

## **In support of Bill No. 36-0191**

### **Honoring and Commemorating Detective Delberth I Phipps, JR.**

#### *The Testimony of Demel A.V. Phipps*

On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the worst thing in the world happened to me. In a fleeting moment, I lost one of the largest pillars of my childhood journey. My mother lost her greatest partner, and my grandparents lost another son.

The weeks that followed were a bitter pill to swallow. Not only was there a sudden tsunami of attention shadowing me, but there were a lot of expectations that had taken root as well. Expectations that I'd never had to go through or process before.

Subconsciously, I always knew that it'd be impossible to prepare for such a thing, no matter how much time you spend thinking about it. But that concept can only really be appreciated and understood once it happens. And that was one of many lessons that I had to learn the hard way.

When my family came to me and asked to testify for the potential changing of Hospital Gade Street name, I wasn't sure what to do. Writing has been my passion for as long as I could remember myself, yet for some reason I was stuck. Not because I had nothing to say, but because there was so much that I could say that could speak as to why such a decision should be considered, nevertheless fulfilled.

Since he's been gone, my grasp on just how much my father meant to the people that he came across has never been firmer and clearer. There's a feeling hard to describe when you're walking down the street one day, and somebody recognizes you without even having to say anything. Of course, St. Thomas is a small island. With only 32 square miles, everybody's bound to know somebody. This feeling isn't like that, though. Whenever someone hails you up on the street, usually it's not to pay condolences.

In spite of the quiet giant my dad may have been known to by others, to me, my dad also stood for everything that a Virgin Islander should. From young, he taught me respect, and how to talk to my elders. He instilled in me the importance of proper greetings. If I didn't say good morning or good night to someone and he found out about it, I'd be in for a lecture when I got home. For as long as I knew him, he was also a man of service. He was always working to help somebody. From his time as a chef, cooking and serving food for hungry people to eat; his days as a TSA officer, ensuring that every plane that took off from the Cyril E. King airport was safe for its' passengers. And his most formidable service as a police officer, in which he followed in his father's footsteps and was well on his way to becoming even greater.

But I also remember my dad as a friend behind his shield. My father was involved in everything I did, and he always included me in everything he did. His love of motorcycles and travel. The lazy days of playing video games or working in the garage. Us, hanging out on our Sunday family days, which usually meant a meal somewhere and a movie – preferably a scary one as we also had that in common. The fondest memories were of our driving lessons and going out to fish. Admittedly I wish we had done the former way more often.

Since he's been gone, I've felt that I've had impossible shoes to fill. My dad pushed me and with him gone, I can physically feel the void on my back. That's just how deep his impact was. My father was a man who could even treat violators of the law with decency and kindness, so much so that they even attended his viewing to pay their respects. There's not many people who can achieve that level of recognition. The respect that comes from a silent integrity that outlives you. That to present day people unanimously verbalize, "That man was a good man".

Which is why, when it comes to the decision of honoring a legacy left behind, to erect a symbol that stands for a person's influence on this island and community, my father's name qualifies to be among the greats to be memorialized. When people look up at the brand-new sign of a new street, they'll understand what took place for it to get there, as well as the importance of that person for which it has been named. Moreso, to commemorate his sacrifice, forever etched for those that come after. To hopefully inspire others to do the right thing, no matter what situations they might find themselves in and with no hesitancy or consideration to personal sacrifice for standing firm.

For my father, and for the love he had for his islands, I can think of no other person who deserves it more.