

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: Yes, good morning. Good morning. My name is Deborah Kaplan and I'm the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Court. I would like to recognize our Chief Administrative Judge Lawrence Marks and on his behalf welcome you to the twenty-first Anniversary of the September 11th, 2001. I thank you for joining us. I'd like to recognize court leadership here with us today. Our Deputy Chief Administrative Judges, Administrative Judges, Supervising Judges, other judges in our greater court family and community.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: I'd now like to recognize Captain Vincent Sinclair to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vincent Sinclair...: Hand over heart.

Vincent Sinclair...: I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Vincent Sinclair...: Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: I call upon Officer Jaleesa Copeland to lead us in the national anthem.

Jaleesa Copeland: (Singing).

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: I ask that you now join me in a moment of silence and reflection for those that we have lost.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: Thank you, and please be seated.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: September 11, 2001 was a glorious day. The sky was cerulean blue. It was not yet fall and a hint of cooler days could be felt in the air. It was hard not to feel optimistic on what was a bright and sunny morning.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: And then, in just the blink of an eye we wondered if we would ever feel any sense of optimism again. Almost 3,000 beautiful, worthy lives were extinguished that day. Hope filled, love filled, joy filled lives and lives that were laden with so much potential.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: On that day beginning at 8:46, our world changed inalterably and we could not watch what was happening. It was too horrific for words, too shocking for our minds to process. Yet at the same time we couldn't not watch the constant news coverage of the attacks. The world was becoming a terrifying, unfamiliar, unfathomable place and we were trying hard to make sense of what was transpiring.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: Well, twenty-one years later and I know that I still experience such anguish and overwhelming sorrow, and I remember the tragic events of 9/11. We all do. And the memory of that day is seared forever in our hearts and our minds. It is

indelibly etched in our souls. And most profoundly we grieved for those lost and especially those who are part of our court family.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: Captain William Harry Thompson, who I was privileged to have worked with, Sergeant Thomas Jurgens, Sergeant Mitchell Wallace. And we acknowledge the presence here today of Sergeant Jurgens' sister Jessica. Charlie, forgive me Charlie, I didn't remember your last name, but I do know you as Charlie, and her son Nelson, Harry's son.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: Please know that Captain Thomas, Sergeant Jurgens and Sergeant Wallace will never be forgotten ever by any of us. And if that that gives you some solace, please know that we continue to grieve with you so many years later. We're reminded of their remarkable heroism not just today, but every day we enter or pass this building, 111 Centre Street. And every single time a new recruit walks into the Court Officers Academy, they too remember and learn about these court officers who exemplified in every conceivable way all that a court officer and a person should be.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: That building is dedicated to these three courageous, exceptional, and self-sacrificing individuals and their names are emblazoned on its exterior. The three officers embodied in full the law enforcement officers' pledge. Indeed, they elevated to the highest level what we understood the words of the pledge to mean.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: Be ready to serve the public faithfully and fearlessly. Take seriously your oath of office. Be loyal to self, organization, country, and God.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: Captain Thompson, Sergeant Jurgens, and Sergeant Wallace served our public, our community, our country, with the utmost faith and boundless bravery, and their loyalty is unparalleled.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: May we pay homage to celebrate their lives. Their utter selflessness and the enormity of their valor cannot be overstated and will not be forgotten. They live on as an inspiration to us and give us hope for a better world.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: We'll now have a musical salute from the New York State Courts Pipe and Drums.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: I call to the podium, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Management Support, the Honorable Tamiko Amaker.

Hon. Tamiko Amaker: Good morning. I'm honored and privileged to be here today with all of you. Twenty-one years ago on that clear September day, we all experienced an unspeakable tragedy that changed our lives forever. In the words of President Bush, "The world was loud with carnage and sirens, and then quiet with missing voices that would never be heard again."

Hon. Tamiko Amaker: The lives of nearly 3,000 individuals were taken in the horrific attacks on the Twin Towers. Three of our own lost their lives, Captain William Harry Thompson, Sergeant Thomas Jurgens, Sergeant Mitchell Wallace, uniformed heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice to protect and serve and to save New Yorkers. The valor demonstrated by Captain Thompson, Sergeant Wallace and Sergeant Jurgens, as well as many of our other court officers and court personnel, some of whom are here with us today. They risked their lives and safety to rescue and provide aid and comfort to the victims of the terrorist attacks on September 11. It remains at the forefront of our memories on this mournful day of history, more than two decades later.

