

Woodson and others, each year our Nation celebrates the history of African Americans and the contributions they have made for the entire month of February.

I am proud to say my home State of Illinois is rich in African-American History and I would like to share some of the great accomplishments African-American Illinoisans have made to our country. Beyond the well known Illinoisans like Miles Davis and James Cleveland who transcended racial lines in the music industry, there exist lesser-known Illinoisans who have made tremendous impacts on our society.

Take for example Dr. Mae C. Jemison, the first African-American woman in space. Raised in Chicago, Dr. Jemison graduated from Morgan Park High School in 1973. At age 16, she entered Stanford University on scholarship where she graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemical engineering, and fulfilled the requirements for an A.B. in African and Afro-American Studies. On September 12, 1992, Dr. Jemison flew into space aboard the space shuttle Endeavor, becoming the first woman of color to venture into space. Along with this tremendous accomplishment, Dr. Jemison has focused on improving the status, quality, and image of the scientist, specifically encouraging women and minorities to pursue careers in science. For example, she founded The Jemison Group, Inc., to research, develop, and implement advanced technologies suited to the social, political, cultural, and economic context of the individual, especially for the developing world.

Along with Dr. Jemison, there are countless others in Illinois that have had a tremendous impact on the lives of many Americans. One such example is those affiliated with the Illinois Theater Center in Chicago. In honor of Black History Month each February, the Illinois Theater Center produces an African-American play. This year is no different, with the Theater presenting a play titled "Master Harold and the Boys". The drama is the work of South Africa's leading playwright, and was recently chosen as "One of the Most Significant Plays of the 20th Century" by the National Royal Theater in London. Set in Port Elizabeth, South Africa in 1950, it depicts the coming-of-age of a white teenager and his relationship with the two black men who work as waiters at his parents' restaurant.

Dr. Jemison, and those of the Illinois Theater Center continue to carry on Dr. Woodson's goal of popularizing Black history. Black History Month allows others, like myself, to commend these remarkable individuals on their tireless efforts and accomplishments. However, while we honor the great strides made by African Americans in overcoming obstacles and color barriers, we must also look ahead and recognize the great obstacles that still hinder African Americans today.

One such obstacle is the issue of HIV/AIDS. Although African Americans

make up about 12 percent of the U.S. population, they accounted for half of the new HIV cases reported in the United States in 2001. African Americans have accounted for nearly 315,000 of the more than 816,000 AIDS cases reported since the beginning of the epidemic. By the end of December 2001, more than 168,000 African Americans had died from AIDS. These astonishing statistics remind us that the issue of HIV/AIDS infiltrates all borders and is not exclusive to developing nations.

Earlier this month the Center for Disease Control and Prevention noted that the 25 States that track HIV cases reported an increase in new diagnoses. As the number of HIV cases increase, prevention programs must continue to develop in cities across the United States. One particular prevention program, the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, works to reduce the risk of HIV among African Americans living in shelters and other transitional living facilities throughout the greater Chicago area. The program trains shelter staff and volunteers to be HIV and STD prevention peer educators and provides personalized HIV counseling, testing and referral services to those at risk for HIV. Programs like these will help fight this terrible epidemic.

To fulfill the dreams of visionaries like Dr. Woodson and Dr. Jemison, progress must be made in breaking down barriers that continue to hinder African Americans. All of these great Illinoisans, and the countless others, struggled against violence and bigotry, but each managed to demonstrate through their distinctive talents that racism and bigotry are un-American. I urge all Americans to learn more about the history of African Americans in this country, and acknowledge the contributions of African Americans to our great Nation.

SALUTE TO BLACKSMITH PHILIP SIMMONS

• Mr. HOLLINGS. Madam President, I am inserting an article from a recent Post and Courier about one of my home State's legendary blacksmiths, Philip Simmons. He is a 90-year-old retiree, who was told 70 years ago that the car would kill the market for blacksmiths. Yet, to this day, he still passes his knowledge of the art on to young people, and I think we can all be inspired by his enthusiasm for an old American art that he won't let be lost.

The citizens of my state have the opportunity to see and enjoy Mr. Simmons' work all over Charleston. In 1975, he forged a piece for the Smithsonian that all Americans can take delight in. As he continues to stay active and show his work, I hope my colleagues in the Senate join this admirer of a great American in wishing him health and happiness in the years to come.

I ask to print the article in the RECORD.

The article follows:

[From the Post and Courier, Feb. 19, 2003]

INSPIRES OTHERS

(By Penny Parker)

Master blacksmith Philip Simmons hasn't slowed down much since turning 90 last June. He still takes any chance he gets to pass on his enthusiasm for ornamental iron working to future generations.

As special guest of the Charleston Trident Home Builders Association, he will be doing just that at this year's Lowcountry Home and Garden Show at the Charleston Area Convention Center. Simmons will be at the show from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday and from 2 to 4 p.m. on Sunday.

