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Speakers

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| Speaker(s): | Donald M. Payne Jr.; Barbara Lee; Bonnie Watson Coleman; Cedric L. Richmond; George Kenneth Butterfield Jr. |
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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker\'s announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Payne) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

General Leave

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 days to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, let me begin by thanking the members of the Congressional Black Caucus who are joining me here tonight.

The topic of tonight\'s discussion is: the missing Black male. Tonight, as a caucus, we will address the issues affecting Black males, including incarceration, health, the increasing suicide rate among Black youth, and the missing Black male in our society.

It was recently reported by The New York Times that 1.5 million African American men are missing. What do we mean when we say 1.5 million Black men are missing? As we speak, hundreds of thousands of Black men are sitting in prisons throughout this Nation. Others have died from homicide-the leading cause of death for young Black men-and from diseases that disproportionately impact African American males.

Then there are others, like Freddie Gray, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, and Eric Garner, who are no longer with us because of excessive force by police which has cut their lives short.

It is clear that our law enforcement system and criminal justice system aren't working for African Americans and other minorities. It is also clear that we need a new approach into other areas, including reducing health disparities among African American men and boys. Tonight, we will diagnose the problems behind America's 1.5 million missing African American men and help identify solutions to this national problem.

While African Americans make up 14 percent of the U.S. population, they comprise 38 percent of those in the U.S. prison population and 60 percent of those in solitary confinement. In 2010, African American men were six times as likely as White men to be incarcerated in Federal, State, and local jails.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that is plaguing the African American community, as we see a disproportionate number of African American men who are incarcerated in this Nation. We are trying to figure out why they make up 14 percent of the population and 60 percent of those incarcerated. It just doesn't add up.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, who has allowed me to anchor this hour.

It is my honor to yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. Butterfield).

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. First, let me begin by thanking the gentleman from New Jersey for his leadership and for his willingness to lead this hour, not only tonight, but for agreeing to do it

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throughout this year. I thank the gentleman so very much for his leadership and for all that he does not only for the people of the State of New Jersey, but for America.

Mr. Speaker, statistic: for every 100 African American women, there are only 83 African American men. This gap equals 1.5 million Black men who are essentially missing from everyday life in America. These numbers are simply staggering. The fact that Black men have long been more likely to be locked up and more likely to die is a problem.

Compounded with the deep disparities that continue to impact the opportunities afforded to African American males, the gender gap leaves, as reported, many households without enough men to be fathers and husbands within the community.

The statistics show that most African Americans live in places with a significant shortage of African American men while most Whites live in places with rough parity between White men and White women. The two leading causes of this gap are incarceration and early deaths, with homicide being the leading cause of death for young African American males; but Black males also die from heart disease, respiratory disease, and accidents more often than other demographic groups, including African American women.

This gender gap does not exist in childhood as there are roughly as many African American boys as there are African American girls; yet, as they grow up, an imbalance begins to appear during their teenage years, and it persists through adulthood.

We now see an increasing number of suicides—yes, suicides—by young African American males while the rate for White children has declined. While any increase is problematic, we have to wonder. What is happening? What is happening with our African American youth that has led to this staggering increase?

The CBC is committed to reducing the school to prison pipeline so that our kids aren't unfairly profiled and placed in the criminal justice system. We are committed to ensuring funding for summer jobs programs and job training programs so that our youth have opportunities to develop their skills instead of having idle time during the summer months.

The CBC is committed to increasing resources for families and increasing family engagement. We must support programs and initiatives that will help us provide opportunities for young African American men.

Again, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for his leadership.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the chairman for gracing us with his comments and for demonstrating true leadership in the Congressional Black Caucus.

Next, we have a distinguished member of this caucus. She hails from Houston, Texas, and has always been on the right side of these issues and has brought light to them.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Houston, Texas (Ms. Jackson Lee).

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me thank the manager of this hour, Mr. Payne, and all of my colleagues and my chairman, who has just spoken and who set the tone very eloquently and with deep conviction.

In his having served on the supreme court for the State of North Carolina, Mr. Butterfield understands the issues of justice, and I applaud him for taking this cause up as well. The gentlewoman from New Jersey and the gentleman from Louisiana, let me thank them as well for the words that they will say.