Hon. Tamiko Amaker: We come together every year to remember, to honor, and to express our unwavering gratitude for the exceptional actions of these individuals. The strength and courage of their noble acts, instinctively rushing into danger to save innocent lives and aid in any way they could, continues twenty-one years later to inspire each of us to be selfless, to be honorable and to be brave.

Hon. Tamiko Amaker: We are grateful and fortunate that many of our court officers returned safely from the Twin Towers after aiding rescue efforts on that fateful day. We are eternally indebted to all who were involved in the rescue and aid efforts after those cowardly attacks on the city. And we are devastated, absolutely devastated that we cannot bring back Captain Thompson, Sergeant Wallace and Sergeant Jurgens -- back to us, and especially back to their families.

Hon. Tamiko Amaker: It goes without saying that the world is a darker place without them. It goes without saying that these courageous men are missed. And it goes without saying that we wish they were here with us today and every other year we have gathered to remember the victims of those terrible attacks.

Hon. Tamiko Amaker: Our collective grief as a court system over their loss is a heavy burden that we carry with us every day. And someone once said, "Grief doesn't get lighter. We just get used to carrying the burden." In their honor, we must continue to live each day as we have for the past two decades, recognizing the great heroism and deeply mourning their loss.

Hon. Tamiko Amaker: And so today, on this day of remembrance, I extend my profound sympathy and warmest wishes to the loved ones of Captain Thompson, Sergeant Jurgens, and Sergeant Wallace, and to the loved ones of every other hero who fell from the events on that tragic day and to the members of the court system who stepped up and aided in the efforts on that day and the days that followed. Thank you all for being here with our court family today to commemorate the twenty-first anniversary of the terrorist attacks in September.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: I now call on Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Edwina Mendelson, who oversees our Justice Initiatives.

Hon. Edwina Mendelson.: Good morning everyone. It is a privilege to greet you here today for this day, in this most solemn season of remembrance. I greet you with a heart and a spirit that is filled with sorrow, combined with deep pride as we reflect upon the tremendous losses and sacrifices made by so many on that grim September day, as well as in the days, months and years that followed.

Hon. Edwina Mendelson.: As we do each time we gather, I join my colleagues in honoring our fallen heroes from the court officer ranks, Sergeant Jurgens, Sergeant Wallace and Captain Thompson.

Hon. Edwina Mendelson.: I'm a proud daughter of the Bronx. I am unapologetic about that. So it was pure honor for me to learn and get to visit that beautiful park recently renamed after our fallen hero, myself. Thompson Park is beautiful. Visit Thompson Park. You will feel peace in your heart when you do so, and I am so grateful that our leaders decided to honor our hero in that way.

Hon. Edwina Mendelson.: A while back, someone brought to my attention the name and life story of a valued member of our court family, one of many. And when we speak a name, it is one of many. And this name, it was a name I hadn't heard before, it was Vernon Cherry, who served as a court reporter and also lost his life in service to others on that terrible tragic day. He was a New York City Firefighter, as well. As one of our beloved court family members he has been recognized, and it makes me want to just stress what my colleagues are also stressing to you today.

Hon. Edwina Mendelson.: We have so many in our court family and beyond who just sacrificed and some of you are right here. A lot of you are there, and here, and here, and here who served and gave and sacrificed and continue to do so. And we honor you all today.

Hon. Edwina Mendelson.: So thank you for joining in this remembrance. Thank you for heeding that call to serve long ago and continuing to heed the inner voice that tells you to serve when it makes no sense to do so. I hope that all of you and your loved ones are well and healthy. And I thank you, for those of you who are in our court family, for all you do to promote justice in our court every single day. Be well.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: And I call on the Honorable Norman St. George, the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for the Courts Outside of New York City.

Hon. Norman St. George: Good morning. I'm Judge Norman St. George and I am privileged to serve as the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Courts Outside of New York City. I am humbled and honored to be with you here today this morning, to gather together as a court community to remember, to mourn and to honor the extraordinary lives of those that we lost on September 11th, 2001.

