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# Farewell to a Protector: VIPD Detective Delberth Phipps, Jr. Laid to Rest

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“Today is not a celebration,” said Governor Albert Bryan on Saturday as he addressed those who had gathered to say farewell to VIPD Detective Delberth Phipps, Jr. who was [shot and killed in the line of duty](#).

For the family, friends, and the brothers and sisters-in-arms of Det. Phipps, those words rang true. “Today is mourning...because this is one of us that has gone much too soon,” he said.

That was the poignant theme threading through the remarks of those who spoke at Detective Phipps’s funeral service – that a positive presence in the community had been ripped away from them at a critical time.

To his fellow officers in the VIPD and beyond, "Detective Phipps Jr. was a cop's cop – a LEO," said Sergeant Ludrick Thomas, special assistant to the commissioner. "Not astrology like a Cancer or Aries, but a proud law enforcement officer, like his father before him."

Being the named junior of his police officer father meant that Detective Phipps was known by many in the blue fraternity long before he decided to join them officially. As Dr. Luna Bailey Riley recounted in her eulogy, "sometime after making his 16th birthday, he came home with an old Chevy Sprint that he had purchased. He was determined to fix it to get it running, and that he did." The refurbished vehicle drew the attention of authorities, Dr. Riley noted. "One unforgettable day Delberth was out test-driving his Sprint, only to be pulled over by Officer Edward Brathwaite. When Officer Brathwaite saw who the operator of the vehicle was, all he could do was laugh as Delbert had been known to just about every officer since he was an infant."

As a "second generation police officer," said President of the Senate Novelle Francis put it, Detective Phipps "was a rising star in a department who had so much more to give in service to this community." He achieved that status through his "dedication, professional standards and strong work ethics," Mr. Francis assessed, urging the community to draw inspiration from Detective Phipps's example. "How do we pay tribute to a life that was so tragically cut short?" he asked. "We do so by renewing our commitment to serve." He exhorted those listening to make deliberate choices in their approach to life. "We can choose to heal and not hurt, to forgive and not hate, to persevere and not quit. We can choose to live a life of service that honors the promises and potential of detective Delbert Phipps Jr.," the Senate president said.

During his time at the VIPD, Mr. Francis said that he would pray as he got dressed before heading to work, that he would be able to get home safely at the end of his shift.

Lt. Governor Tregenza Roach said that Detective Phipps's tragic death had "reminded us of the vulnerability of those engaged in law enforcement, the fragility of each person who commits herself or himself to this mission, to protect the life and safety of the people of this territory."

VIPD Commissioner Ray Martinez said this grim reality is one which, by necessity, is compartmentalized by many police officers. "This profession sees and experiences the worst in human behavior," Mr. Martinez stated. "Yet day in day out, we continue to serve while tabling the realization that one or more of us may not return home to our families at the end of our shift. It is only when incidents like that of Delbert occur, that we are painfully reminded of these dangers," he remarked.

The commissioner urged those under his command to keep the faith. "I ask that let us not be swayed. We must endure. No matter the depth of pain we feel today. In Dell's honor, we must persevere," he said. "We must remain steadfast and vigilant. But most of all, we must continue to respond to calls for service and to protect this community with the same zeal that Dell responded."

Sergeant Ludrick Thomas said that the heroism displayed by Detective Phipps on that day "reignited the focus for justice, thereby ensuring peace and the clarion call to community safety." For residents of the territory, Sen. Francis urges that people undergo a radical rethink of how they will react to a negative scenario. "We can choose to heal and not hurt, to forgive and not hate, to persevere and not quit. We can choose to live a life of service that honors the promises and potential of detective Delberth Phipps Jr."

Governor Bryan echoed the sentiments of the Senate president. “So we could live life a little harder. We could love a little more. We could be a lot kinder. We could surf a little more. Let's make sure that we make his life count.”

These choices, the two men say, must be made despite the mountain of grief created by Detective Phipps's murder. “The pain of his death will hurt for a long time, if not forever, ” Mr. Martinez, the VIPD Commissioner, acknowledged. Mr. Roach admired the strength of the family of Detective Phipps. “I really, really want to thank his family, I want to commend them, because they have held themselves up. Throughout this difficult time, they have held themselves up and have supported us in our grief as well,” he continued. “And we cannot know, we cannot imagine the depth of their loss as they have participated in these public ceremonies, and have been an example of a family who recognize that this work could lead to this.”

“Though they have hurt and are hurting so tremendously, they've still managed to be here for us and hold us up as well. And I'm grateful for that,” the lieutenant governor said.

Chris Heisler, a retired Army special agent and president and CEO of The Honor Network, also singled out Detective Phipps's family for praise. “Especially mom and dad, thank you for allowing us to know who this person is. Your son, your father, your brother, an incredible police officer. Delbert will not be forgotten. He will not be forgotten.”

The family of Detective Delberth Phipps Jr. was presented with the Law Enforcement Medal of Honor Committee's Medal of Honor, as well as a certificate for the VIPD Medal of Honor in lieu of the actual medal. Mr. Martinez noted that the medal itself needed 5 weeks to be manufactured, hence the delay.