Let me also say that this is a team and that we will work as a team on our respective committees to be able to bring this issue to a productive solution.

I have always said-as a member of the Committee on the Judiciary for a number of years now, serving on the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations-that we must breathe life into change, and as legislators we must come to a point where we bring legislation for final signature by the President of the United States of America. So I thank Mr. Payne for giving us this opportunity.

Let me rush quickly through my remarks because one could be here for a very long time. As I do so, let me take note that this is the 150th year commemoration of the 13th Amendment; that is the freeing of individuals from slavery. It is the 150th year also of the commemoration of Juneteenth, and that is, of course, a regional holiday that the Nation celebrates, which is the acknowledgment that the slaves were freed pursuant to the Emancipation Proclamation issued in 1863. Texans, who will celebrate this on June 19th, and many others travel throughout the Nation Juneteenth. I say that because it is a question of freedom. When we have the ability, Mr. Payne, to save lives, that is a question of freedom.

I want to thank The New York Times for writing about this research. I want to hold this up. "Rise in Suicide By Black Children Surprises Researchers." Researchers did not come predisposed to get this answer, but they got this answer. The opening sentence says: "The suicide rate among Black children has nearly doubled since the early 1990s." They did not expect this to come forward, but it contributes to the story in The New York Times: about 1.5 million men are missing. In New York almost 120,000 Black men between ages 25 and 54, missing from everyday life; Chicago, 45,000; and more than 30,000 are missing in Philadelphia. Across the South, from North Charleston, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and up into Ferguson, hundreds of thousands more are missing.

African American men have long been more likely to be locked up, more likely to die young. A city with at least 10,000 Black residents that has the single largest population of missing men? Ferguson, Missouri, where a fatal police shooting catapulted this question to the national attention.

Incarceration and early deaths are overwhelming. Of the 1.5 million missing men from 25 to 54, which demographers call the prime-age years, higher imprisonment rates account for almost 600,000. Let me say that again: higher imprisonment rates account for 600,000. Almost 1 in 12 Black men in this age group are behind bars, compared with 1 in 60 non-Black men in the same age group.

Whenever we talk about the shootings in South Carolina, Ohio, Ferguson, I hear people saying, what about Black-on-Black crime? As if we, as African Americans, run away from facts. We do not. But we recognize that the fight to preserve lives in the African American community is societal and holistic. It deals with education and job opportunities and health care and mental health care, and it calls upon the Nation to respond. But it does not put aside what we have faced over the years by killings of Black men, even from the time of slavery and Reconstruction into the 1900s, all through the time of segregation. We found that they were in the eye of the storm.

So let's not distract or detour from the crisis of incarceration and the crisis of what happens in the African American community in the justice system by suggesting that any of us are ignoring Black-on-Black crime. I am glad that the Congressional Black Caucus wants to look at the holistic issue of how do you solve this problem. It does not take the attacking of the Black community, of ignoring the fact that crime is perpetrated there. I think everyone knows that perpetrating crime impacts your neighbors, impacts where you live, just as it does in incidents dealing with White crime or White-on-White crime or Hispanic or Asian. People usually engage with those who are familiar.

So I am looking to work with this very august body to talk about how we can stop the tide of suicide and the incarceration of our young people. Let me cite these examples as I come to a close. Let me just give you the example of Kelvin Mikhail Smallwood-Jones, who was a dean's list student with a 4.0 grade point average on a full academic scholarship to one of the most respected historically Black colleges in the country. Prior to enrolling

in Atlanta's Morehouse College in the fall of 2006, he was a football star and homecoming king at his Washington, D.C.-area high school. An English sophomore, he dabbled in photography, mentoring at-risk youth in his free time. Last winter he was planning an elaborate birthday celebration, and he was preparing to accept a prestigious summer internship. He never made it to either. On February 23, 2008, less than 2

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weeks before his 20th birthday, Kelvin shot himself in the head with his mother's gun on the deck of a suburban Atlanta farmhouse that she bought to live closer to him.

This very statement is hurting, is hurting the family, but it means that we must collectively come together to address the question of the pain, of the disparate treatment, the disparate treatment in education, and to get to the source of Mr. Smallwood-Jones' pain so that we can, in fact, find a solution.

