

TRIBUTE TO MS. EDNA MITCHELL-STEWART

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SPEECH OF

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30, 2010

* Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to one of the most admired, most loved and most influential members of my community, and of my congressional district. She was not a minister, she was not a physician, she was not an athlete, she was not a gangster and she was not a public educator or well known philanthropist. She was a queen, the queen of soul, the queen of soul food. She was the owner of Edna's Soul Food Restaurant where she fed kings and queens but never lost the common touch.

* Edna and her father, the late Mr. Sam Mitchell Sr. opened Edna's in the 1960's and operated a number of businesses in the Garfield Park Community. Their good food, personality and community spirit propelled Edna's into becoming a community institution.

* During his stay in Chicago, it was one of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s, favorite eating places and of course they fed him and his staff often times for free. Over the years Edna's became the place to be, it was a meeting place for ministers, politicians, business persons and others. I have held regular meetings there for both my political and government activities.

* Mayors, governors, Presidents, entertainers, athletes and other well known personalities were there on a regular basis. Edna and her family were not just proprietors; they were a community institution, her parents, her sisters, including Judge Judy Mitchell Davis, her brother Sam, Sister Alice, all contributed greatly to the community. One former governor always called it Edna's Kitchen and would inquire about meeting there. Governor Pat Quinn earlier this year proclaimed Edna's Day while feasting on black-eyed peas and cornbread.

* Edna would hire young people and help them go to college. I cannot count the times she asked me about scholarships and financial aid for students.

* Edna did more than just manage a restaurant. She was a guidance counselor, a community resource, she hired people fresh out of prison, she fed the hungry, she clothed those who were naked, and she gave hope to the hopeless and provided help for the helpless. She was active in her church, participated in politics and played a substantial role in community affairs.

* Although Edna is gone, her spirit lives on in her recipes and in her legacy of generosity. Goodbye to our Queen of Soul . . . that is soul food.