Simmons and students from the School of the Building Arts (SoBA) will be on hand at the Home and Garden Show to offer insight into the building arts of the past, and the importance of passing on this knowledge to future generations. Simmons will answer questions and sign copies of his books and posters, which will be on sale during the show. Plant hangers with his name inscribed on them and jewelry made from his designs will be available as well. New items this year include Christmas ornaments, wrapping paper and a 2003 calendar also features "Good Friday" by Jonathan Green on the cover.

Proceeds from the sales of these items go towards the Philip Simmons Foundation and its effort to build the Philip Simmons Blacksmith Museum at the Camden Towers Cultural Arts Center, which is set to be completed in 2004.

Simmons was born on Daniel Island on June 9, 1912, and moved to the Charleston peninsula when he was 8 years old. He became an apprentice for blacksmith Peter Simmons (no relation) at the age of 13. He started out shoeing horses and repairing and making wagon wheels in Peter Simmons' shop on Calhoun Street. Once cars became the more popular mode of transportation, he switched to making trailers, but big businesses such as Sears soon put an end to that venture.

In 1938, he switched to ornamental iron work when a client commissioned him to make a gate from a set of plans. The rest is history.

Over the years, he as fashioned more than 500 decorative pieces of ornamental wrought iron gates, fences, balconies and window grills. His work can be seen throughout Charleston, in Columbia and even at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

In 1982, the National Endowment for the Arts awarded him its National Heritage Fellowship, the highest honor the United States can bestow on a traditional artist. This was followed by a similar award from the South Carolina state legislature for "life-time achievement" and commissions for public sculptures by the S.C. State Museum and the City of Charleston. Simmons was inducted into the S.C. Hall of Fame in Myrtle Beach on Jan. 31, 1994.

Pieces of Simmons' work have been acquired by the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institute, the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, N.M., the Richland County Public Library and the Atlanta History Center. Two gardens in Charleston have been dedicated in Simmons' name, one at his church, St. John's Reformed Episcopal Church at 91 Anson St., and a children's garden at 701 East Bay St., near his house and workshop.

While the awards and accolades mean a great deal to Simmons, one of his big thrills now comes from teaching his craft and passing on the artistry of ornamental iron work to a new generation of craftsmen.

"I don't want it (ornamental wrought iron work) to become a lost art," he says. "I can't work anymore, but I can teach. A lot of

young people see the need to keep these old crafts going, and they want to learn."

Simmons teaches workshops at SoBA and has students come to his shop for hands-on lessons also. He gladly welcomes visitors to his workshop on Charleston's East Side because he sees it as a way to pass on the old way of working with wrought iron.

"I bring people to look at the shop all the time," he says. "It reminds them of the past. You had to use these hands. There were no machines.

"The machines can cut the wood and the iron, but it's not the same. It's not the art. You can create so many things with that forge. You can really knock yourself out."

Of all the pieces Simmons has crafted, he says his favorite piece is the one he made at the Smithsonian Institute in 1975 and which has been on display there ever since. "The one at the Columbia (State) Museum and the one at the (Charleston International) Airport are the prettiest. The Smithsonian one with the fish, the moon and the stars might not be the prettiest, but it shows the country what is going on in South Carolina. So many people have seen it and can learn my craft. That's the piece I love the best, not for looks, but for its purpose in serving this country."

Simmons adds that although many people tried to tell him that the car would kill the market for blacksmiths, he never thought of leaving the field. "In the '30s and '40s, people told me that blacksmith was a dying art. I would shake my head and say, 'OK.' That didn't stop me. I didn't close up shop and go work at the Navy Yard or something. I kept on going, and made a great living at it. Not rich, but live well and take care of my family. Now I want to get people excited about it and pass it on.

"Craftsmen enjoy making things people have never seen. It's a joy. That's what keeps me going.

"I'd be in there beating on that forge right now if my health were good. But I do enjoy passing it on." •

THE BURMESE JUNTA'S PERSISTENT USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS

• Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I recently read an article that appeared in the Washington Post on February 10, 2003 by Ellen Nakashima that details particularly repulsive human rights abuses committed by the Burmese military junta, whose brutal totalitarian misrule has shattered the lives of its citizens and ruined Burma's economy. I am grateful for Ms. Nakashima's excellent reporting, and am pleased to draw attention to this important issue. I will ask that Ms. Nakashima's article, entitled "Burma's Child Soldiers Tell of Army Atrocities," be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

Reports of widespread use of child soldiers, forced labor, and human rights abuse come as no surprise to anyone with even casual knowledge of recent Burmese history. Tragically, these recent reports are not "news," but rather business as usual in one of the world's most repressive countries.