On the criminal justice-and I realize that criminal justice is not the answer to all, but it is a side parallel effort that we must correct in order to give dignity to those who may have detoured but yet do not need to be condemned for life. I intend to introduce a number of legislative initiatives besides those which are ongoing, as we are discussing the mandatory minimums, to focus on the criminal justice side of dealing with juveniles: an effective speedy trial, bail reform, and a solitary confinement safeguards for juveniles act. Most people don't realize that when these young men are incarcerated, rather than giving them an opportunity, rather than promoting the PROMISE Act of our colleague, Mr. Scott, and giving alternatives to incarceration, but more importantly to people's lives, we throw them in jail. Many of us know the tragic story of the 16-year-old who was in solitary confinement for 3 years, was ultimately released, and committed suicide.

So we look forward to our colleagues joining in this legislation, an effective, speedy trial, bail reform, and solitary confinement safeguards for juveniles act of 2015, to alter the holding of juveniles so that they come out whole and ready to be rehabilitated and to be welcomed into society. The Nonviolent Offenders Act, which will diminish the amount of time that African American men serve in a Federal prison system that does not have parole. And then we want to introduce the RAISE Act to establish a better path for young offenders to ensure that there is a way for judges, even though juveniles are treated differently, to give an alternative assessment in giving them or sentencing them when they run afoul of the law.

Mind you, they are in juvenile court for status offenses, for truancy and others. This young man was incarcerated for taking a knapsack, and he insisted he did not take it. That is why he was still there. He did not take it, but he couldn't get to trial. How horrible a life, 3 years of solitary confinement.

So, Mr. Payne, let me thank you for leading forward on this august day and time, this year of commemorating the 150th year of the 13th Amendment, when we were declared free, meaning the ancestors' African American slaves. It should be a telling moment that this is also the 50th year of the commemoration of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. This should be the year that we restore the voting rights to individuals who have detoured. We should restore section 5. We should preach freedom. We should encourage those who want to advocate for fixing the criminal justice system, which can incarcerate and enslave and as well deny freedom.

This is a time that we can join together in the Congressional Black Caucus and free people in the right way and put them on a pathway of contributing to this great country. They are worthy, and they have the talent, the stardom to contribute. I look forward to working with all of you for that journey and for those results.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues of the Congressional Black Caucus in this Special Order to speak to the issues that Members of the 114th Congress must address.

I thank my colleagues Congressman Donald M. Payne, Jr. and Congresswoman Robin L. Kelly for leading this evening's Congressional Black Caucus Special Order on "The Missing Black Male".

We are in a time where the news of young black men being incarcerated and losing their lives is all too common.

As highlighted in a recent NY Times article, 1.5 million black men are missing from everyday life, as a result of incarceration or early death.

In New York, almost 120,000 black men between the ages of 25 and 54 are missing from everyday life. In Chicago, 45,000 are, and more than 30,000 are missing in Philadelphia. Across the South-from North Charleston, S.C., through Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi and up into Ferguson, Mo.-hundreds of thousands more are missing.

African-American men have long been more likely to be locked up and more likely to die young, but the scale of the combined toll is jolting.

It is a measure of the deep disparities that continue to afflict black men-disparities being debated after a recent spate of killings by the police-and the gender gap is itself a further cause of social ills, leaving many communities without enough men to be fathers and husbands.

And what is the city with at least 10,000 black residents that has the single largest proportion of missing black men? Ferguson, Mo., where a fatal police shooting last year led to nationwide protests and a Justice Department investigation that found widespread discrimination against black residents.

It is critical that we look to training that will lead to cohesive policing in areas of minority concentrations.

We need to focus on improving relationships between law enforcement and communities most impacted by cases of police brutality and incarceration.

Incarceration and early deaths are the overwhelming drivers of the gap.

Of the 1.5 million missing black men from 25 to 54-which demographers call the prime-age years-higher imprisonment rates account for almost 600,000.

Almost 1 in 12 black men in this age group are behind bars, compared with 1 in 60 nonblack men in the age group, 1 in 200 black women and 1 in 500 nonblack women.

Higher mortality is the other main cause.

Homicide, the leading cause of death for young African-American men, plays a large role, and they also die from heart disease, respiratory disease and accidents more often than other demographic groups, including black women.

We also are seeing a shocking and troubling increase in suicide rates amongst our young black youth.

