

pride in my district—not just because of its beauty but more importantly because of its meaning as a place of faith, unity and peace. I rise today to commemorate the laying of its cornerstone one hundred years ago and to congratulate the Bahá'í community for a century of worship in this magnificent temple.

The Chicago area has played a pivotal role in the development of the Bahá'í community in America. The first public mention of the Bahá'í faith was in Chicago on September 23, 1893. It happened at the World's Parliament of Religions, which was connected with the Columbian Exposition commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America.

In 1907, the Local Assembly of the Bahá'í of Chicago was incorporated, making Chicago the first local Bahá'í community in the world to acquire legal status.

The Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette has been a focus of the Bahá'í world for over a century. It began with the vision of 11 local Bahá'ís in Chicago, who began work on it in 1903. Its cornerstone was laid in 1912. In 1953, following two World Wars, the Great Depression, and numerous financial and technical difficulties, the Bahá'í community completed construction of the temple. Fifty years after its vision was conceived, this House of Worship, which was the first Bahá'í Temple in the West and is known as “the Mother Temple of the West,” opened its doors to the peoples of the world. The temple in Wilmette, like the six Bahá'í temples throughout the world erected after it, is free and open to people of all backgrounds and is offered as a place for peaceful prayer, meditation, and reflection.

One hundred years ago, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the son of the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, arrived in America and he participated in the historic cornerstone laying ceremony. A prisoner of the Persian and Ottoman empires since childhood, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá left the Ottoman prison fortress of Akka at the age of 67 and set out on a historic journey to the West, which culminated in a 239-day journey through America. He traveled to several important cities across the country and met with people of diverse backgrounds, teaching the elimination of racial prejudice, the equality of women and men, the unity of religions, and the fundamental oneness of all humankind.

Throughout his travels, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke of the great destiny of America. In a public talk in Cleveland, he stated, “This revered American nation presents evidences of greatness and worth. It is my hope that this just government will stand for peace so that warfare may be abolished throughout the world and the standards of national unity and reconciliation be upraised. This American nation is equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will adorn the pages of history, to become the envy of the world and be blest in the East and the West for the triumph of its democracy.”

One of the most significant events of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's journey was the laying of the cornerstone of the Bahá'í House of Worship on the shores of Lake Michigan in Wilmette. For several decades, Bahá'ís around the world sent money to support the construction of the temple. One of the Bahá'ís who wanted to support the construction of the temple, was Nettie Tobin, a humble seamstress living in Chicago. Nettie had no cash money to contribute for the Temple but thought she might find a stone for its construction. Nettie went to

a construction site and asked for a stone from the foreman, who pointed out to her a pile of rejected stones from which she could choose. With the help of a neighbor she got the large limestone home and sometime later, through an even greater effort involving a baby carriage and a wagon, deposited it on the temple grounds in Wilmette.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá arrived in Chicago on April 29, 1912, and, while there, penned a special prayer for America. The next day he spoke to over one thousand people gathered in Chicago for the public session of the Bahá'í Temple Unity convention on the subject of building the Bahá'í Temple. The evening before the laying of the cornerstone of the House of Worship in Wilmette—‘Abdu’l-Bahá the son of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, explained that places of worship have a special unifying power:

In brief, the original purpose of temples and houses of worship is simply that of unity—places of meeting where various peoples, different races and souls of every capacity may come together in order that love and agreement should be manifest between them . . . that all religions, races and sects may come together within its universal shelter, that the proclamation of the oneness of mankind shall go forth from its open courts of holiness . . .

On May 1, a chilly, blustery and overcast day, a tent was erected on the temple grounds and hundreds gathered for the dedication of the temple. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, standing at the center of the crowd, called for Nettie Tobin's stone. The ground was so hard that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá swung an ax to break through the rigid topsoil, and representatives of various races and countries came forward to share in the digging. After ‘Abdu’l-Bahá rolled the cornerstone into the ground he proclaimed, “The Temple is already built.”

On this hundredth anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone, I thank the Bahá'ís for their contribution to our district and I congratulate the Bahá'ís of Wilmette, Chicago, and, indeed, the world on this important centenary.

CASEY SOUTHWICK

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 26, 2012

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Casey Southwick for receiving the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth award. Casey Southwick is a 7th grader at Drake Middle School and received this award because his determination and hard work have allowed him to overcome adversities.

The dedication demonstrated by Casey Southwick is exemplary of the type of achievement that can be attained with hard work and perseverance. It is essential students at all levels strive to make the most of their education and develop a work ethic which will guide them for the rest of their lives.

I extend my deepest congratulations to Casey Southwick for winning the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth award. I have no doubt he will exhibit the same dedication and character in all his future accomplishments.

HONORING FLORA WALKER

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 26, 2012

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Flora Walker on receiving the Eleanor Roosevelt Award at the Michigan Democratic Party (MDP) Jefferson-Jackson Annual Women's Caucus Luncheon. She is a truly deserving recipient and I am pleased to see her contributions recognized with this prestigious award.

Not only has Ms. Walker blessed us with over forty years of service in Michigan, as well as continuing service with the UDW/AFSCME in Nevada, but she was also the first female president of the AFL-CIO in Michigan. Thanks to her efforts, the bar was set very high for those following in her footsteps. Her work has greatly enriched the common good and improved the lives of many families. I commend her and am grateful for her tireless work ethic and the important work she has accomplished.

The Eleanor Roosevelt Award hosted by the MDP honors members of the community who have furthered the ideals of the Democratic Party with their commitment to the party's cause. Each year one man and one woman are selected to receive this prestigious award, which recognizes their work as continuing the work of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his wife, Eleanor Roosevelt. It fills me with great pride to see my friend, Flora Walker, be the recipient in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, I would request that the House of Representatives join me in offering congratulations to Ms. Walker for her outstanding achievements. I commend the organizations and honorees for their important work in advancing the values of the Democratic Party and wish her the best of luck in all future endeavors.

CHEVELLE DASSOW

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 26, 2012

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Chevelle Dassow for receiving the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth award. Chevelle Dassow is a 7th grader at Mandalay Middle School and received this award because her determination and hard work have allowed her to overcome adversities.

The dedication demonstrated by Chevelle Dassow is exemplary of the type of achievement that can be attained with hard work and perseverance. It is essential students at all levels strive to make the most of their education and develop a work ethic which will guide them for the rest of their lives.

I extend my deepest congratulations to Chevelle Dassow for winning the Arvada Wheat Ridge Service Ambassadors for Youth award. I have no doubt she will exhibit the same dedication and character in all her future accomplishments.