While the corrupt military junta has recently been conducting a propagandistic offensive to convince naive Western diplomats that Burma can be a responsible member of the inter-

national community, the continual flow of evidence regarding Burma's gross abuses of human rights illustrates how hollow recent Burmese "reform" has been. Anyone duped into believing that the junta's decision to loosen the shackles that bind Aung San Suu Kyi, the democratically elected leader of Burma who has spent nearly a decade under house arrest, represents a liberalization of the junta should think again. Proof that the Burmese junta continues its repression of democracy came yesterday when the Defense Ministry announced that it had detained seven members of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy Party, NLDP, members. Their treasonous crime appears to be distributing anti-government leaflets.

The Burmese junta maintains power through its gratuitous use of military force against ethnic minorities and political dissidents. Now, the evidence is overwhelming that the junta exploits children as young as 11 years old in pursuit of greater coercive military power. Human Rights Watch reports that Burma's army of 350,000 includes nearly 70,000 boys under the age of 18.

If these children are fortunate enough to survive the physical and emotional abuse heaped on them by their military superiors during their "training," they are then forced into combat, often against domestic Karenni and Shan minorities. As part of the ethnic cleansing and intimidation campaigns the Burmese junta has conducted against these ethnic minorities for decades, these children soldiers are often encouraged to torture, rape, and kill innocent villagers. In one instance, Burmese military commanders ordered some of these child soldiers to force Karenni villagers to clear a minefield by walking through it. The children were subsequently ordered to shoot villagers who refused to walk through the minefield.

Recently, the Burmese junta has sought to improve its standing in the international community by touting its supposedly more intense efforts to curb the production and trafficking of heroin. Mr. President, this claim is laughable. American State Department officials should not be deluded into believing that Burma has become a partner in the war against drugs. Burmese child defectors from the army who now live in refugee camps in Thailand have corroborated reports that the Burmese military has fueled its soldiers by making them take amphetamines, washed down with whiskey, before going into combat. Countries that force drugged children into deadly combat should not be considered allies by the United States in any war.

In response to Human Rights Watch's report, a Burmese military spokesman denied that Burma "recruits" underage soldiers and incredulously asserted that Burma's military is an all-volunteer army. Such brazen lies should convince no one that the Burmese government has changed its repressive ways.

If Than Swe, as head of the Burmese government, is committed to upholding international standards of human rights, it can begin by enacting meaningful and verifiable economic, political, and judicial reforms. It should release the seven NLDP members it has unjustly arrested and all other political prisoners, and it should allow Aung San Suu Kyi to meet and communicate freely with Burmese citizens throughout the country, as well as with international representatives. Until the Burmese junta agrees to hold free and fair elections to allow the Burmese people the opportunity to choose their own leaders, it must be aware that American sanctions will continue.

I ask that the article to which I referred be printed in the RECORD.

The article follows:

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 10, 2003]

BURMA'S CHILD SOLDIERS TELL OF ARMY ATROCITIES

(By Ellen Nakashima)

He was taught how to hold an assault rifle and aim it at an enemy. He was taught how to pull a trigger, aim at the next enemy and pull the trigger again. He learned all this, he says, by the time he was 12, when he was officially declared a soldier of Burma and sent to the front lines of a long-running civil war.

Now 14, the taciturn boy Kyaw Zay Ya lives in a rebel-held village in Burma near the Thai border, one of the few places in the country willing to protect him from service in what human rights monitors call the largest child army in the world.

According to New York-based Human Rights Watch, Burman's army of 350,000 includes as many as 70,000 youths under 18. A study the group issued last October found that rebel groups fighting the army also use child soldiers, though in far smaller numbers.

The numbers would make the military-ruled Burma, also known as Myanmar, the worst violator of international laws against using children in armed conflicts, Human Rights Watch contends.

The Burmese government has denied that its army takes in recruits under 18, and says that its force is all volunteer. But people interviewed in safe houses and camps along the border disputed those contentions.

In a two-hour talk here, Kyaw said he was press-ganged into the army at age 11, took part in combat repeatedly and felt "afraid and very far from home."

Another young man, Naing Win, said he was 16 when he was ordered into a nasty firefight. To fuel the soldiers, he said, the commander made them take amphetamines, washed down with whiskey. The troops, Naing recalled, "got very happy."

In the encounter, each soldier was ordered to lob five grenades at the enemy. Naing, whose forehead bears a shrapnel scar, said he was sufficiently high on the drugs that at one point he was throwing stones. With one grenade, he forgot to remove the pin that allows it to explode. Then he was ordered to run forward exposed to enemy fire, retrieve the grenade, take out the pin and throw it again. The battle killed his best friend, 15.

Another time, after his unit had won a battle against ethnic Karenni rebels, his commander wanted the area cleared of mines. But 40 Karenni villagers were made to walk through the mined zone, he said. In the ensuing explosions, some died and some lost their legs. Those who survived were lined up. Naing said he and several other soldiers were ordered to shoot them. They did.