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Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge an extraordinary human being. Rev. Dr. Michael Beckwith, an outstanding man, an emissary of peace, and a humanitarian for all people, who has made a profound and lasting impact on our world through his distinctive stand for peace and harmony in our community.

Having known "Reverend Michael," as his community affectionately refers to him, since he was a child, I can unequivocally say that his life is a testament to building community. In the 1970's he began a journey that to this day embraces the major religions, philosophies and cultures of East and West. One significant manifestation of this vision began in 1986 when Dr. Beckwith founded Agape, a trans-denominational community with over 9,000 members currently devoted to the study and practice of the New Thought—Ancient Wisdom tradition of spirituality.

If it is so, as Emerson has stated, that "every institution is but the lengthened shadow of one person," then the Agape International Spiritual Center, the Association for Global New Thought and the Season for Nonviolence are all indeed extensions of Dr. Beckwith. Furthermore, they are distinctly emblematic of his vision of one human family united on a foundation of peace based on the spiritual origin of every man, woman and child.

One of the largest churches of its kind, the Agape church is a portrait of multiculturalism. The diversity you will find attending service on Sunday can be compared to the diversity that would be found by walking into the United Nations. Further, Agape's unique outreach ministry reaches deep into the heart of the community to care for city, country and world citizens who need it most.

But Dr. Beckwith's impact is even greater. His entire life, being dedicated to serving his community and creating harmony in our world, has attracted the movement's most influential visionaries, leaders and teachers including Arun Gandhi and his Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet. Coretta Scott King wrote in a personal letter to Reverend Michael upon his election as an assembly member of the Parliament of the World's Religions, "I greatly admire what you are doing to bring about the Beloved Community, which is certainly what my dear husband worked for an ultimately gave his life."

Whether it's through his leadership as president of the Association of Global New Thought where he stands with co-creative leaders on the threshold of an evolutionary leap that dares to call an end to human suffering, as the author of Forty Day Mind Fast-Soul Feast and A Manifesto of Peace, or as co-founder of the Season for Nonviolence, a grassroots effort expanding the power and truth of non-violence, Reverend Michael stands before us as an exemplary guide to living in a world united by humankind's highest spiritual, philosophical, educational and scientific expression.

ON THE HEALTH CARE EQUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2003

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, in the backdrop of just returning from Iraq and seeing the challenges of our soldiers, might I offer to their families and those who lost their lives in the Black Hawk incident of just about 3 days ago my deepest sympathy.

I rise today because I am very proud to be joining with my colleagues in the offering of the Health Care Equality and Accountability Act of 2003, I believe one of the singular legislative initiatives of this century. I congratulate the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS), chair of the Congressional Black Caucus; the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN), chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Health Brain Trust; House Democratic leader NANCY PELOSI; Senate Democratic leader TOM DASCHLE; Senator EDWARD KENNEDY; as well as leaders of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ); Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus; and the Native American Caucus. This has been a tremendous coming together recognizing the need for curing disparity in health care in America.

I am very proud that this bill improves the diversity of our health workforce, improves data collection on health disparities, and helps to reduce the disparities by promoting accountability and strengthening the institutions that serve minority communities.

I am glad to have been the author of two particular pieces of this legislation, one that will create the Center for Cultural and Linguistic Competence in Health Care so that individuals who speak a different language, who have a different culture will be able to be treated by those health professionals who understand; and a piece to be able to give visas to those who will come and to treat those in the inner city areas and rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, this is a great bill. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will help to see this bill passed immediately to save lives here and abroad.

Mr. Speaker, across this great Nation the health disparities between minority and majority populations are staggering. As the economy continues to falter and as the unemployment rate spikes, millions of Americans are losing their health insurance. That state of affairs will only make the health disparities worse. Therefore, the introduction and movement of this legislation is imperative.

I commend my colleagues: Representatives ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), Delegate DONNA CHRISTENSEN, chair of the CBC Health Braintrust, House Democratic Leader NANCY PELOSI, Senate Democratic Leader TOM DASCHLE, and Senator EDWARD KENNEDY, as

well as Leaders from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, and the Native American Caucus. This has been a tremendous effort, and has truly resulted in a landmark piece of legislation.

This bill will expand health coverage, improve the diversity of our health workforce, improve data collection on health disparities and then help reduce those disparities by promoting accountability and strengthening the institutions that serve minority communities. Truly, this bill represents years of intense thought and discussion, and 9 months of hard work on both the House and Senate sides. It is the comprehensive approach that this important issue deserves. The Healthcare Equality and Accountability Act is a solid foundation upon which we can build a strong healthcare system that will bring quality affordable healthcare to all Americans.

I am also pleased to be the author of two pieces in this landmark legislation. First, this act will create the Center for Cultural and Linguistic Competence in Health Care. Too often, even people who can afford to pay for quality care receive second-rate services because healthcare providers cannot speak their language or relate to their cultural health backgrounds. Good medicine is more than dispensing pills; it is about communication and an understanding relationship between doctor and patient. The center will help foster that kind of relationship.

Also, drawing on my expertise as ranking member on the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims, I was gratified to contribute a piece that will provide appropriate visas for healthcare providers to come to the U.S. to work in underserved areas as needed.

It is a misconception that minority health care is just about helping minorities. Keeping Americans healthy ensures that children can stay in school and that their parents can go to work. It ensures that our emergency rooms are not glutted. It ensures that our hospitals are not wasting time and money chasing the uninsured with massive bills they cannot afford to pay anyway. Keeping Americans healthy ensures that all of our friends, neighbors, and loved ones can have longer, more productive lives to contribute to our communities and to our economy.

We all pay the cost of leaving people in America without health coverage. We cannot afford to pay that high cost any longer. The time for health equality is now.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

BAD DEAL FOR AMERICA'S SENIORS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of confusion from the debate earlier tonight about what the so-called pharmaceutical benefit for seniors is or is not. Let us just clarify things a little bit.