Also noted by the NY Times, the suicide rate among black children has nearly doubled since the early 1990s.

Between 1993 and 1997 suicide was the 14th cause of death among black children.

Between 2008 and 2012, suicide was the 9th leading cause of death among black children.

In 2005, when suicide was the 3rd leading cause of death among African-American youth-1621 of the 1,992 suicides completed by African-Americans were black boys (371 of 1,992 were female).

Thus, looking specifically to our young black men with this growing trend of suicide rates, we must highlight the fact that black males are six times more likely to commit suicide than their female counterparts.

Increase in Black male suicides is not surprising considering the "unique social and environmental stressors, including racism," they have to deal with.

Interestingly, just 4 percent of the nation's psychiatrists, 3 percent of the psychologists and 7 percent of social worker are black.

The mental health profession needs to become more culturally sensitive to the needs of our black youth and get out the message that it's OK to get help and be vulnerable.

Noticeably, girls get depressed and gravitate toward friends, family, church or other social institutions while through social conditioning.

Yet, black males are taught to tough it out, stand strong, to get a grip, and ultimately isolate when mental anguish becomes visible.

As we saw with the recent and tragic case of Kalief Browder in New York-his plight was ignored and overlooked for far too long.

Continued statistics and reports documenting the death and disappearance of our young black males is unacceptable and must be addressed.

We know that the disappearance of these men has far-reaching implications.

We know there is a correlation between the mass incarceration and the destruction of the black home.

The absence of black men disrupts family formation and foundation building for our young people.

This in turn results in vulnerable feelings of little or no self-value or self-worth and lacking direction or foresight on ways to overcome dangerous ways of thinking and living.

We need to give special attention to families and communities affected by incarceration and mental health problems-as we know many of our young black men are afflicted with abuse, trauma and unresolved stigmas of mental and emotional health.

It is time to acknowledge the cracks in our foundation and treat our young with the attention they deserve.

We can no longer ignore gaping deficits that exist for our young black males-namely, in education, health care, mental health services, and general opportunities for growth and success.

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This special order is an opportunity to highlight and raise awareness to the stark and tragic reality of young black males in America.

Now is the time to change the course and save their lives.

Mr. PAYNE. I would like to thank the gentlewoman from Houston, who always brings clarity to these issues and is a great contributor to the conscience of this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, the gentlewoman brings up a lot of good points in reference to incarceration and speaking about the young 16-year-old boy who spent that much time in solitary confinement and comes out and ends up committing suicide.

What we have found in this country, as they have broken down the mental health institutions over the years, that what we are doing in this country is warehousing people who have mental health issues in prisons, and it is a way to warehouse and get the problem out of the way so we don't see it, but a lot of people who are in prison these days have mental health issues and should be dealt with from that perspective as opposed to incarceration.

It is my honor and privilege to ask my colleague from New Jersey, the Honorable Bonnie Watson Coleman, who is known in New Jersey for her work around criminal justice in the State legislature and has joined us this year in the 114th Congress, for her remarks with respect to tonight's topic.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for yielding and giving me the opportunity to lend my voice to what I think is a crisis that we are experiencing.

As my colleagues before me have pointed out, particularly Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, we are in the midst of an American crisis, shaking the very foundation of the Black community. The word crisis should motivate us to act now. Crisis describes a need for immediate action. Crisis calls for an immediate infusion of resources. Crisis requires a meeting of minds to find answers.

If thousands of people disappeared in the prime of their lives, their friends, their families, their coworkers having no idea where they went, we would be calling that a crisis. Yet, for years, our young, Black men have disappeared from their homes, their communities, and everything that would have been their lives.

Violence has taken them. Violence that we could have avoided with stronger schools to give youth the outlet that they need. Better jobs and job training to prepare these men to be supporters of strong families. Prisons have taken these men, prisons that we support through a legal system that dehumanizes men of color and enforces policies that all but ensure these men will enter an endless cycle of recidivism where more than 67 percent of them will come back into the communities with no preparation, no assistance whatsoever in becoming whole and healthy in their communities.

This is a nation that is quick to see these Black men as a problem, and this is a nation that seems to continue to ignore and deceive the slow, steady disappearance of 1.5 million Black men. This is devastating to our families and to our whole communities. It is past time that we see this for the crisis that it is and invest the resources and intellectual power that will end it and save our men and our families and our communities.

