

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 18, 2016

To the brave members of our Nation's law enforcement community:

Every day, you confront danger so it does not find our families, carry burdens so they do not fall to us, and courageously meet test after test to keep us safe. Like Dallas officer Lorne Ahrens, who bought dinner for a homeless man the night before he died, you perform good deeds beyond the call of duty and out of the spotlight. Time and again, you make the split-second decisions that could mean life or death for you and many others in harm's way. You endure the tense minutes and long hours over lifetimes of service.

Every day, you accept this responsibility and you see your colleagues do their difficult, dangerous jobs with equal valor. I want you to know that the American people see it, too. We recognize it, we respect it, we appreciate it, and we depend on you. And just as your tight-knit law enforcement family feels the recent losses to your core, our Nation grieves alongside you. Any attack on police is an unjustified attack on all of us.

I've spent a lot of time with law enforcement over the past couple of weeks. I know that you take each of these tragedies personally, and that each is as devastating as a loss in the family. Sunday's shooting in Baton Rouge was no different. Together, we mourn Montrell Jackson, Matthew Gerald, and Brad Garafola. Each was a husband. Each was a father. Each was a proud member of his community. And each fallen officer is one too many. Last week, I met with the families of the Dallas officers who were killed, and I called the families of those who were killed in the line of duty yesterday in Baton Rouge. I let them know how deeply we ache for the loss of their loved ones.

Some are trying to use this moment to divide police and the communities you serve. I reject those efforts, for they do not reflect the reality of our Nation. Officer Jackson knew this too, when just days ago he asked us to keep hatred from our hearts. Instead, he offered—to protestors and fellow police officers alike—a hug to anyone who saw him on the street. He offered himself as a fellow worshipper to anyone who sought to pray. Today, we offer our comfort and our prayers to his family, to the Gerald and the Garafolas, and to the tight-knit Baton Rouge law enforcement community.

As you continue to serve us in this tumultuous hour, we again recognize that we can no longer ask you to solve issues we refuse to address as a society. We should give you the resources you need to do your job, including our full-throated support. We must give you the tools you need to build and strengthen the bonds of trust with those you serve, and our best efforts to address the underlying challenges that contribute to crime and unrest.

As you continue to defend us with quiet dignity, we proclaim loudly our appreciation for the acts of service you perform as part of your daily routine. When you see civilians at risk, you don't see them as strangers. You see them as your own family, and you lay your life on the line for them. You put others' safety before your own, and you remind us that loving our country means loving one another. Even when some protest you, you protect them. What is more professional than that? What is more patriotic? What is a prouder example of our most basic freedoms—to speech, to assembly, to life, and to liberty? And at the end of the day, you have a right to go home to your family, just like anybody else.

Robert Kennedy, once our Nation's highest-ranking law enforcement official, lamented in the wake of unjust violence a country in which we look at our neighbors as people "with whom we share a city, but not a community." This is a time for us to reaffirm that what makes us special is that we are not only a country, but also a community. That is true whether you are black or white, whether you are rich or poor, whether you are a police officer or someone they protect and serve.

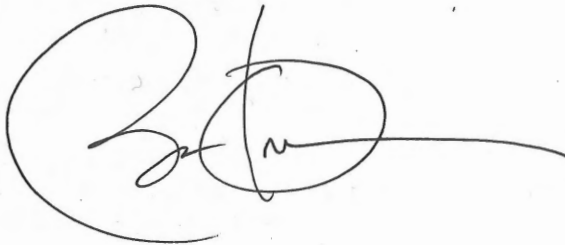
With that understanding—an understanding of the goodness and decency I have seen of our Nation not only in the past few weeks, but throughout my life—we will get through this difficult time together.

We will do it with the love and empathy of public servants like those we have lost in recent days. We will do it with the resilience of cities like Dallas that quickly came together to restore order and deepen unity and understanding. We will do it with the grace of loved ones who even in their grief have spoken out against vengeance toward police. We will do it with the good will of activists like those I have sat with in recent days, who have pledged to work together to reduce violence even as they voice their disappointments and fears.

As we bind up our wounds, we must come together to ensure that those who try to divide us do not succeed. We are at our best when we recognize our common humanity, set an example for our children of trust and responsibility, and honor the sacrifices of our bravest by coming together to be better.

Thank you for your courageous service. We have your backs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "R. Kennedy", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned below the word "Sincerely," and above a horizontal line that extends to the right.