

PROFESSOR HELLE PORSDAM: A DISTINCTIVE INSIGHT ON AMERICAN CULTURE AND THE LAW

**HON. TOM LANTOS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 13, 2000*

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to urge my colleagues to take notice of the work of a talented Danish scholar, Professor Helle Porsdam of Denmark's Odense University. Dr. Porsdam's book, *Legally Speaking: Contemporary American Culture and the Law*, which was recently published by the University of Massachusetts Press, offers evidence of her extraordinary perceptiveness in her analysis of American culture.

In *Legally Speaking*, Dr. Porsdam discusses the social impact of the law in the United States. Whereas many European and Asian nations find symbols of their national identity in royalty or an established church, Americans look to an institution far more consistent with our egalitarian roots: our system of justice. Despite our frequent frustrations with the legal profession—ambulance-chasing lawyers, legal "sharks," frivolous lawsuits, the O.J. Simpson trial—the law epitomizes our most cherished civil ideals of fairness and equality. When a citizen is wronged, we look to the courts to make things right. When a crime is committed, the courts offer our sole vehicle for judgment and punishment. When our rights are violated, our courts can restore them. For this reason, Dr. Porsdam contends, the law serves more than just a functional purpose for the American people: it is a "civil religion" in which we place a particular kind of faith. The courts arbitrate more than just lawsuits and criminal cases; they pass judgment on our hopes and dreams as well.

Dr. Porsdam's book analyzes America's moral investment in the legal system, and it further demonstrates how this facet of our national identity has permeated our culture. From *The People's Court* to *L.A. Law*, from Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities* to Scott Turow's *Presumed Innocent*, the evidence of our society's attraction to judicial institutions is overwhelming. Dr. Porsdam carefully and thoughtfully explores the connections between the allure of the law and our faith in it.

The perceptiveness of Dr. Porsdam in *Legally Speaking* has earned the endorsement of scholars across our country. Lewis D. Sargentich of Harvard Law School noted that the book is "full of valuable insight." Her "emphasis on the symbolic, unifying, aspirational side of law in American life, and her showing of this aspect of law through a close look at a series of contemporary 'cultural texts,' combine to produce a unique scholarly contribution." Maxwell H. Bloomfield, the author of *American Lawyers in a Changing Society*, was equally effusive, praising Dr. Porsdam's work as "an innovative and engaging study exploring the pervasive influence of law in the shaping of contemporary American culture. It is a strikingly original piece of work for which no comparable models exist."

Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with these distinguished scholars. I urge my colleagues to join me in reading *Legally Speak-*

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

ing and in appreciating the brilliant observations of Dr. Helle Porsdam.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. LOIS CAPPS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 13, 2000*

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, March 8, 2000, I was on a plane returning from my district and was unable to attend votes. Had I been here I would have made the following votes: Rollcall Nos. 29—"aye"; 30—"aye"; 31—"aye"; 32—"aye"; and 33—"aye".

IN RECOGNITION OF THE BROOKLYN CHINESE-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION'S TWELFTH ANNIVERSARY

**HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 13, 2000*

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Brooklyn Chinese-American Association (BCA) in honor of its Twelfth Anniversary.

An ancient Chinese proverb states: "If you want 1 year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want 10 years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people." Twelve years ago, the Brooklyn Chinese-American Association did just that. The Association started out as a small, social services agency with a mission to provide assistance to the growing Asian-American community in Sunset Park, Borough Park and Bay Ridge sections of Brooklyn.

Since then, the Asian-American community has seen tremendous growth and recent estimates show that more than 200,000 people of Asian descent now live throughout the borough. As a result, Sunset Park and its surrounding neighborhoods are commonly known as "Brooklyn Chinatown."

BCA has expanded throughout the years to meet the growing need of Asian-Americans by providing day care and senior centers, with a main community center and ten other service sites in Sunset Park, Borough Park, Bay Ridge, Sheepshead Bay and Bensonhurst.

Through its programs and services, BCA provides assistance to more than 800 individuals a day. Stepping into a new Millennium and its thirteenth year of community services, offering a wide array of new programs including comprehensive bilingual social services and other programs to meet the growing challenges in this new century.

What started out as a small agency has flourished into the largest community-based, multi-human services community development organization, providing assistance to Asian-Americans throughout the borough of Brooklyn as well as other parts of the city.

I congratulate BCA on its Twelfth Anniversary and wish the Association continued prosperity as it offers members of the Asian-American community guidance today, tomorrow and into the future.

*March 13, 2000*

HONORING VETERANS ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE KOREAN WAR

SPEECH OF

**HON. RUSH D. HOLT**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 8, 2000*

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, recently, the House of Representatives joined together in a bipartisan fashion to pass House Joint Resolution 86, legislation recognizing the 50th anniversary of the Korean war and commending the bravery and patriotism of the 5.72 million men and women who fought bravely in that conflict. I have spoken with many New Jerseyans who served in the Korean war, and I can tell you, this tribute is long overdue.

Too often we hear the Korean war referred to as the "forgotten war," because it was sandwiched between this Nation's victory in World War II and the Vietnam war. Because of that, the over 55,000 men and women who lost their lives in the Korean war, and those who served, sometimes do not receive the recognition and gratitude that they are owed. I am hopeful that Congress' passage of this legislation will serve as a first step towards reversing that gross inequity.

Victory during World War II signaled the beginning of a world where the United States shouldered the role of undisputed leader of the free world. America was the only democratic power capable of responding to the spreading advances of communism when North Korea commenced its attack on the south. With the aid of the Soviet Union and China, North Korea thought they would swiftly and easily unite the Korean peninsula under communist rule. Only through the blood and sacrifice of men in a thousand dark battles, was the tide turned and freedom restored.

The determination that America showed in Korea set in motion the events that ultimately led to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Soviet communism. By standing up for freedom and democracy in South Korea we sent a clear message that where democracy was threatened, the United States would stand firm. Here in Washington, DC, the inscription at the Korean Memorial reminds us that "freedom is not free," and that the young American men and women who have been willing to pay the price for freedom are owed a tremendous debt of gratitude. We must remember their sacrifices.

Mr. Speaker, the brave men and women who served in the Korean war fought not for personal gain, but rather to insure freedom for all generations to come. We must not forget what their blood bought. I hope my colleagues will join with me to honor and call attention to our nation's Korean war veterans.

MILITARY RECRUITERS SHOULD BE WELCOME IN HIGH SCHOOLS

**HON. DOUG BEREUTER**

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, March 13, 2000*

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member highly commends and submits for the RECORD