



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 8, 2016

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Sen. Rodríguez's statement on Dallas shootings

El Paso – State Senator José Rodríguez released the following statement:

I was hesitant to speak out on this latest tragedy because of the raw emotions involved and the complexity of sorting through the elements of gun culture, police culture, the protest culture, and the legacy of racism in this country.

But last night, snipers killed five officers, who were on-duty at a Black Lives Matter march in Dallas. This is a tragic event, and I can only imagine the effect of this terrible loss on their families, friends, and colleagues.

That has turned this issue into the topic of the day, dwarfing everything else in both traditional and social media. Unfortunately, it also has buried our ability to sort through the issues involved. Predictably, there is an attempt to blame the deaths of the officers on the Black Lives Matter movement, including from some Texas leaders. This simplistic appeal to an "us versus them" mentality requires a response.

Let's be clear. Black Lives Matter did not shoot at police in Dallas last night; individuals with guns did that. Black Lives Matter also did not invent the killing of two men in Falcon Heights and Baton Rouge, in what appears to be law enforcement execution at worst, and tragic incompetence at best. These are only the two most recent in a string of events made public only because of now-ubiquitous video technology. We grant police the right to make life and death decisions, but not without question or with impunity. There is much evidence that too often, this government-sanctioned violence is exercised too quickly and easily, especially against minorities. Anyone who doesn't get that simply lives in a different reality than millions of Americans, and to deny the reality lived by millions shows a stunning lack of empathy.

We can and will find a way to live together peacefully with respect for each other's rights, but not until we have the very hard conversation required to right some wrongs in this country. Rather than deepening the divisions by continuing to play on the politics of fear, it is incumbent on state leaders to begin that dialogue. I will always condemn violence against the police, but I will not be silent about policies and procedures that lead to unjustified deaths, the brunt of which are borne by minority communities.

José Rodríguez represents Texas Senate District 29, which includes the counties of El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, and Presidio. He represents both urban and rural constituencies, and more than 350 miles of the Texas-Mexico border. Senator Rodríguez currently serves as the Chairman of the Texas Senate Democratic Caucus, and is a member of the Senate Committees on Education; Health and Human Services; Veteran Affairs and Military Installations; Nominations; and Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs.