

ensure the further advancement of women in our country and around the globe.

INTRODUCING A RESOLUTION TO COMMEND THE AUSTRALIANS' UNQUALIFIED APOLOGY TO INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AND TORRES ISLANDERS

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation that commends the Australian government for apologizing for its mistreatment of Indigenous Australians and Torres Islanders, and for committing to fighting the disparities that continue to impact Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Australians first arrived on the continent more than 50,000 years ago, developed one of the oldest cultures on earth, and made world renowned contributions to the arts, politics and athletics despite the hardships that they faced at home.

From the mass killings of Indigenous people by European settlers during the 18th Century to restricting Indigenous Australians from the right to vote until 1962, violence, discrimination and disenfranchisement have however, played a significant role in European and Indigenous relations for centuries. Perhaps Australia's most notorious action against the Indigenous population during the 20th Century was the Australian government's authorization of the removal of tens of thousands of children of native and mixed ancestry from their homes under the Protection Acts. These were inspired by racist and pseudo-scientific notions of cultural and racial superiority, and designed to eradicate Indigenous culture and the very existence of the Indigenous people. The victims of this national atrocity are often referred to as the Stolen Generation.

Madam Speaker, the legacy of official and unofficial discriminatory practices by the Australian Government has contributed to substandard education, health, employment and lack of political power among Australia's Indigenous population. On average, Indigenous Australians die 17 years earlier than white Australians, and have higher instances of infant mortality, unemployment and homelessness. These figures are a jarring reminder that Australia's prosperity has yet to fully reach the people who first inhabited the land.

On February 13, 2008 millions of Australians of all colors and ethnicities witnessed Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's formal apology—on behalf of the Australian Government and its Parliament—to the Indigenous and Torres Island community. The long awaited apology was accompanied with a promise from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to donate \$4.6 billion to fund initiatives to improve life expectancy, health, education and employment in Indigenous communities. Nearly a year later, Prime Minister Rudd addressed the nation and reported on the status of the initiatives that were implemented and drafted after the apology, and reiterated the importance of change and reconciliation.

Madam Speaker, American Theologian Tryon Edwards said, "Right actions in the future are the best apologies for bad actions in

the past." The value of Australia's apology is undoubtedly determined by the Australian government's ability to aggressively address the systemic inequalities that exclude most Indigenous people from the standard of living that is held by the vast majority of non-Indigenous Australians.

Like Australia, racial disparities exist in the United States. As we commend Australia on its willingness to confront its past, let us also reflect on our history with the purpose of comprehensively targeting the residual barriers that prevent some Americans from accessing opportunities in this country.

A TRIBUTE TO KO-THI AFRICAN DANCE COMPANY OF MILWAUKEE

HON. GWEN MOORE

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the internationally renowned dance troupe, Ko-Thi African Dance Company of Milwaukee. In May, 2009, Ko-Thi African Dance Troupe will celebrate its 40th anniversary.

Much of the success of the Ko-Thi African Dance Company can be attributed to its founder and Artistic/Executive Director, Ferne Caulker. Ms. Caulker, born in Sierra Leone, West Africa is a creative genius blessed with the passion and determination needed to create a "family" of professional performers. She is a full professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in the School of Dance where she has taught since 1971. Ms. Caulker is not only a former Fulbright Fellow but a recipient of numerous award. She has made the music and dance of the peoples of the African Diaspora accessible to all Americans, especially African-American audiences. Twenty years ago she extended that vision to include a children's troupe, Ton Ko-Thi, to instill cultural pride and self-worth to children through the discipline required to create art.

The Company is comprised of both musicians and dancers trained in the history, mythology and techniques of art forms within the African Diaspora. The troupe utilizes a myriad of traditional instruments, authentic costumes, infectious music and extraordinary dance to educate and bridge the gap between cultures. Ko-Thi operates a comprehensive educational outreach program, Drum Talk that works with institutions to assist with expanding and diversifying any curriculum with the history, dance, and drumming of the African continent and its Diaspora. If you have had the privilege of attending a Ko-Thi Dance Company performance, you know it is a tremendous experience to observe their exacting stepping, pulsating vibrant rhythm and hypnotic movement. The Ko-Thi African Dance Company is Wisconsin's regional, national and international touring gem. They have performed in Japan, Canada and many venues throughout the United States.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to say the Ko-Thi African Dance Company hails from the 4th Congressional District and pleased to give praise to Ferne Caulker, the ensemble, and their Board of Directors. I wish them many more years of success.

RECOGNIZING FAIRFAX COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE DEPARTMENT RECIPIENTS OF THE FAIRFAX COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 2009 VALOR AWARD

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today, joined by my colleagues Rep. FRANK WOLF and Rep. JAMES MORAN, to recognize an outstanding group of men and women in Northern Virginia. These individuals have demonstrated superior dedication to public safety and have been awarded the prestigious Valor Award by the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce.

The Valor Awards recognize remarkable heroism and bravery in the line of duty exemplified by our public safety agencies and their commitment to the community. Our public safety and law enforcement personnel put their lives on the line everyday to keep our families and neighborhoods safe. More than 80 awards were presented at this year's ceremony in a variety of categories: The Lifesaving Award, the Certificate of Valor, or the Bronze, Silver, or Gold Medal of Valor.

Nine members of the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department earned this high honor. It is with great pride that we submit their names into the Congressional Record:

Recipients of the Lifesaving Award: Shift Captain Ronald A. Gemsheim Jr. and Firefighter Brian J. Bonkoski.

Recipients of the Certificate of Valor: Technician Michael S. Eddy, Technician Tie L. Burlow, Technician Kathleen M. Vorbau, and Firefighter Medic Damian C. Ripley.

Recipients of the Bronze Medal of Valor: Station Captain Tony C. Kostecka, Firefighter Miguel Obleas, and Firefighter Henry T. Chan.

Madam Speaker, in closing, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the men and women who serve in the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department. Their efforts, made on behalf of the citizens of Fairfax County, are selfless acts of heroism and truly merit our highest praise. We ask our colleagues to join us in applauding this group of remarkable citizens.

INTRODUCTION OF THE GERIATRICS LOAN FORGIVENESS ACT OF 2009

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 12, 2009

Ms. DeLAURO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Geriatrics Loan Forgiveness Act of 2009. This bill would take an important step towards encouraging more health professionals to enter the field of geriatrics and care for our aging population.

In 2011—just two years from now—the first baby boomers will turn 65. By 2030, the number of Americans 65 and older will have nearly doubled, to over 70 million.

Our nation currently has too few health care professionals who specialize in geriatrics to treat older adults with complicated illnesses,