Tribute to the "The Puerto Rican Family of the Millennium," the Del Valle Family. Telesforo del Valle, Sr., Rafaela Leon del Valle and Telesforo del Valle, Jr., were honored on Wednesday, June 22, 2000, during the Puerto Rican Day Parade of New York, GALOS Corp. of New York and Puerto Rico and Manhattan Valley Senior Center.

Telesforo del Valle, Sr., was born in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, in 1908. He moved to Brooklyn before moving to "El Barrio" in Manhattan. He was a guitarist and a composer and in 1932 he became a member of a musical group called "Trio del Valle". In 1941, while studying law, he joined the National Guard and Civil Defense. In 1945 he made history as the first Puerto Rican elected Councilman at Large in the City of New York. He was also the first Hispanic candidate to form his own political party. In 1948 he became the first Hispanic from New York to run for the United States Congress.

Mr. Speaker, in 1958 Telesforo, Sr., and his wife Rafaela Leon del Valle, who was born in the town of Guaroa, Puerto Rico, formed an organization known as "Loyal Citizens Congress of America, Inc." They established offices in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx. They organized the first military troop of Hispanic cadets in New York and New Jersey to prevent and combat juvenile delinquency. A major goal of the organization was to provide guidance to workers and to intervene in labor disputes.

Loyal Citizens Congress of America had over a thousand members who were knowledgeable on the political and electoral systems. With their support, Telesforo, Sr., was appointed by New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller to be his campaign director in the Hispanic communities of New York State. Rockefeller won the Latino vote by 85 percent. It was the first time the Republican Party ever won in East Harlem.

In 1985, Mr. And Mrs. Del Valle were recognized with the "Valores Humanos" award. Mrs. Del Valle was honored by the newspaper "El Diario" as the most knowledgeable feminist in the State of New York. Their son, Telesforo del Valle, Jr., Esquire, is a criminalist who has followed in their footsteps and whose career and achievements are great sources of pride for them.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to the "The Puerto Rican Family of the Millennium," the Del Valle Family.

NEW TRIAL FOR GARY GRAHAM

HON. EDDOLPHUS TOWNS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 20, 2000

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to raise an issue of great importance to society's guarantee of due process and fairness to all of our citizens. As you all know we are less than two days away from executing a potentially innocent man. Gary Graham is a great weight of evidence, still unheard by a Texas court, that could establish his innocence. The evidence that he had an inadequate lawyer is so overwhelming that to put this man to death, without consideration of the evidence that could exonerate him, would be a travesty of justice.

Last week, 34 of my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus sent a letter to the Texas Governor, appealing to him to grant Mr. Graham a conditional pardon and the right to a new trial. Mr. Speaker, I insert a copy of this letter into the RECORD at this point. Were the relief we requested granted, Mr. Speaker, the Texas Court would be able to consider this important evidence that could exonerate Mr. Graham.

In a new trial, Mr. Graham's counsel would be able to effectively challenge the only evidence that was used to convict Mr. Graham—the testimony of a single witness. With the assistance of effective counsel, the court would hear that the witness initially failed to identify Mr. Graham at a photo spread the night before she picked him out of a lineup of four people. They shown to her was a .22 caliber gun found on Mr. Graham at the time of his arrest was determined by the Police Crime Lab not to be the weapon used in the murder. Further, the Court would hear from four other eyewitnesses mentioned in the police report who said that Mr. Graham was not the shooter.

In addition to this evidence available in the first trial that defense counsel failed to present, the Court would also benefit from "new" evidence obtained after the first trial concluded. The court would need to hear this evidence, consisting of statements from at least six eyewitnesses to the incident who affirmed under oath that Mr. Graham did not commit the crime for which he may soon pay the ultimate price. Because prior Texas court rules give persons convicted of a crime only 30 days after their trial to present "new" evidence, these exonerating testimonies could not be presented to the Appellate Court for consideration.

Mr. Graham may not be innocent, but as we stand here today we know that he has not been proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. We are talking about a man's life, one that cannot be brought back once we have taken it away. If we execute this man without a fair trial it will be an obvious contradiction to everything this country stands for and a dark day in our history.

Mr. Speaker, we have a choice today: we either hold strong to our principles and show that we are truly a nation of justice, or we allow a man to die in the face of strong evidence of his innocence. I urge my colleagues to join me in supposing justice, to show that a human life can never take a back seat to politics. In two days we will show that we are truly the greatest country of all time, or we will put our heads down in shame in the realization that a great country, a just country, and a truly democratic country does not yet exist.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES


Hon. George W. Bush, Governor, the State of Texas, Office of the Governor.

Re: Request for Stay of Execution, Grant of Clemency for Shaka Sankofa, formerly known as Gary Graham.

Dear Mr. Governor: As you are aware, time is quickly running out before the June 22, 2000, scheduled execution of Gary

HON. GEORGE W. BUSH,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 20, 2000

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to raise an issue of great importance to society's guarantee of due process and fairness to all of our citizens. As you all know we are less than two days away from executing a potentially innocent man. Gary Graham is a great weight of evidence, still unheard by a Texas court, that could establish his innocence. The evidence that he had an inadequate lawyer is so overwhelming that to put this man to death,