



For Immediate Release

July 7, 2017

Grace Under Fire, Empathy, Perspective and Justice for All Highlighted in Remarks by Judge Jenkins at Day of Remembrance: Prayers and Reflections

Within minutes of the first shot, I saw grace under fire as officers on the street assisted me in reaching City Hall and the City of Dallas emergency operation center (EOC). I witnessed that same grace in the calm, resolute response of Chief David Brown and his command staff. The information we were receiving in the EOC made clear the targets of the assassin were the police officers themselves. Some of their friends and comrades were dead some were wounded and many more were in danger. Yet the mission never wavered from protecting and serving the public in harm's way.

As you know, most of that public had gathered to peacefully protest the police shootings in other cities of Philando Castille and Alton Sterling. That right to assemble is guaranteed by our constitution and protected by law enforcement. Yet, the action of one lone assailant brought two diametrically opposed forces - peaceful protest and violence - together in one instant.

Still, in this terrible moment, we saw such grace, courage and commitment to duty. I wish all people could experience the heroism of our first responders from the vantage point you have granted me as your county judge. But that is not possible.

We all view things from our individual perspective. "Perspective" is a keyword we have heard a lot this year. A perspective with which we all empathize is that of the families of the fallen. We will pray for five families whose pain is still fresh and ever present. For them today is especially hard.

I ask you weigh and respect some different perspectives from your own today as a way of honoring

- Lorne Ahrens
- Michael Krol,
- Michael Smith,
- Brent Thompson and
- Patrick Zamarippa,

the five officers who gave the ultimate sacrifice to protect all of us regardless of our perspective.

I wonder how many people will hear the words spoken today only long enough to determine whether the words are perceived to validate the listener's perspective and, if not, tune out the message and discount the messenger?

Too many people want the prize of peace and reconciliation without the hard work and sacrifice of seeking and finding true justice for all our neighbors. We ask too much of our police and first responders even as we cut the social safety net and ask our officers to catch everyone who falls through. Too many expect near perfection from fallible human beings who undertake a noble profession to protect and serve us and put their lives on the line for us every day.

There is not a binary choice between justice for communities of color or support for the police. These are complementary goals and this is a journey we are on together whether we like it or not. Whether we respect one another or not.

Respect is not a substitute for justice. The officers who died one year ago today did not lack respect. Neither did Jordan Edwards.

However, most healthy relationships are built on respect. Respect born of understanding one another; from being able to empathize with the other person's perspective.

Black parents have conversations with their children that white parents are unlikely to feel the need to have. Law-enforcement and their families face stresses the rest of us will never endure. I believe that if we can empathize with one another, we can move towards true justice for all faster.

I keep hearing the same question this week: have race relations improved this past year? I don't know the answer. One year is too short a measure to judge improvement in an evil that has plagued us for hundreds of years. I see progress in the fact that we are confronting problems rather than debating whether or not they exist.

Martin Luther King wrote "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." How fast and how far this generation travels on that Arc is up to all of us. I have faith we will travel far together if we empathize with one another, refuse to aspire to a false peace and recognize that true justice is our shared and worthy goal.

Contact: Clay Jenkins, Dallas County Judge
clay.jenkins@dallascounty.org
(214) 653-7949