There is a very witty African American comic who refers to the crisis of Black men and the need to get them on the endangered species list, because when we recognize that a species is endangered, we place value on that species. We place resources in every opportunity to ensure that they continue, that they thrive, and that they live in the habitats that are healthy for them.

Well, this is a situation of an endangered species. This is, indeed, a crisis. So I thank my colleagues for drawing attention to this issue.

Mr. PAYNE. I would like to thank my colleague from the Garden State of New Jersey. She has come to the Congress and hit the ground running. As great a legislator as she was in New Jersey, she is doing a magnificent job here in the Halls of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, we have touched on many different topics, many different issues, and it is just really a difficult circumstance that these individuals face, you know; tremendous barriers to reentering society and pursuing education and gainful employment.

When these men are incarcerated, their children suffer, too. Nearly 2 million children grow up in homes where one parent is in jail. Of course, lowering the incarceration rates means we need to reevaluate the war on drugs. One out of every three African American men will be incarcerated at some point in their lives. Most of these arrests are drug related. According to the National Urban League, mandatory minimums and disparities in crack cocaine sentencing incarcerates countless African Americans for an inhumane length of time, and that made the U.S. the world leader in prison population.

Now, is that something that this country wants to be known for? This has created a modern-day caste system in America. The incarceration rate for African Americans convicted of drug offenses is 10 times greater than that of White Americans, even though Americans engage in drug offenses at higher rates.

We need to focus on rehabilitating drug users instead of incarcerating them and making it nearly impossible to reenter society.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I would like to introduce the hero from last week's game between the Republicans and the Democrats where he pitched a magnificent game. Once again, we were victorious. I don't believe that we have lost since he has arrived in Congress. It is the honorable gentleman from New Orleans, the honorable Cedric Richmond, also known as "The Franchise."

I yield to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. Richmond).

Mr. RICHMOND. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for hosting our hour tonight, Congressman Donald Payne, who, like the old adage, is "a chip off the old block." His father was an outstanding Congressman from the district who did a lot for Africa, did a lot for urban cities. I see that Congressman Payne, although in his second term, has taken up the banner and is following in his father's footsteps quite adequately.

Tonight we are talking about the missing Black male. The good news and the bad news is that I found him, and we know where they are. They are incarcerated in prisons, they are in cemeteries, and they are in unemployment lines.

We know where they are not. They are not in the homes, and they are not providing leadership and mentoring to our young African American male children.

The question tonight, I think, why we are here and why we are talking about it is, if you can't talk about the problem and you can't identify it, then you will never get to a solution.

I come from an area and I was raised by parents who always told me that you can achieve anything you want to achieve. They gave me the nurturing and the support and the push up when I needed it, and they gave me the swift kick in the rump when I needed that, also. That is where we are.

I had prepared remarks, and I will defer to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Payne) on how he wants to go. But I think there are things that we can learn, and I think there are things that we should focus on when we talk about the schools, the prison pipeline, when we talk about youth summer employment.

You know, it is amazing that we never, ever talk about it, but some of the kids in some of our neighborhoods should get the Congressional Gold Medal just for showing up at school every day, because what they go through when they get home from school and all night until it is time to come to school again are conditions that we

shouldn't have children living in. The good news is that we can overcome all of that by doing criminal justice reform and providing another chance for kids and for parents who are incarcerated.

I had a juvenile court judge a long time ago write an essay and tell me a story about the fact that there are so many parents that are in jail, but the children are doing the time. And we have to make sure that children are not paying for the sins of their parents. That is where society will come in, and that is why I thank the gentleman. And I have more stuff, and it is just you would like to go forward, Mr. Congressman.

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Well, I think it is worthwhile to probably go into a little bit of my story, which is a little bit different from your story. And I think it is important for kids around the country and some of our colleagues to know it.

My mother is from the poorest place in America. She had 15 brothers and sisters. My grandmother was a housekeeper. So the family pulled together to take care of the 15 children.

My mother finished high school, and she went to college at Southern University. My father, on the other hand-my grandfather owned a funeral home, owned a farm, and was very well-to-do. My mother went to Southern University, sharing a jacket with her sister. My father went to Southern University with a brand-new deuce-and-a-quarter car because my grandfather didn't want him walking around his college campus with a bad heart.

