

TRIBUTE TO FRANCISCO PANCHO MEDRANO

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 9, 2002

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the passing of a great American, a mentor and a friend, Mr. Francisco "Pancho" Medrano. The nation has lost a legendary civil rights pioneer with the death of Mr. Medrano, who dedicated his life to eradicating prejudice and intolerance in this country and fought mightily for fairness and equality for America's working men and women.

Mr. Medrano rose to great heights from humble beginnings, defying discrimination at every turn along the way. He was a native to Dallas, born in 1920 to Mexican immigrants who taught their young son the value of hard work as they headed northward to Michigan each year as migrant laborers. When Mr. Medrano was able to return to Dallas, he came back to a community that refused to let him swim in a public swimming pool or watch an evening movie in the park because he was Hispanic. At the age of 16, he was told by a school principal he was "too poor" to attend public schools, so he went to work at a rock quarry for 25 cents an hour.

Soon after, he became one of only a handful of minority workers on the line as an aircraft jig builder, where he often had to do a two-person job by himself because no one would work with a Mexican-American. And, while at the aerospace plant, he fought prejudice—literally—as a champion prizefighter who used his notoriety to integrate sporting events in Dallas.

Mr. Medrano had an illustrious five-decade career as a union organizer and civil rights representative with the United Auto Workers. During his tenure with the UAW, he became a national leader. He marched alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the civil rights movement, fought for fair labor standards on the farms of Texas and California with Cesar Chavez, worked tirelessly to advance workers' rights in the automobile industry, and spent decades promoting civic activism in the Dallas area.

Yet, for as much as he achieved in his life, Mr. Medrano never forgot the inequities of his childhood. He fought for the rights of all workers to peaceably demonstrate, broke racial membership barriers in labor unions, worked to defeat the poll tax and fostered civic participation in the minority community. His keen sense of justice caused him to work on behalf of African-Americans with as much fervor as he worked on behalf of Mexican-Americans, and his inspirational legacy is a challenge to all of us to continue to fight for social and economic justice for people of all races.

Mr. Medrano shared with me a fervent belief in the importance of voting rights and civic participation, and it is important that we strive to emulate the work that he has done in this area. Just last week, though he was desperately ill with the cancer that ultimately took his life, Mr. Medrano went to the polls and cast his ballot in the Texas Democratic Senate runoff election. He fought to get Dallas residents of all races and backgrounds more involved in the political process, and he pro-

vided support to people like me who dared to cross the color lines of Texas politics. Pancho Medrano offered his support and counsel when I decided to run for the Texas House of Representatives in 1972, he stood by my side when I ran for Texas Senate in 1986, and he was a tremendous friend to me when I made my run for Congress a decade ago. I couldn't have come this far without him.

Mr. Speaker, when we think about Pancho Medrano, we think about justice, courage and civic activism. His work to end discrimination and prejudice has had a profound and lasting effect on the lives of millions of Americans, and we will miss him dearly. His death on Thursday, April 4th, at the age of 81 is a great loss for the city of Dallas, and a great loss for the nation.

WE MUST STAND BY OUR ALLY ISRAEL

HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 9, 2002

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks, columnists and pundits have taken to the airwaves to proclaim the Middle East crisis as complex and complicated. Analysts have discussed the difficulties our government has in balancing conflicting interests and equities that have polarized a historic conflict between two peoples.

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't disagree more. Indeed, I view this controversy in basic terms.

On September 11, a line was drawn in the sand.

In the sands of the Middle East and in the rubble of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

The line does not divide religious groups. It does not divide cultures.

It does divide values. It divides extremists and fanatics from the civilized world.

On one side are those who deliberately and carefully target innocent civilians for death—whether they were reading memos at their desks in the World Trade Center in Manhattan; or reading from the Hagaddah at a Passover table in Netanya, Israel.

When terrorists crossed that line on September 11 and attacked our people, the full military might of the United States government was dispatched to retaliate against those attacks and prevent future attacks. We routed out terrorists in caves and tunnels. Similarly, when terrorists crossed that line on seven different days in seven different places in Israel, the same standard applied. There simply is no moral difference. Targeting innocent men, women, children and elderly for a savage attack is terrorism pure and simple. It doesn't matter where it occurs, when it occurs, or under what circumstances it occurs. It has no ethical defense. It has no other definition. In the interests of our own place in the world, in the interests of our own security, in the interest of our own defense, we must combat and work with others to combat terrorism without equivocation.

On one side of the line are those who teach their children to hate. Who feed their children a steady diet of intolerance. Who use classrooms to poison minds, to reject compromise,

to fuel extremism. Only on that side of the line do mothers celebrate the suicides of their children. Only on that side of the line did men and women cheer in jubilation when the World Trade Center towers collapsed.

On that side of the line, Mr. Speaker, are governments who embrace tyranny. On our side, are governments that cherish democracy. On one side are those who invest power in bombings, on our side are governments who invest power in voting. On one side are those who leave their people behind in squalor and despair; on our side of the lines are governments, comprised of all religions, who promote literacy, job expansion, economic development, education, technology, and an ability for their citizens to compete in a global economy.

On one side of the line are those who violently reject religious freedom, diversity, pluralism, a respect for different opinions, or room for different faiths. On the other side are those who believe that a diversity of ideas and beliefs makes us a better civilization. Indeed, America's great gift to the world was the revolutionary notion that freedom and liberty prohibits religious tests.

Earlier today, I gathered in the Capitol Rotunda with members of the President's Cabinet and our colleagues in the House and Senate, to commemorate and remember those who perished in the Holocaust. During the ceremony, Elie Wiesel said: "Those who kill in the name of their god make God a killer." He is right.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to return to basics. Through thick and through thin, we only have one truly democratic ally in the Middle East. Only one nation there shares our fundamental values of elections, education, economic opportunity, women's rights, and religious freedom.

At a critical time, our role should be to stand firmly with our ally while encouraging Arab and Palestinian leaders to resume negotiations rather than bombings to reach the ultimate goal of stability, autonomy, peace, and a place on the civilized side of the line that was drawn in the sand on September 11.

WE MUST CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ISRAEL

HON. JOE KNOLLENBERG

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 9, 2002

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, the situation in the Middle East has deteriorated dramatically in recent weeks. Secretary of State Colin Powell is now on a mission to the region. President Bush made the right decision to send him there, and now we must be very clear about the cause of the current conflict, now it its nineteenth month. As difficult and complex as the Middle East is, what's needed most is very simple: an end to Palestinian terrorism.

Despite the commitments Yasir Arafat has made to fight against terror, his actions have not met his words. Time and time again he's passed up opportunities, betraying the people he's supposed to lead. Because he has failed to join the fight against terror, Israel has been forced to fight it for him. As Secretary Powell heads to the region, he has another chance.