

Madam Speaker, I sincerely hope that my colleagues will join me in celebrating the life of Askouhy Jallyan-Vassilian. Her legacy will continue to serve as a reminder of the audacity of human resilience.

IN HONOR OF SPIKE LEE

**HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH**

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 31, 2008*

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today in honor of distinguished producer, writer-director, educator and actor, Spike Lee, whose insightful, intelligent films have had a significant impact not only on the film industry but also on American political discourse.

The son of a jazz musician and teacher, Shelton Lee was born in 1957 in Atlanta, Georgia and later moved to Brooklyn, New York, the setting for many of his films and home of his production company, 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks. Mr. Lee learned the value of film as a tool of social commentary and developed his film making skills while attending Morehouse College, where he made his first student film. He also took film courses at Clark Atlanta University and later earned a degree from Tish School of Arts graduate film program at New York University. Through his films and ability to capture the attention of audiences everywhere, Mr. Lee's films such as "Do the Right Thing" and "Malcolm X" have been used as vehicles to significantly raise levels of social awareness about a variety of important social and political issues that continue to plague American culture and society.

He has revolutionized the role of Black talent in cinema. Widely regarded as one of today's premier American filmmakers, Mr. Lee is a frontrunner in the "do it yourself school" of independent films. His most recent work, "When the Levees Broke," a ground breaking documentary focusing on the plight of Americans stranded in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, has garnered rave reviews and is considered by many to be the definitive account of that catastrophic event.

Mr. Lee's trend-setting filmmaking, acting, and groundbreaking producing are just a few of the contributions he has made to greater American culture throughout his career. He has not only paved the way for numerous filmmakers, but has also positively changed public conversations on many social issues.

Madam Speaker and colleagues, please join me in honoring the talented and inspirational producer and director, Spike Lee, whose genius will continue to touch the lives of generations to come.

HONORING DERICK RAY BONNER

**HON. SAM GRAVES**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 31, 2008*

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Derick Ray Bonner of Kearney, Missouri. Derick is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of Amer-

ica, Troop 1397, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Derick has been very active with his troop, participating in many Scout activities. Over the many years Derick has been involved with Scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Derick Ray Bonner for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

COMMENDING THE IMMIGRANT  
AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO NEW  
YORK CITY'S VIBRANCY

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 31, 2008*

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my delight that immigrants have carved out a sacrosanct place in the American story and accordingly introduce a New York Daily News piece showcasing that contribution. The vivacity and freshness that come with a heavy immigrant population has been a defining characteristic of New York City—and we have been the better for it. We define ourselves as a city of immigrants and recognize the importance of the Statue of Liberty as a symbol of what has helped make our city great. We live immersed in a potpourri of culture, all components distinctly American but each with flair and a kaleidoscopic beauty.

Our children have benefitted most from this variety, learning not just from their teachers, but from a diverse cast of neighbors and peers. The February 14 article—"Immigrants' Stories Not Foreign to Kids"—narrates the story of a New York classroom filled with Americans, through and through, all with ancestral ties to foreign nations. This newest generation will inherit this country far better equipped to be citizens of the world than generations before them. They are bound by a fervid love and allegiance to America, their home, married with a sensitivity and respect for our global neighbors.

It is a good day in America when our commonalities bind us, and our differences bring us that much closer.

IMMIGRANTS' STORIES NOT FOREIGN TO KIDS

It's a wonder immigrants in the U.S. haven't been blamed for global warming. After all, from the crumbling economy to increases in crime, they've been accused of just about every other of society's ills.

Which is why walking on Tuesday into teachers Joe Briscat and Kristen Grolimund's fourth-grade class at Public School 199 in Long Island City was so uplifting. Their students are lively, smart, curious and diverse, everything you would expect from New York kids. And as it can happen only in this city, particularly in Queens, they—or their parents—come from 11 different countries.

"Raise your hand if your parents came from a foreign country," the group of 24 9- and 10-year-olds was asked. All the students did.

There was Anita, a self-assured 9-year-old with big green eyes who wants to be a doctor. A Muslim, she was wearing a beautiful gold head scarf.

"My parents are from Yugoslavia, but I was born here. I am a citizen," she said proudly.

And there was Ángel, also 9, with a ready smile and mischievous eyes, who wants to grow up to be a pilot. He came from Mexico with his parents, as did Maura, who is tall for her 9 years and very shy.

"I want to be a teacher," she said.

Tenzin, 9, was born in Tibet and was not shy at all. And Shrabonti, 10, arrived in New York from Bangladesh and is proud of her good grades.

"I love school," she said.

That's why "A City of Immigrants—Dreams and Realities of Life in New York, 1840-2007," the history course Briscat and Grolimund are teaching, is so appropriate. For these kids, history is more than learning about events that took place many years before they were born.

For them, the history of New York is their own and that of their parents; it is the struggle and the hopes and dreams of people like themselves who make our city vibrant and alive and unique.

"Immigration has defined the history of New York City," reads the introduction to the curriculum of "A City of Immigrants," which was developed by the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives of LaGuardia Community College.

This became even more evident for the students on Tuesday, when three of the people they had been studying in class—all of whom have their immigrant experiences chronicled in the fourth-grade curriculum of "A City of Immigrants"—came to visit them.

Esther Levine, born in 1919, was the daughter of Morris Levine, one of millions of Eastern European Jews who fled religious persecution from the 1880s through the 1920s.

She told the children about her father, who became a traveling salesman, about Dora, her mother, and their life on Essex St. on a very different lower East Side of Manhattan.

Juan Rodriguez, a graphic designer at LaGuardia, a Dominican immigrant in his mid-30s, dreamed of being a baseball player. The kids were fascinated by his tale of playing pelota with a glove made from cardboard in his native country when he was about their age.

Fern Kahn, a former associate dean at LaGuardia, told the children about her life in New York in the 1950s, when she arrived from Jamaica to study at NYU. But it was when she spoke about her native country, and how she kept close ties with its culture, that the children could not stop asking questions.

"Many fourth- and fifth-graders, especially those in public schools in Queens, are members of these ethnic groups," said Richard Lieberman, the archives director. "By inviting Fern, Juan and Esther to speak to the class, the children will gain an understanding of their own place in history and the important role they play in American society."

They, these diverse New York children, will be the doctors, pilots and teachers of the future. And they will keep writing the history of our vibrant and unique city, which is, after all is said and done, their own story.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. STEVE COHEN**

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 31, 2008*

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, on Tuesday, March 12, I was unable to vote on roll No. 126