

Action Team (WHEAT) and his long involvement with the Clinton Exchange Club and Polish American Veterans are just a few examples of the breadth of his extraordinary civic engagement.

Madam Speaker, all of us in public life routinely rely on the advice of loyal friends and trusted advisors. I will forever be grateful to Don Lowe for his unfailing friendship and good counsel as a colleague in government throughout my career in congress. However, I am just as grateful that while he is leaving his position with the Town of Clinton, Don will remain in public service as the newly appointed Administrator for the Town of Bolton. Now more than ever, we as a nation and as a commonwealth need professionals like him in municipal government to help steer us through these uncertain economic times. Bolton will soon be in the steady hands of one of the most talented and devoted public servants I have ever known. On behalf of the U.S. House of Representatives, I want to extend to Don and his wife, Liz, our very best wishes for continued good health, happiness and success with heartfelt appreciation for all you have accomplished for the good people of Clinton, Massachusetts. You are a credit to your family and your community and make us all very proud.

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS VETERANS BRAINTRUST

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 26, 2009

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise during this Black History Month to congratulate Hons. SANFORD BISHOP, JR. (D-GA) and CHARLES RANGEL (D-NY) for joining me in convening the highly successful 20th Anniversary of the Congressional Black Caucus Veterans Braintrust during the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's 38th Annual Legislative Conference (ALC) held in Washington, DC. The 20th anniversary celebration covered three days of activities over September 24–26, 2008, with the collaboration of the African American Civil War Museum, the Vets Group and the National Association for Black Veterans. This was an important social, psychological and political achievement for the sustained work and growth of the Veterans Braintrust over more than twenty years. During that period the Veterans Braintrust has become the institutional memory for the Congressional Black Caucus on American veterans of African descent, much like the U.S. Naval Historical Center is for the Navy, and U.S. Army Center of Military History is for the Army. Thus, can justifiably be called the pre-eminent forum for debate, or discussion for public policy issues between veterans of African descent and government officials in the country. Second, the Braintrust deserves our special admiration for being the champion of diversity and inclusion for a much broader array of WWII, Korean, Vietnam, Persian Gulf and War on Terrorism constituencies; including our African veteran allies from abroad heretofore unrecognized and unrepresented. For example, the Ethiopian delegation that at-

tended reminded us that Ethiopia fought by our side during the Korean Conflict; was the only African country never colonized, and led the way for the liberation of the rest of Africa. Equally important, the Veterans Braintrust long ago adopted the expanded definition of veteranhood to include: families and friends, in order to recognize the central importance of family and friends, particularly when any veteran goes into the hospital, and second, as an authentic voice for black veterans, their families, and communities nationwide.

Yet, no less important, the 20th Anniversary took place during two of the most challenging moments in American history—America's worse economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 20s and 30s, and the sixth year of the war on terrorism, now the second longest war in American history, in which 4,000 soldiers have been killed, 30,000 wounded, and 14,000 seriously disabled.

Hon. CHARLES RANGEL (D-NY) opened the morning tribute session of the forum, which was dedicated to recognizing the contributions of our nation's African American veterans, by briefly explaining the economic crisis and its impact on us all. He also honored our invited guest speakers Hons. NANCY PELOSI (D-CA), BOB FILNER (D-CA), and JOHN CONYERS, Jr. (D-MI).

Next he shared a small piece of his own story of returning from the Korean War (1952) as an Army Sergeant with a Bronze Star, four Battle Stars and a Purple Heart. But somehow forgot he was a high school drop-out and ended up pushing a clothing cart in New York City's garment district, before finally going to the VA to request assistance.

More importantly, he pledged his undying support for the GI Bill, because, as he put it, "the only difference between being a drop-out on Lenox Avenue and a chairman in Congress was the GI Bill!" before turning over the reins to Ron Armstead, Executive Director of the Veterans Braintrust, who has been with us since the beginning in 1988. Ron promptly began by saying "forums that begin with an invocation and end with a benediction are a blessed occasion," and invited Leon Bryant, Sr., Pastor of Capitol City SDA Church to give the invocation.

Throughout the morning session more than 250 people were on hand as we paid special tribute to the courageous African American men and increasingly women of the military who dedicate their lives to preserving our precious freedom and continuing way of life. Our special guest, Emmy award nominee Actor John Amos, called the honor roll of black military units from the segregated World War II and Korean War eras to the integrated Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq wars. Remembering their selfless service and sacrifice to national defense throughout the entire 20th century, and returning home to join the fight for equal rights.

Most importantly, we focused on the long legacy of service of those who undertake the armed defense of the sacred principles of the Constitution, Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights that all men (and now women) are created equal, have thus earned the right of every African American full citizenship through honorable military service, and as Dr. W.E.B. DuBois said in 1906, for "all true Americans." Thus Congress, the Executive Branch, states, commonwealths, territories, counties, municipalities and communities

across the land ought to be deeply indebted to these all too often forgotten warriors who fought the most bitter of ironies in America's history: for democratic ideals abroad while the practice of racial discrimination persisted at home. But as the historic inauguration of President Barack Obama proves, their hope, faith and loyalty have been vindicated.

