

**HONORING THE EMBASSY OF TURKEY AND THE ERTEGUN
FAMILY FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO JAZZ**

**HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.
OF MICHIGAN
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, a recent Washington Post article examined the Embassy of Turkey's role in promoting jazz in America. Former Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Munir Ertegun and his sons Ahmet and Nesuhi Ertegun were instrumental in raising the profile of jazz in the 1930s and 40s in the District of Columbia.

While growing up in Washington, DC, Ahmet Ertegun and his brother, Nesuhi, disregarded the racial barriers that divided the city and the country and hosted jam sessions at the Turkish Embassy. Many notable jazz artists performed, including Lester Young, Benny Carter, Meade Lux Lewis, Leadbelly, and members of the Count Basie and Ellington bands. On a recent visit to the Embassy, Ambassador Tan showed me a picture of Dr. Martin Luther King at the embassy with jazz musicians.

Later in his life, Ertegun went on to found Atlantic Records in 1947 as a record label for gospel, jazz and R&B music with partner Herb Abramson. His brother eventually joined the firm and created one of the most successful independent labels in American history. Many renowned artists joined Atlantic Records such as Ray Charles, Ruth Brown, LaVern Baker, the Drifters, the Coasters, Aretha Franklin and Led Zeppelin. Other artists shaped by Ertegun include John Coltrane, Stevie Wonder, and Mick Jagger.

Asked by the Slate magazine on his legacy, Ertegun responded, "I'd be happy if people said that I did a little bit to raise the dignity and recognition of the greatness of African-American music."

On Friday, February 4th, in acknowledgement of Black History Month, Namik Tan, the Republic of Turkey's current ambassador to the United States, announced a series of six concerts at the Turkish Ambassador's residence to highlight the unique role the Embassy played in the promotion of jazz music and racial integration and acceptance in our Nation's capitol. The first concert will be tomorrow and it will feature the Orrin Evans Trio.

As we conclude Black History month, I would like to pay tribute to the contributions of the former Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Munir Ertegun and his sons Ahmet and Nesuhi Ertegun and to their contributions to bringing jazz to the world.