They meet. They get married. They have two boys, and I am the youngest. My father dies when I was 7 years old of a heart attack while I was home. And I don't say that to say I grew up without a father figure and times were hard, because I missed my father and I missed out on the love and the nurturing, but I had a mother who was there every step of the way as a public schoolteacher. Then I had a grandfather and two grandmothers who stepped in to also give me guidance.

But one of the biggest factors in me developing into what I am today is the fact that I lived across the street from a public playground that was well funded. So my mother, who was the teacher, and my grandfather and grandmother who lived in Mississippi, and my other grandmother who lived in Lake Providence, the message was the same: Go home from school; do your homework; and then go across the street to the playground so that you could participate in organized sports.

That became very, very important because those men that coached me were role models. They didn't know it, and I didn't know it. But I can remember them saying: Cedric, you are too talented. You need to be a little more serious. You need to get focused.

They would do the same thing my parents would do, which was give me a push when I needed it and give me a swift kick in the butt when I needed it. And they led me to do and push myself to achieve things that I never thought I could achieve.

But we don't have that anymore. We have decimated the funding for after-school programs. We have decimated the funding for recreation in our urban cities. We have decimated the funding for public schools and the athletics and the extracurricular activities that go along with them.

I am not sure about your life, Congressman Payne, but those activities expose kids to things they never thought that they would ever, ever realize. Exposure is very, very good when a mind is developing. I don't know if you had those same experiences when you were growing up.

Mr. PAYNE. Well, Mr. Richmond, let me just say, and we have discussed it in private before, that I am the product of a very blessed circumstance in my life. My mother died when I was 4, and my father raised us, my sister and me.

All the things you talk about benefiting from, I have benefited from. But I have never lost the sight and was taught: There but for the grace of God go I.

So I have had circumstances in my life where I have been stopped by the police and have been told by that officer using the N word that if I did not find my license, they would throw me so far under the jail they would never find me.

Well, I was able to find my license after that and showed it to the police officer, and lo and behold, I become a human being again. Because, you see, my father was a councilman in that town. But prior to me showing my identification, there was the potential of someone never seeing me again because a police officer decided that

that should be my fate. So now this police officer becomes nurturing and is parental and he is asking me: Well, don't you know you could get hurt by doing that?

I had made a U-turn somewhere as a youngster I shouldn't have. But does my life have to end because I made a U-turn that I am thrown so far under the jail they will never find me until I become a human being because my father is a councilman in that city and now there is a concern for my well-being? No.

What about the 1.5 million Black males that don't have that recognition that we have? That is why I do what I do every day, to make sure that in this Nation, the greatest country in the world, every man is playing by the rules, doing what he is supposed to do, has that equal opportunity, and the men that need that kick in the rump or that extra push get that.

So my story is a little different, although it sounds the same.

My father lost his mother at a very early age. He was 8. And the family got together to buy a house, some aunts and uncles and the grandparents, so they could bring my father and his siblings in so they wouldn't get bounced around anymore like they were. And I truly believe that is the reason my father never gave my sister and me up because of what he went through as a child and his experiences.

So we have been very fortunate; and your articulation of your experience and us understanding that we have an obligation, being as fortunate as we have been and to have this bully pulpit, it is our obligation to speak out against the injustices that these 1.5 million missing Black men face every single day.

Mr. RICHMOND. Well, Congressman, I would tell you, except that, you know, I won't go into any incident that I have had with law enforcement. Let's just stipulate and agree that there have been many, and each one has made me a better person, some of which were warranted and some of which were unwarranted.

I will say we have raised an interesting question. And your last comment, I think, when you described your story with your parents, I think, shows how separate all of these issues are, but then how whole they are at the same time.

Because one of the things that many people don't talk about-and I wish our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, we could stop talking at one another and talk to one another-is that the issue of parental lead is so important because, as a bus driver once told our leader, every day she sees a parent coming to put their kid on the bus with tears in their eyes because they know that that child is sick and they should be home with that child, but they absolutely cannot lose a day's pay because they won't be able to feed that kid or pay the rent or pay to keep the lights on at the end of the month. Those are very real circumstances.

You have to believe that as America, as the United States of America, as the greatest country on Earth, the exceptional country that we are, we are better than that. We are better than making a parent put that kid on the schoolbus going to school sick because they can't afford to lose a day's work.