Seated on the dais were Anthony Brown, Lt. Governor from the state of Maryland, highest ranking black elected state official to serve in Iraq; Hon. SANFORD BISHOP, JR. (D-GA), Member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and I, Senior Member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Co-Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation 38th Annual Legislative Conference and Veterans Braintrust Co-Convenor; keynote speaker Secretary James Peake, MD, Department of Veterans Affairs; Rev. Dr. James Forbes, Jr., President & Founder of the Healing of the Nations Foundation of New York; special guest of honor Actor John Amos, Honorary Master Chief of the USCG and Navy, and New Jersey National Guardsman (best known for his role as Kunta Kinte on the hit CBS miniseries *Roots*, and NBC's Emmy award winning hit series, *The West Wing*, as Admiral Percy Fitzwallace, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff); Hon. Louis Stokes (D-OH) Retired Congressman and Past Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies, Past Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust and WWII veteran, and Dr. Roscoe Brown, an original Tuskegee Airman and Congressional Gold Medal Recipient.

The afternoon session consisted of a unique Stakeholders Roundtable Discussion on Veterans' Issues supported by the Hon. BOB FILNER (D-CA), Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee and his senior committee staff. The roundtable was moderated by Dr. William King, and featured the following subject matter experts and discussants: Dr. William Lawson, MD, Ph.D., Dr. Shirley Marks, MD, MPH, Dr. Lorraine Blackman, Ph.D., LCSW, Dr. Cedric Bright, MD, Dr. Reginald Wilson, Ph.D., Dr. Beverly Coleman Miller, MD, Dr. Donna Holland Barnes, Ph.D., Dr. Cheryl Royster Branker, Ed.D., Judge Robert Russell, Jr., Haywood Fennel, Sr., Sidney Lee, Maceo May, Amy Fairweather, Col. Ann Wright, USA, Ret., Sgt. Natasha McKinnon & Jason Lindsay, disabled Iraqi veterans & students at North Carolina State University; SFC Vontella Fludd, USA, Ret., Two Tour Iraqi veteran and mother of two accompanied by First Sgt. Ronnie Robinson, USA, Ret. and Local Union Vice President, American Federation of Government Employees, along with committee staff members to address a lengthy list of black veterans issues and concerns.

Additionally, special invitations were extended to the major veterans' service organizations to enhance ways of building closer relationships between them and minority veterans. Further, the VA provided us with case workers who were present to respond to questions from individuals in the audience.

The roundtable discussion opened with brief presentations on PTSD and other health related issues such as VA health disparities, disability benefits difficulties, employment concerns and/or discrimination, post secondary education challenges and other issues of particular interest to black veterans. The outcome

product was a video recording of the session, which in turn will be transcribed in order to produce a document, or written report for presentation back to Reps. BISHOP, JR. (D-GA), and RANGEL (D-NY) of the Veterans Braintrust, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Democratic leaders in the House, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and others recommending ways to address the unique needs of both Iraqi & Afghanistan returning soldiers, and their families, as well as African American, or black veterans and provide thoughtful proposals for legislation.

Later that evening I hosted the 20th anniversary gala reception and awards ceremony at the Washington Grand Hyatt Hotel. Among those publicly recognized and acknowledged on this special occasion were Judge Robert Russell, Jr. who was presented the Citizens Beneficiary Award by the Mike Handy Foundation and Fund, for his unique Buffalo Veterans Court Treatment Program in the state of New York along with the U.S. Army Freedom Team Salute recognizing Frederick Gray, President of the Black Iwo Jima Veterans Group; Brig. Gen. Robert Cocroft, President and CEO of the Center for Veterans Issues; and Joseph Stevenson, a World War II veteran.

Other 2008 Braintrust awardees included: Actor John Amos, Sgt. Nathaniel Bass, USA, Ret., Asa Gordon, Dr. Richard Danford, Jr., Ph.D., Dr. Edward Brown, Dr. Vincent Patton III, Maj. Gen. Rosetta Burke, NYANG, Ret., Thomas Jones, Sr., Christopher Moore, Dr. Charles Simmons, Howard Wright, Thomas Yarosz, Halley's Comet Foundation, Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Tubman African American Museum, Smithsonian's National Museum for African American History and Culture, Parting Ways Historical Site, Sankofa Restoration Project, Myrl Billings Memorial Veterans Center, and Doubleback Productions.

Finally singled out for special praise was the Association of the 2221 Negro Volunteers of World War II, who served in white Army infantry units during and after the Battle of Bulge. Afterward the private reception and awards ceremony was opened to the general public for a party with entertainment provided by Tori Robinson of Paris and Recording Artist Betty Wright.

