

"MY VOICE IN OUR DEMOCRACY"

A voice can easily be compared to a rock that is thrown into the most tranquil pond. The size of the rock is irrelevant because the slightest touch can change the water's surface forever. The ripples that emerge cannot be stopped until they reach the edge of the pond.

22 years ago when my parents immigrated to the United States of America, their dream of having a voice in Democracy began as a tiny pebble. They had abandoned the only home they had ever known, to blend into a nation they had yet to understand. They were only 2 foreign people, yet it was the promise of freedom that fueled their desire to leave a war-torn country. The legacy began with my parents' arrival: a stone of hope had been tossed into the pond.

To be the daughter of immigrants is unique. I am a ripple: a continuation of my parents' voice. Their pebble has carried me only so far and now, I am getting ready to throw in my own rock to continue the cycle. My voice in Democracy speaks with the hope that, someday, there will exist a world where everyone can decide how his or her life will progress.

Democracy allows me, as an individual, to express concerns and beliefs without persecution. Many people do not understand that they have a gift. Their voices are heard in their actions as well as their speech. The worst crime an American can commit against his or her country is to be mute. Voices come in all shapes and sizes just like the stones that are thrown into the pond. A voice in Democracy need not be huge and bellowing to be noticed. Americans forget that ripples start out small and grow.

Democracy is not for spectators: it is an active sport that requires flexibility and at times, even arguments with referees. It is a game for and by the people, and its rules can change to help everyone be a winner. Democracy has the word "demo" in it, meaning I must be an example. I must demonstrate what it means to be an active voice. The responsibility I have is not only to myself but also to my neighbor who can gain inspiration from what some may call my courage.

I speak out on behalf of Democracy daily; my simple message is broadcast through my actions as a student, class vice president, and young adult.

My voice as a student interacts with many people of many nationalities and personalities. We share our aspirations and I have respect for the ideas of fellow classmates. Together, we are the future voices of Democracy. The greatest challenge I face is to learn more about the USA in order to effectively use my creativity to become more involved.

The responsibility of leadership can be a burden, as well as a reward. As class vice president, it is essential for me to realize the consequences of my actions beforehand. Democracy must benefit the majority in order to be successful. My voice in Democracy is not only a representation of myself, but also the needs of many. Remember, a voice should never be used selfishly.

As a young adult, my knowledge of the world is limited. However, I am preparing myself to face my country with a conscious effort to change the things that I can. After all, change starts with me. I cannot account for anyone but myself and have much enthusiasm for the power of my own voice in our Democracy. As I grow older, I hope that cynicism and doubt will not diminish the faith I have in my voice.

In his inaugural speech, John F. Kennedy once said: "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country." What exactly does each one of us

owe to America? Everyone's task is different but it is evident that people are neglecting their duty to simply voice their opinion. America doesn't exist as a Camelot; nor should we pretend that it does. But an active voice in Democracy can open doors that were once locked. It is only through the participation of all that Democracy can be maintained. It is vital for every American to realize that we have the potential to be the rock that begins the ripple.

RECOGNIZING THE TIRELESS EFFORTS OF THE KIDS FOR CORAL ORGANIZATION

HON. ROBERT A. UNDERWOOD

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 3, 1998

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise to recognize an organization from the island of Guam which has demonstrated its ability to raise community awareness of the importance of our oceans. It is befitting to bring such recognition to this organization, at this time, since the United Nations has dedicated this year to the Oceans of the world.

The Kids for Coral organization, will celebrate its tenth year anniversary in the coming year. The organization's initial membership included only a handful of seventh grade students. Oddly enough, what began as a simple class project blossomed quickly to include all other middle and high school grade levels. The prompt response from other students demonstrates a new generation's willingness to weigh in on issues that lay by the wayside on the agenda of policy makers.

