

A BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE TO DR. MELVIN E. BANKS, FOUNDER OF URBAN MINISTRIES, INC.

HON. BOBBY L. RUSH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 15, 2009

Mr. RUSH. Madam Speaker, today it is my distinct honor and privilege to rise to acknowledge and congratulate one of my state's unsung jewels. Seventy-five years ago today, on October 15, 1934, Melvin E. Banks was born into this world in the, then, relatively small town of Birmingham, Alabama. From his humble beginnings in the segregated South, through hard work, perseverance and an abiding faith in God, today, Melvin Banks presides over the strong and thriving Urban Ministries, Inc., the largest independent African American-owned Christian publishing company in the United States.

UMI is located in Calumet City, Illinois, and this global, family-operated business is a vital part of our state's thriving, south suburban community. With all of the accolades and accomplishments that Dr. Melvin Banks has rightfully earned over the years, I stand here, tonight, Madame Speaker, simply proud to call him my friend.

Melvin Banks' life story is uniquely American. He often tells the story of discovering his faith in his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, at the age of 12. Even at that young age, his sense of faith and guidance was so strong that he accepted his personal call to minister the gospel to all who would listen. His evangelism began, literally, on some of the dusty back roads of Birmingham. One day, young Melvin encountered an elderly gentleman who recognized his spiritual gifts and referred him to a scripture that influenced his life's work. That scripture, Hosea 4:6, states, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Upon hearing those words, young Melvin knew that God's purpose for his life was to help spread the knowledge of the gospel of Christ through the unique, cultural lens of the African American experience. And from that moment on, Melvin Banks' dreams and life's work continued to grow and to prosper.

As Melvin Banks grew in the Lord, he also embraced the value of a good education. Banks graduated from Parker High School in Birmingham, in 1952, and he went on to study at the Moody Bible College, in Chicago, where he graduated in 1955. Continuing his education, Banks attended Wheaton College, earning a B.A. degree in theology, in 1958, and his master's degree in biblical studies in 1960.

After graduation, Dr. Banks chose to remain in Chicago and he soon got a job with Scripture Press Publications, a job that included sales. Dr. Banks' work with Scripture Press gave him his first opportunity to begin to understand how to market to African American consumers. It was that passion to serve his community coupled with his godly vision, professionalism and drive that ultimately led him to launch Urban Ministries, Inc., in 1970.

After founding Urban Ministries, Dr. Banks and his small staff operated out of the basement of his home for 12 years. As Dr. Banks' faith grew, so did his media ministry. In 1982, Urban Ministries occupied the second floor of a building located at 1439 West 103rd Street in Chicago. Guided by a vision that continues to serve him well to this day, Dr. Banks moved

Urban Ministries, in 1996, to its current 46,000-square-foot headquarters in Calumet City. Shortly before that milestone, it's worth noting that, in 1993, his alma mater, Wheaton College, conferred its esteemed graduate with an Honorary Doctorate in Literature, a recognition of his consummate stewardship over the written and published word.

And so, Madam Speaker, as I enter these words into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on this day, it's my pleasure to note these words from UMI's website:

UMI is the largest independent, African American-owned and operated Christian media company. UMI publishes Christian resources, including Christian education and Vacation Bible School curricula, books, movies and websites designed for African American churches and others seeking a diverse, Christ-centered perspective on faith and life issues.

Today, UMI is the largest, independent African American Christian publisher in the United States. UMI, literally, serves thousands of churches nationwide with curriculum resources, teaching materials, videos and other products aimed at instilling character in the youth and adults of our nation.

Madam Speaker, today, more than 10,000 churches utilize UMI materials, on a weekly basis, and a dozen different denominational groups call UMI their publishing partner—a distinction that gives this Illinois-based company its national and global impact.

Madam Speaker, for the more than 50 years that Dr. Melvin Banks has been a citizen of our great state, I'm proud to report that he has also been a devoted husband to his wife and business partner, Olive Banks, and the father to his children, Melvin Banks, Jr., Patrice Banks Lee and Reginald Banks, all of whom have worked with their father to help make this company the global leader it is today.

As I conclude this well-deserved tribute, let me also say that as my heart breaks for the thousands of children in this nation whose lives are cut short because of violence and unrealized dreams, my hope is that as these words enter the permanent annals of history that some young boy or girl will look upon these words and be inspired by the tremendous life of Dr. Melvin E. Banks.

My hope is that they will see in his life the hope, the determination and the abiding faith that God gave him. While every child may not have all the spiritual gifts that Dr. Banks enjoys, my hope and prayer is that they will see in his life what a made up mind can do.

PROJECT MEND-A-HOUSE CELEBRATES 25 YEARS IN PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 15, 2009

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Project Mend-A-House and its twenty-five years of service to the citizens of Prince William County, the City of Manassas and the City of Manassas Park.

A joint effort between private citizens and the Prince William County government, Project Mend-A-House was created in 1984. At the time, Lily Blackwell was a volunteer delivering meals to seniors who were confined to their homes due to disabilities. Her call to action began with the observation that a number of

seniors along her delivery route could no longer perform necessary home repairs. Basic home repair and some structural improvements were needed to ensure that these disabled seniors remained safe and independent. Ms. Blackwell partnered with Toni Clemons-Porter and Lin Wagener of the Prince William Area Agency on Aging to create the foundation of an organization that has now provided humanitarian assistance for a quarter of a century.

Project Mend-A-House completes home repairs and safety modifications to facilitate independent living for seniors, the disabled and low-income residents. Over the years, projects have ranged from fixing termite damage in an older home to making entire houses more accessible with wheelchair ramps, hand rails, shower seats and transfer benches. The work is truly a community effort. Local corporate partners provide monetary support, volunteers and building materials. Civic associations and faith based groups contribute hundreds of volunteer hours to Project Mend-A-House each year. Project Mend-A-House puts everyone to work regardless of skill level to improve the quality of life for our disabled, elderly and low income neighbors.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in commending Project Mend-A-House and its volunteers. The strength of a community can be measured by how it responds to the plight of the less fortunate, and Project Mend-A-House is certainly contributing to a robust spirit of community in Prince William County.

WEST PAPUA'S MESSAGE OF SUPPORT TO THE PEOPLE OF AMERICAN SAMOA IN AFTERMATH OF DEVASTATING TSUNAMI

HON. ENI F. H. FALEOMAVAEGA

OF AMERICAN SAMOA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 15, 2009

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, I submit the following message of support submitted by Tom Beanal, Chairman of the Papua Presidium Council, in response to the massive tsunami that struck American Samoa on Tuesday, September 29, 2009.

PRESIDIUM DEWAN PAPUA, JAYAPURA,
OCTOBER 7, 2009.

Hon. ENI F. H. FALEOMAVAEGA,
Rayburn House Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN FALEOMAVAEGA, on behalf of the people of West Papua, we are writing to express to you our greatest sympathy for the losses and sufferings of the people of American Samoa and other Pacific Islands caused by the recent tsunami.

Please accept our sincerest condolences to you. Please also extend them to your people. We are with you all in our hearts, tears, and prayers.

With God's grace, may you, our dear Congressman, and the people of American Samoa, find the strength to endure in this tragic tragedy.

TOM BEANAL,
Wakil Ketua,
HERMAN AWOM,
Moderator,
THAHA MOHAMMAD
ALHAMID,
Sekretaris Jenderal.