

of adoring family members, friends and fans, like me, throughout our Nation.

As a fan and admirer of Junious Norfleet, when I think of his life as an African American in these United States, I think that, in many ways, it mirrors the challenges, growth and triumphs of our nation. Junious was born in the town of Marion, Alabama on March 20, 1926 to the union of Jake and Indiana Norfleet. He was the youngest of 15 children, a "PK," or preacher's kid, who grew up in a loving, but disciplined home in the segregated South. Junious came of age enjoying his childhood. He learned the value of hard work while living in a large, rural environment where he was responsible for the care and upkeep of his own portion of land. There, his parents grew sweet potatoes, cotton and other produce and he recounted many days of happiness from enjoying something as simple and refreshing as watermelon on a hot summer day. He did share with his friends, though, that no children of his would ever have to perform such rigorous, manual labor. And he, indeed, delivered on that promise for his family.

With a father as a minister and the youngest of 15 children (ten boys and five girls), the church was always a big part of Junious' life. He grew up singing with his older brothers on the family farm in Marion, Alabama. They would perform at any time, anywhere, so long as people were around to listen. Junious was handsome and charismatic, the perfect lead for any music group. He possessed a booming voice that made others stop and take notice. As word of the Norfleet Brothers' talent began to spread, they gained their first taste of commercial success by hosting a 15-minute radio program which broadcast every Saturday afternoon from Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. It was in Tuscaloosa where The Norfleet Brothers recorded their first record.

As their singing abilities began to be recognized, in 1948, after some of his older brothers completed tours of duty in WWII, The Norfleet Brothers began to travel. They sang in churches and town halls in Tennessee, Cincinnati, Ohio and Chicago while driving across the country in their cherished, fiery red Chevy. Junious along with his brothers, Peter Young, Arthur and Joseph, his nephew, Wilson, cousin Nathaniel and their friend, George, made quite a name for themselves while building an adoring fan base. Their notoriety had a bit of a downside as, after performing in Chicago, they found that their red Chevy had been stolen. But their loss was Chicago's gain as they decided to make Chicago their home.

Never afraid of hard work, Junious and his brothers worked a variety of jobs while continuing to sing. A patriotic American, like his brothers before him, Junious served, state-side, in the Army from 1953 to 1956. During this time he continued to balance love of country, love of family and a passionate desire to build a career in music and entertainment. Like other talented African American artists at that time, Junious and his brothers had to struggle with unscrupulous record labels and managers during an era when Jim Crow segregation remained the law of the land. Still, the Norfleet Brothers continued their rise to prominence in the 1950s with a traditional, four-part harmony gospel sound that was backed with guitar. The group maintained this structure even as gospel moved toward heavier instrumentation and more of a "shout out" style of singing, according to author Bob Marovich

who is writing a history of gospel in Chicago. Songs on which Junious was featured as lead tenor included "Through it All" and "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." According to his wife, "Wade in the Water" was his favorite. During this time the group cut an album, "Shadrach," and were widely known for the song "None but the Righteous."

According to published reports, the cast of the group was fluid and they began touring in the late 1940s. Over time, The Norfleet Brothers were joined by other family members and an occasional outsider and, later, the sons of the original members also sang with the group. In 1957, they won the first place prize on the Morris B. Sikes Amateur Hour, a local television program. They appeared on several television programs and were hired to sing television commercials for a local auto dealer.

In 1963, The Norfleet Brothers became the host of the Emmy award-winning "Jubilee Showcase," Chicago's longest running television program (1963–1984). The Norfleet Brothers performed as the headlining act for 21 years! The group continued to perform at various churches and events. They held their annual gospel concerts at Hartzell Memorial United Methodist Church during the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1988, The Norfleet Brothers celebrated their 50th Anniversary in the music business with a concert at Olivet Baptist Church in Chicago.

Junious is survived by his loving wife, Janet, and by several children, grandchildren, a host of nieces and nephews, grand nieces, grand nephews and a legion of fans, young and old, who will miss his charming smile and his wonderful voice. In addition to this reflection, Junious Norfleet's legacy will live on as, in recent years, his grand nephew, Ronald Norfleet, his grand niece, Toni Reed, took the time to gather oral history from Junious that preserves the rich musical and family legacy he leaves behind. Reed, a Chicago-based documentary film producer, is working on a documentary feature film about her uncle's remarkable life.

My prayers and best wishes are forever extended to this large and loving family. I wish Ms. Reed and her family all the best in sharing the artistry, courage and musical gifts of Junious "Bud" Norfleet with family, friends and fans throughout the world.

#### SAN JACINTO DAY

#### HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, April 24, 2008*

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate one of the most important events in Texas history. Monday, April 21, Texans celebrated San Jacinto Day. In the past I have missed this event because I had to be in Washington for votes, but this year I was able to be at home in Texas, and actually be at the battleground where Sam Houston and Santa Anna fought over one hundred and seventy years ago.

On that day in 1836, approximately 900 Texan and Tejano volunteers overpowered a larger, professional Mexican army of conscript soldiers, after defeats at Goliad and the Alamo. These outnumbered volunteers succeeded because they were fighting against tyr-

anny and they were fighting for their homeland. In the words of the Texas Declaration of Independence, the people's government had been "forcibly changed, without their consent, from a restricted federative republic, composed of sovereign states, to a consolidated central military despotism."

The Texas Revolution proved the bonds of freedom are stronger than ethnicity, as many Tejanos sacrificed their lives for Texas' freedom at the battles of Gonzalez, Bexar, Goliad, the Alamo, and San Jacinto. The war was not between Anglos and Hispanics, it was a struggle between all Texans and the military dictatorship in Mexico City. Texans and Tejanos knew then what we know now—freedom requires sacrifice. Our young people going to or coming back from fighting in Afghanistan or Iraq are very aware of this hard fact of life.

Texas culture places high honors on heroes willing to sacrifice their lives for a better life for their fellow man, and Texans are known around the world as an honorable people who respond to the call of duty. While our young people are answering today's calls of duty, we should not forget those who have bravely answered the call in the past.

In that spirit, I want to highlight the work by the San Jacinto Chapter of the Daughters of the Texas Republic, who made the preservation of the San Jacinto Battleground possible by petitioning the Legislature to purchase the acreage and by donating their treasury to complete the sale in 1900. The San Jacinto Chapter of Daughters and the Texans Veterans Association did tremendous work to ensure that the legacy lived on, and the importance of the park has only expanded since then.

The park not only has the San Jacinto Monument to recognize the brave men that defeated the military dictator General Santa Anna, it is also home to the Battleship Texas, which is a symbol of Texans' sacrifices in World War I and World War II. Thankfully, through federal appropriations and state and local funding, the restoration and preservation of Battleship Texas is moving forward as part of a multi-year effort to collect the necessary funding for the restoration of this great historical site. The funding will help with the Battleship Texas Foundation's plans to restore the Battleship Texas and convert it into a museum. This is an important project not only to honor those in our past, but to educate future Texans who may have to answer future calls to service about our tradition of defending freedom.

As part of our historical preservation efforts, we are also working on the Buffalo Bayou National Heritage Area, which will stretch from Buffalo Bayou in East End Houston to San Jacinto Battleground, including the Ship Channel and the Baytown Nature Center. The Heritage Area will help the history of the establishment of the Texas republic. The restoration of the Battleship Texas and the establishment of a Buffalo Bayou National Heritage Area will go a long way to ensure that new generations of Texans know their tradition of bravery.

With an understanding of where they came from, future Texans will continue to respond to calls to service, and Texans will continue to be respected and admired around the world.