

A TRIBUTE TO JUDGE JUSTICE

It is an honor to pay tribute to Judge William Wayne Justice, who has been an inspiration to me since I clerked for him almost ten years ago. The Judge's commitment to justice and his imperviousness to public hostility make him a standard against which I continue to measure myself and others. His courageous enforcement of the rights of unpopular minorities has transformed political and social institutions in Texas and profoundly affected countless individual lives. His insistence that civil rights and civil liberties cannot be subordinated to majoritarian political power, no matter how entrenched, has resulted in the reform of prisons and juvenile detention centers, meaningful enforcement of voting rights for black citizens, ongoing efforts to achieve true desegregation of public housing and education, and the admission of undocumented alien children into public schools. For almost twenty years, Judge Justice has been a beacon for civil rights advocates seeking to translate the spirit of the Constitution into reality.

From the beginning, the Judge's decisions have made him an outcast among the political establishment and much of the public. But this has never deterred him from grappling with volatile issues, no matter how unprecedented the claim or unpopular the cause. The courage he and his family have demonstrated in the face of social ostracism and overt hostility is reason enough for honoring him.

In addition to his unshakable convictions, two other, less public traits had an equally profound effect on me when I was beginning my legal career: his receptivity to change and his abiding sense of modesty about his own importance.

Unlike many who maintain a level of commitment to their own values only by refusing to consider those of others, the Judge is always eager to explore new perspectives or discuss differing viewpoints. He has a boundless capacity to appreciate new issues and has never stopped recognizing that the problems of society are continually changing. The breadth and scope of his decisions—particularly in cases of institutional reform—manifest his continuing effort to enforce the transcendent values of the Constitution in ever-evolving contexts.

Yet, even more striking than the Judge's willingness to confront new issues and seek new solutions is his self-effacing view of himself. His respect for individual rights is reflected in his respect for individuals themselves. Despite his position, his prominence, and his authority, he is incapable of arrogance or pretension. His interest and attention always focus on others, never on himself.

For me, Judge Justice serves by example as a constant reminder of

the capacity to combine commitment with tolerance, and courage with humility. For that, and much more, I am deeply grateful.

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