

**Open Letter to General John Kelley, (USMC) White House Chief of Staff  
from a Military Chaplain**

**By  
CAPT, Leroy Gilbert, CHC, USN (ret)**

Dear General Kelley,

The President of the United States reveres and respects you as a leader and confidant. You have earned the trust and respect of all Americans, and you are a shining role model for all military personnel. One of the reasons military trained leaders make great leaders in civil, federal, religious, and business organizations is because they operate with integrity and high ethical standards in all that they do. Military leaders live by the principle of “be, know, and do everything you ask of those below you.”

General Kelley, you are a model for the highest standards of military and governmental leadership. As you are aware, young cadets and midshipmen at our military academies commit themselves to an Honor Code, ***"I will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do."*** General Kelley what you do on the national scene does influence thousands of military personnel who are being trained to apply the Honor Code to their lifestyle and leadership.

General, you have a marvelous opportunity to demonstrate what a leader of integrity and veracity does when he makes a mistake, or says something that is not true. Your remarks regarding Rep. Frederica Wilson (FL) accusing her of grandstanding about raising money for a federal building named for two slain FBI agents, have been proven ultimately false. The whole world has heard her speech and knows you misrepresented her speech. What I am most surprised about General is why are you still silent! Why have you not admitted that you made a mistake? A military officer could be court martialed for such offense.

My heart was touched when you explained how you received notification of your son's death. Your son died doing what he loved to do, with courageous men he loved and they all understood the cost of the commitment. You know what that means, and can appreciate someone telling you that about the death of your son. But why would you suggest that the President of the United States use that same approach, when he knows nothing about military life, nor has he experienced the pain of a loved one dying in battle? He has demonstrated little ability to comfort others in times of bereavement and refuses to apologize when he is blatantly wrong.

Your approach that you taught the President caused a widow to cry and become very hurt. I suggest that you utilize the expertise of either the Chaplain of the Senate, the Chaplain of the House of Representatives, or some other clergy to help the President formulate a condolence statement so he may be more compassionate, caring, sympathetic, and comforting when addressing family members of fallen heroes. In times of national crisis, we need our President to be a spiritual leader, to comfort, console, and uplift the spirit of those who are bruised and wounded.

General Kelley, if you stay silent, knowing that you have made a mistake, your greatness will be diminished to that of a puppet of the President. As a military officer, you pledged to be loyal to

the United States of America. When you appeared on the news conference, you spoke as a person in love with the President, loyal to him, and wanting to make him look good. You stepped over the line of your training, your integrity, and principles when you tried to debase Rep. Wilson and delegitimized the heart felt feeling of the widow of Sgt. La David Johnson's response to the President's condolence call.

General Kelley, you have extensive training both in military ethics, and in biblical principles; both institutions require seeking forgiveness and making conciliation when one has offended or wronged another. Please take the high road and call Sgt. La David Johnson's Widow. She is still in distress about the President's insensitive call. Your call could comfort the widow like no other person. I am not sure what you remembered about Rep. Wilson's speech, but you need to review the speech again, and do the right thing, for the good of our nation, the grieving widow, the professional and emotional development of the President, and the continuous development of impressionable military and civilians leaders.

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