My special thanks go to Roslyn Burroughs, Anthony Hawkins, Mae Campbell, Forest Farley, Jr., Dr. Frank Smith, Jr., Brigadier General Robert Cocroft, Joe Wynn, Jack Evans, Dr. Vince Patton III, Belinda Foster, Dr. Martel Teasley, Dr. Michael Kane, Dr. Cheryl Royster Branker, Karen Freeman Wilson, Carmen Wilson II, Lucretia McClenny, Thomas Harris, Pastor Leon Bryant, Sr., Maceo May, Jason Young, Clarence Slaughter, Jean Davis, David Thompson, Maj. Myles Caggins, USA, Tonya Collins, Medgar Evers College and Congressional staff members Emile Milne, Kenya Handy, Holly Biglow, Kiwanis Harvey Styles, Roshan Hodge, Lee Footer, Alexandra Ward, Sonya Passi, Jonathan Halpern, Edwin Larkins, Tony Buckles and Malcolm Shorter.

May God continue to Bless America, and thank all veterans for their service.

48TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
PEACE CORPS

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 26, 2009

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 48th Anniversary of the Peace Corps and in doing so, join many others around the nation in celebrating National Peace Corps Week. Their mission is to help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women while helping to promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served, as well as, a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

Since the establishment of the Peace Corps by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, more than 195,000 U.S. citizens have served their country in the cause of peace by living and working in 139 countries throughout the world. As of September 30, 2008, 7,876 Peace Corps Volunteers are making significant and lasting contributions to improve the lives of individuals and communities in 76 countries.

I am proud to say that three of those volunteers currently serving their country are from my district in West Virginia. Both Ashley M. Hess (Burkina Faso) and Garrett C. Prendergast (Mongolia) will finish up their two years' of service in August of 2010, while Stephanie D. Zorio will finish up her two years' of service in the Philippines in November of 2010.

Peace Corps volunteers have made significant and lasting contributions around the world in agriculture, business development, information technology, education, health and HIV/AIDS, youth and the environment.

The 195,000 citizens, who have volunteered to serve their country since 1961, came from all walks of life and represent the best of what the United States has to offer. The work they have done over the past 47 years has played an important role in developing nations and continues to provide opportunities for people of different backgrounds to come together to serve the cause of peace.

SUPPORTING THE MEDAL OF
HONOR COMMEMORATIVE COIN
ACT OF 2009

HON. MARK STEVEN KIRK

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 26, 2009

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, I am proud to join my good friend Congressman CHRIS CARNEY as an original cosponsor of the Congressional Medal of Honor Commemorative Coin Act of 2009. This bipartisan legislation will assist the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation in raising the funds it needs to promote heroism and selflessness among our nation's youth—qualities which the Medal of Honor embodies.

First authorized by Congress in 1861, the Congressional Medal of Honor is our nation's highest award for valor in action against an enemy force. It is a symbol of how ordinary Americans can risk their lives and go above and beyond the call of duty in defense of our great nation.

Since its inception, fewer than 3,500 Medals of Honor have been awarded to members of the United States Armed Forces—approximately half during the Civil War. Today, there are only 111 living recipients. These select few exemplify the values of our great nation through their incredible acts of bravery and commitment to our country.

As the first U.S. Representative-reservist to be deployed to an imminent danger area since World War II, I know first hand the sacrifices and challenges our men and women in armed forces face. It was an honor to serve with uniformed Americans in Afghanistan and it is in their honor that I join Mr. CARNEY in introducing this legislation today.

EXEMPLARY STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

HON. GREGORY W. MEEKS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 26, 2009

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Madam Speaker, There are wonderful examples of academic achievement and community service taking place in Southeast Queens high schools. Many students throughout the New York Congressional 6th District are performing at such a high level in their academic work and community activities that it deserves public recognition. I have been so inspired that I initiated the Exemplary Student Achievement (ESA) award program to honor these young citizens who are emerging as our community's future leaders.

Since the inception of the ESA program in September 2008, I have partnered with administrators and faculty in various Southeast Queens high schools to identify and honor worthy students. It has been my privilege to award the following students with Congressional Achievement Awards:

Andrew Sargeant of Business, Computer Applications & Entrepreneurship Magnet High School

Brian Herb of Queens High School for the Sciences at York College

Chandraika Niranjana of Math, Science Research & Technology Magnet High School

Cleavelyn Murray of Humanities & the Arts High School

Deborah Hector of Humanities & the Arts High School

Dookumarie Persaud of Jamaica High School

Kevin Thom of Humanities & the Arts High School

LeeAnn Anderson of Queens High School

Mariamama Donzo of Hillcrest High School

Marquise Moore of Business, Computer Applications & Entrepreneurship Magnet High School

Miriam Gonzalez of Hillcrest High School

Oniyebiyi Hinton of Humanities & the Arts High School

Peter Brown of Math, Science Research & Technology Magnet High School

Philipnary Thuyamany of Jamaica High School

Reaz Khan of Jamaica High School

Robin Singh of Queens High School for the Sciences at York College

Shannon Gordon of Humanities and the Arts High School