Let me just give you these statistics in Louisiana, because I don't want people to get the impression that it is just urban or it is just single-parent families. The Jesuit community at Loyola University in Louisiana did a study. One out of three two-parent households in Louisiana is economically insecure. Four out of five single-parent households, that is 80 percent of the single-parent households in Louisiana, are economically insecure. We have to do better than that.

Raising the minimum wage raises 14 million people out of poverty the day the President would sign the law. Those things are important.

What do those things have to do with the African American male? Well, the young African American male has parents. Too often, it is just a single mother raising that family. And we have to make sure that they have the means and ability to make sure that that kid can eat every day, because you absolutely cannot learn in school if you are hungry or if you have had a night where you are sleeping in a car or you don't have heat and all of those things. I think, as a Congress, we ought to come together and look at those very specific issues.

Mr. PAYNE. You know, the gentleman is absolutely correct. It reminds me of another story of some of those households where the circumstances are unfathomable.

My sister is a kindergarten teacher of 25 years. I don't know if she would like me telling the length of time, but she had a child in one of her classes several years ago, and the child would sleep all through class. You know, once

or twice, she let it go, but it became a persistent pattern.

She calls the parents and finds out that the reason that the child slept in school was it was the only safe place to sleep because, in the evening, the rodents that came out of the walls would bite them at night, and they would stay up most of the night trying to keep this circumstance off of them. When the child got to school, it was the only place that they could rest.

In this country, that is unacceptable, absolutely unacceptable. It is circumstances like that-now, how does that child get ahead? They are falling behind already, and this is kindergarten. The deck is stacked against a lot of these children when they show up to school.

Head Start and these programs have shown and demonstrated the upward mobility that they have given generations of children that need this type of service; yet our colleagues continue to thwart efforts to increase efforts we know that work-really, just kind of just dismiss that any of these social programs that have been instituted have any benefit.

That is not true. It is just not true. We need to continue to bring these stories up and explain to people why we fight every single day for these issues.

The whole issue, once again, around mental health issues, people walking the streets that need help and end up doing something that they are really unable to control and end up incarcerated-how does that help them? How does that help the circumstance in this country? Is it that we are just hiding the issue? We don't want to deal with it, so we just lock it up?

It is absolutely unconscionable, in this country, that we still act as if we are in the 1800s in this day and age.

Mr. RICHMOND. I am glad you brought up the monetary aspect of it because, look, Morehouse College, accounting major, I get numbers, and I get the concern that we have about the budget, the deficit and the national debt. The other thing that I know from my basic accounting classes is that we shouldn't talk about spending as the only criteria for how we judge things.

The conversation in D.C. should be about return on investment. Anything that gives us greater than a 1 to 1 return, then we can use whatever is greater than 1 to pay down the debt and the deficit and get us to a more balanced country.

Let me give you an exact example. You used Head Start, early childhood education. You get a 9 to 1 return on every dollar that you spend. Now, I am not chairman of Ways and Means; I am not over the Budget Committee; I am not on Appropriations, but in my simple household, when I was young, I knew that \$9 was greater than \$1, and that if you spend \$1 and you could get \$9 back, you could do great things with that extra \$9, like spend \$4 of it on reducing the debt, spend another \$5 on other programs that would give kids the opportunity to reach their full development, to also reduce crime, which means not only do you have less people incarcerated, but you have less victims of crime.

When we start evaluating the programs that we are talking about, that is what we need to focus on.

In Louisiana, when I was in the legislature, we paid around \$9,000 a year to our public schools to educate each kid, and we were spending about \$45,000 a year to incarcerate a juvenile. Now, in my public school education, that \$45,000 is far greater than that \$9,000, and it just doesn't make sense.

As we talk about the \$6 billion that we spend on incarcerating juveniles in this country-any given day, we have 70,000 juveniles that are in jail-\$6 billion. We could spend that money in better places to do better things to make the country safer and to help them reach their potential.

That is why I am glad that we are having this conversation tonight because it is about not just complaining about the problem, but identifying it and figuring out a way to solve it. I think that both sides could come together to try to solve this problem because, hey, victims of crime are victims of crime, and we should do everything we can to reduce that number.

