therefore, it is only appropriate that we join with his wife of 46 years, Maria Fort, and his three children and three grandchildren, in celebrating his life and his legacy. Dr. Joel Fort is an undeniably outstanding member of our community, and I speak for the entire U.S. House of Representatives in this tribute to him.

**COUNCIL OF KHALISTAN CALLS ON PAKISTAN TO RECOGNIZE KHALISTAN**

**HON. JOHN T. DOOLITTLE**

**OF CALIFORNIA**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Thursday, April 23, 1998

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, recently the Council of Khalistan, which leads the struggle to liberate the Sikh homeland, Punjab, Khalistan, from Indian rule, recently wrote an open letter to the people and government of Pakistan urging Pakistan to recognize Khalistan to stop India from achieving hegemony in South Asia.

The letter pointed out that two leaders of the ruling BJP recently called for Pakistan and Bangladesh to become part of India. It has been fifty years since India and Pakistan achieved their independence, agreeing to partition at that time. For leaders of the ruling party to call for that agreement to be undone reveals India's imperialist aims in the region. The atrocities committed against the Sikhs, the Christians of Nagaland, the Muslims of Kashmir, the Dalits ("black untouchables," the aboriginal peoples of the subcontinent), and so many others also show India's drive to establish Hindu Raj throughout South Asia.

An independent Khalistan can serve as a buffer to prevent war between India and Pakistan. Khalistan is committed to freedom, denationalization in South Asia, and economic cooperation to assure prosperity for all. It is time for the United States to promote freedom, peace, stability, and prosperity in South Asia by supporting a free and fair vote on the political status of Khalistan and for Pakistan to recognize the legitimate aspirations of the people of Khalistan, Nagaland, and all the nations of South Asia.

I am putting the Council of Khalistan's open letter into the RECORD.

**COUNCIL OF KHALISTAN, WASHINGTON, DC, APRIL 8, 1998.**

**AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN: TO STOP INDIAN HEGEMONY, RECOGNIZE KHALISTAN.**

To the people and Government of Pakistan:

Your recent missile test is an unfortunate reminder of the tensions in South Asia. While it was a necessary response to India's 'cold start' nuclear demonstration over South Asia, it is still an unfortunate event. We all hope that South Asia will not once again erupt into a war.

India's drive for hegemony shows in India's ongoing repression of the minorities living within its artificial borders. It has already murdered over 250,000 Sikhs since 1984. It has murdered almost 60,000 Muslims in Kashmir since 1988, over 200,000 Christians in Nagaland since 1947, and tens of thousands of Assamese, Manipuris, Tamils, Dalits ("black untouchables," the aboriginal peoples of the subcontinent), and others.

You can help to end India's drive for hegemony by recognizing Khalistan. Your recognition will be a major boost of the movement to bring freedom to the oppressed Sikh Nation. It will also carry strategic advantages for you, as Khalistan can serve as a buffer between you and India. If there is a war, Sikhs will not fight for India. The Sikh Nation can also use the fact the over 60 percent of India's grain comes from Punjab. Khalistan to deter India from pursuing its dream of Hindu Raj throughout South Asia. I ask you to recognize Khalistan immediately.

We seek to establish a regime of friendship and defense treaty with Pakistan. Only the liberation of Khalistan and the other oppressed nations of South Asia will bring true peace and stability to the subcontinent.

The Indian government has been talking to Nagal leaders about the status of Nagal. Yet India has failed to live up to its obligations under the 1948 U.N. resolution in which it agreed to a plebiscite in Kashmir and it has refused to hold a free and fair plebiscite in Punjab. Khalistan, from Indian rule, writes an open letter to the people and government of Pakistan urging Pakistan to recognize Khalistan to stop India from achieving hegemony in South Asia.

The letter pointed out that two leaders of the ruling BJP recently called for Pakistan and Bangladesh to become part of India. It has been fifty years since India and Pakistan achieved their independence, agreeing to partition at that time. For leaders of the ruling party to call for that agreement to be undone reveals India's imperialist aims in the region. The atrocities committed against the Sikhs, the Christians of Nagaland, the Muslims of Kashmir, the Dalits ("black untouchables," the aboriginal peoples of the subcontinent), and so many others also show India's drive to establish Hindu Raj throughout South Asia.

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I am putting the Council of Khalistan's open letter into the RECORD.

**HONORING THE 80TH BIRTHDAY OF JOSEPH GIGUERE**

**HON. RICHARD E. NEAL**

**OF MASSACHUSETTS**

**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Thursday, April 23, 1998

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I have this opportunity to stand on the floor of this Chamber and acknowledge the celebration and occasion of the 80th Birthday of my constituent, Joseph Giguer.

Mr. Giguer of Southington, Massachusetts was born in St. Aimee in the Province of Quebec, Canada on March 19, 1918. His early years on his family's homestead in the countryside surrounding Montreal instilled within him a sense of hard work and determination, and loyalty to friends and family. These admirable qualities were carried with him when he emigrated to the United States at the age of eleven and helped him to persevere and fully acculturate himself to the American society that he proudly became a citizen of. His eagerness to learn a new language, while still observing and respecting the strong French-Canadian heritage he carried with him, enabled him to attain an education and skills necessary for trade of a woodworker. Though it was the Depression, his father was an entrepreneur and successfully started numerous enterprises, including broom factories, butcher shops, and woodworker establishments. The skills that Mr. Giguer learned allowed for him to always find work to sustain and contribute to his family.