Hon. Norman St. George: The acts of September 11th, 2001 exposed many things. They exposed the evil and hate in others. And they also exposed the selflessness of many. They showed us that bravery is much more prevalent than evil. Of the many heroes who rose up against evil that day, three members of our court family bravely chose self-sacrifice to help others. Captain William H. Thompson, Sergeant Thomas Jurgens and Sergeant Mitchell Wallace. The actions of these three heroes who instinctively ran toward danger to rescue others have expanded our sense of what is possible in a human being.

Hon. Norman St. George: Maya Angelou said, "Trauma lives on in our heart, our mind, and our memories." Without question, the trauma of 9/11 has done just that. But love and hope also lives on. Let us never forget and let us give tribute to those who live on in our hearts, in our minds, and in our memories.

Hon. Norman St. George: Let us also thank the families of these three heroes for sharing these brave men with our court family for so many years. They are missed and their absence is felt every day. We must remember to continue to recognize that time with loved ones is a gift. And that self-sacrifice, bravery, and heroism are alive and strong in life and in memory. Thank you. Stay safe and God bless.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: Now I call he Honorable Ellen Biben, Administrative Judge, New York Supreme Court Criminal Term.

Hon. Ellen Biben: Good morning. I want to first thank Judge Kaplan and her office, as well as Chief Baccellieri, and so many others for organizing such important and meaningful ceremony this morning. I am truly honored to be here along with many of my esteemed colleagues, including Judge Marks and Judge Amaker, Judge Mendelson, and Judge St. George among others. And I am touched to see that many of our former colleagues have joined us here today as well. I am also extremely grateful to be joined by some of the family members of Captain Thompson and Sergeant Jurgens, and to be joined by all of you as we honor and remember the sacrifice of those who died on 9/11.

Hon. Ellen Biben: September 11th is of course personal for all of us New Yorkers. Many of us were living and working down here that day and continue to do so in its aftermath. But it is particularly personal to all of us in New York County Supreme Court Criminal Term because three of our own were taken from us on that day. Captain William Thompson, Sergeant Thomas Jurgens and Sergeant Mitchell Wallace honored their oath and ran into danger to try to save the lives of others. And very tragically, their bravery and heroism cost them their own lives. A number of our own court family who serve in all different roles in the court and remain working in the court, were also first responders on that day including New York County's Supreme Court Chief Clerk Christopher DiSanto. And I would like to take a moment to acknowledge them both for their heroism on that day, and I am so grateful to them for their continued service with us.

Hon. Ellen Biben: Twenty-one years later, we are still reeling from the unimaginable events of that day. As Mayor Bloomberg has said, "We have lived in sunshine and in shadow. We should never forget 9/11, neither the tragic deaths nor the heroic bravery." And I believe the court officers, court employees, and the judges of this court, we honor that memory every day as we work hard to keep our courts open, accessible, safe and fair, even during our darkest and most challenging times. I am extremely proud of the work that we do promoting justice for all, and I know that we will continue to do that great work and that we will never forget. Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: On behalf of our court family, I want to thank all of you for being here today. Thank you. Very special one to the members of the 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony Committee for their efforts in organizing this meaningful commemoration. I want to acknowledge and express our gratitude to New York State Supreme Court Officers Association and President Patrick Cullen for providing breakfast today and flowers.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: Our gratitude is extended to the Civil Court, New York County for sharing their space and of course, Supreme Court Civil Term, New York County and Criminal Term New York County for their coordination and organization.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: And finally, before you leave to go on with today, I invite you to stop inside the building here to the Ceremonial Courtroom, Room 107 to view a very special short film entitled 9/11 Reflections. The film is nominated for an Emmy Award in Historical Cultural category.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: In this film 9/11 Reflections, eight of the 28 New York State Court Officers who rushed to the World Trade Center immediately following the 2001 attack poignantly recount their experience, the horror, the bravery that they witnessed. And the 25 surviving court officers received the Medal of Valor for their life saving efforts. The video was developed by OCA's David Handschuh, who pays homage to our three family members who never returned, Captain William Harry Thompson, Sergeant Thomas Jurgens, Sergeant Mitchell Wallace.

Hon. Deborah Kaplan: And again, we are grateful that you have all joined us today as we fulfill our promise to never forget what happened on September 11, 2001, to never forget the lives lost on that fateful day and to always keep our three family members with us. Thank you.