Also, we need to get back to what I thought and still do think makes this country the greatest country on Earth, is the fact that we care and we love our neighbors and we want to see them do well. If we really want to see them do well, then let's invest in those things. Let's put our money where our mouth is, and let's do the things that we

know we can do.

If anybody is interested in really having that conversation, I know that both of us and the entire Black Caucus, we are willing to engage in that conversation. It is not all about spending money, but it is about spending it where you get a return and helping families be a family unit to nurture and push kids to achieve everything they can and give them that swift kick in the butt when they need it to achieve that also.

I just want to thank you, Congressman, for allowing me to participate in this Special Order Hour tonight to talk about an amazing-well, not an amazing problem, but an incredible problem that this country faces and the fact that we have the leadership to help solve that problem.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in the adage, "Education is the only sure way for many children to escape poverty."

Creating Opportunity for Our Young Men and Boys

Invest in our economy and infrastructure, 21st century manufacturing, job training, and raise the minimum wage.

More investments in summer jobs, summer recreation, and summer community service.

Criminal Justice Reforms to help give our young men a second chance after mistakes made
Better training for our police forces on cultural sensitivity and proper respect for our communities.

End the school to prison pipeline-pass my bill (see separate section).

youth opportunity legislation

To help ensure a strong, coordinated effort to give schools the tools they need to be schools instead of "pipelines to prison," and do more to build habits that will lead to success in the future, I have introduced the Student Disciplinary Fairness Act of 2015 and the Youth Summer Jobs and Public Service Act of 2015.

Juveniles that have been incarcerated are much more likely to become criminals later in life and much less likely to achieve economic success but providing employment opportunity increases the likelihood of favorable outcomes.

All of us who care about building strong, prosperous communities must do everything we can to ensure that involving our youth in the criminal justice system is used as a last resort, not as a routine first response.

We must make smart investments in our youth so that they can be present and visible in society and the 21st century economy.

Mr. PAYNE. I want to thank the gentleman from Louisiana for his remarks, and I appreciate him being involved in tonight's Special Order.

I am not surprised that he would be here on such an important topic. He has demonstrated numerous times his commitment to young people and their aspirations and motivating them to do the right thing and be successful, as he has been.

One thing that comes to my mind, Mr. Speaker, is as we talk about this issue, what is it that we find these 1.5 million men missing? They are human beings. They are Americans. What is the difference about these 1.5 million men, that they are African American? Does it go back in our history of 300 years? Does it have something to do with us, as a race?

I just wonder, sometimes, what is the difference; but I won't go there.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to thank the members of the Congressional Black Caucus here tonight for sharing their profound insights and observations. Your participation was greatly appreciated.

Every Monday night in this House, we have a remarkable opportunity to speak about the important work of the CBC to advance full equality and justice for African Americans in all communities in this Nation.

One of the most significant challenges our communities face is that of "the missing black male." Once again, to quote The New York Times: "More than one out of every six black men who today should be between 25 and 54 years old have disappeared from daily life."

Many of these men are incarcerated. Others have died from homicide and from disease that disproportionately affects African American males. The consequences of these missing men are

severe, not just for the men themselves, but for their families and for the entire society.

Strong communities lay the foundation to strong societies, but when our criminal justice system emphasizes incarceration over rehabilitation, we make it increasingly difficult for those individuals to become productive members of society. We need a system that holds criminals accountable, while focusing on rehabilitation of nonviolent criminals.

If we are truly to make our communities more secure, we also need to address health disparities among African American men. Health disparities are a burden to African American communities. African American men suffer from a number of disease, including colorectal cancer, at higher rates than their White counterparts.

Part of the problem has to do with stigmas, and this is an area which I have been working hard to address in my capacity as co-chair of the Congressional Men's Health Caucus.

Along those lines, we need to eliminate the stigmas around mental health and make sure that those suffering from mental illness have the resources they need. No one struggling with mental illness should feel isolated and that they have nowhere to turn. It is clear that we are not doing enough, as a society, to get them the help they need.

We should not be seeing an uptick in the number of African American boys dying from suicide, that dreaded suicide rate. For these young boys and for others, we need to listen, and we need to encourage them not to be afraid to seek help.

The problem of "the missing black male" is not going to be resolved overnight, but closing the gap is a goal we all need to aspire to for ourselves, for our community, and for our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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