The continued existence of the organization confirms its commitment to raise interest in caring for the coral reefs which surround our tropical island. I am sure that some can argue that that which is closest is sometimes forgotten. This may be the case with Guam's reefs. However, despite the maturation of Kids for Coral's original members, its organization continues to grow and pursue its goals of awareness and preservation. This growth assures that coming generations will work towards preserving Guam's reefs and oceans.

Guam is especially dependent on the ocean for its survival. Surrounded by the Pacific Ocean, anything arriving or leaving the island must do so by air or by sea. The majority of our goods and products, are transported in and out of Guam by sea. Though Guam's trade deficit is a reflection of its location, our evolving exports of; fish and crustaceans, mineral fuels, oils, waxes, agricultural products, tobacco, and beverages rely on world oceans.

Historically, our way of life as well as other island nations, states, territories, and possessions are heavily dependant on a clean and healthy ocean environment. More than four thousand years ago, when the ancestors of the people of Guam inhabited the island, their prime source of nourishment, recreation, and education revolved around the existence of the ocean. This still hold true today, and the role of the ever-changing oceans has expanded.

The people of Guam rely on the oceans not only for their own pleasures but for others as well. Guam boasts a tourism industry totaling 1.4 million visitors annually. They come not only for the sun and fun, but for the surf and

sand. It is in our best interest to take positive steps to recognize the value the oceans have to offer. It is to this end that we must continue to bring consciousness to preserving this natural resource.

The means by which Kids for Coral has tried to reach this goal is nearly endless. Ideas, wholly generated by the students, have included design and sale of bumper stickers and t-shirts, beach clean-ups, an annual Save the Reef Week, an art show, and presentations to other students. Kids for Coral has also sponsored a Coral Reef Awareness Conference, where more than 350 middle school students gathered to discuss the preservation of Guam's reefs.

Kids for Coral's local achievements and activities brought them quick attention to island residents. In 1993, their popularity was bolstered by placing first runner-up in the Region IX Presidential Environmental Youth Awards Competition. The following year, their hard work again paid off. International recognition of Kids for Coral, and the Island of Guam, culminated in the bestowment of the United Nations Environmental Program Award, one of only six given to children's groups worldwide. This award recognized their dedication to heighten community awareness of the reefs and the oceans that surround the Island of Guam.

We should all be as diligent in our work to recall the importance of the oceans of the world. The majority of our livelihoods are in some way connected to the water. Transportation, recreation, and sustenance of the world population is an ever connecting bond that begins with our very existence. Once again, during this Year of the oceans, I am proud to recognize the hard work of Kids for Coral.

Lauren Ahillen, Joan Baluyut, Owen Bollinger, James Brenner, Chris Butler, Shirley Chu, Joyleen Co, Cody Cousineau, Barbara Cushing, Christina Del Rosario, Jessica Georgelas, Diwang Gomowad, Tara Gonzalo, Chantal Guedon, Yoo San Ha, Thomas Ham, Tera Hannah, Ronson Ho, Eva Huang, Dana lone, Jean Jastillan and Seena Kallingal.

Sung Yul Kim, Un Kyun Kim, Priya Kodiyaplakkal, Richard Lee, Alex Leon Guerrero, Chalani Leon Guerrero, Adeoer Mabogunje, Maria Manibusan, Mia McCully, Jaya Medabalmi, Maria Perez, Amanda Peterson, Peter Querubin, Lola Rosario, Pika Rosario, Aman Sobti, Margaret Suda, Saori Tembata, Emi Yen, Quinn Yeomans, Whitney Yuen, Deborah Zee and Advisor: Janette Deagle.

KENNY DESAI, PRESIDENT OF TAK CONSTRUCTION, INC., NOMINATED FOR MINORITY CONSTRUCTION FIRM OF THE YEAR

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 3, 1998

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Kirti (Kenny) Desai, President of TAK Construction, Inc., of Clark, NJ, has been nominated by the Newark Minority Business Development Center of the Interracial Council for Business Opportunity, Minority Business Development Agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, for Minority Construction Firm of the year