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**Inquiry Concerning a Judge: James R. Adams  
SC06-249**

MARSHAL: PLEASE RISE . HEAR YE.HEAR YE.HEAR YE.THE SUPREME COURT IS NOW IN SESSION. ALL WHO HAVE CA USE TO P LEA , DRAW NEAR , GIVE ATTENTIONAND YOU SHALL BE HEARD. GOD SAVE THESE UNITED STATES , THIS GREAT STATE OF FLORIDA AND THIS HONORABLE COURT. LADIES AND GENTLE MEN , THE FLORIDA SUPREME COURT. PLEASE BE SEATED.

CHIEF JUSTICE: GOOD MORNING , LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, AND WELCOME TO THE FLORIDA SUPREME COURT. THE FI RST CASE ON THIS MORNING'S DOCKET IS A PUBLIC REPRIMAND INQUIRY CONCERNING JUDGE JA MES ADAMS. JUDGE A D AMS , PLEASE APPROACH THE PODIUM AND REMAIN STANDING. SERVING AS CH IEF JUSTICEOVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, I HAVE TRAVELED ALL O VER THE STATE , MEETING MANY, M A NY JUDGES WHO ARE UNIVERSALLY DEDICATED TO DELIVERING EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW. OUR JUDGES IN THIS STATE AREAMONG THE F I NEST IN THE COUNTRY. EVERYDAY THEY DEAL W ITH CROWDED DOCKETS , MAKE DIFFICULT DECISION AND A CT AS AMBASSADORS FOR THE JUSTICE SYSTEM. THE TRUST AND CONFIDENCE OF THE PU BLIC DEPENDS ON THE ACTIONS OF OUR JUD GES , AND THE COND UC T OF A VAST MAJORITY OF OUR JUDGES IS BEYOND REPROACH. MY ROLE AS CHIEF JUSTICE HAS ALSO SHOW N ME THAT MUCH OF THE EXCE LLENT W ORK AND GOODWILL GENE RATED BY OUR JUDGES CAN BE UNDERMINED BY THE MISCONDUCT OF A FEW. JUST AS A CH AIN IS ON LY AS STRONG AS ITS WEAKEST L INK , THE PUBLIC'S IMAGE OF OUR JUDICIARY IS DETERMINED TO A DEGREE, BY TH OSE WH OSE CONDUCT FALLS SHORT OF THE MARK. DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS , THIS COURT HAS REMOVED F RO M THE BENCH , TWO JUDGES FOR MISCONDUCT, AND THIS WILL BE THE SI XTH PUBLIC REPRIMAND THAT I WILL HAVE DELIVERED AS CHIEF JUSTICE. EACH PUBLIC REP RIMAND SADDENS ME. EACH IS REGRETTABLE , N OT JUST FOR THE JUDGE S DISCIPLINED BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, FOR THOSE JUDGES WHOSE O WN COND UCT HAS B EEN IMPECCABLE BUT WHO MUST NONETHELESS BEAR THE BURDEN OF THIS MISCONDUCT . YET THIS PUBLIC REPRIMANDWHICH IS BROADCASTTHROUGHOUT THE STATE, IS ONE WAY THAT THE COURT CAN SHOW THE PUBLIC THAT WE ARE VERY , VERY SERIOUS ABOUT REQUIRING OUR JUDGES TO AD HERE TO THE HIGHEST ETHI CAL REQUIREMENTS. JUDGE ADAMS , YOU ARE B E FORE THIS COURT TO BE REPRIMANDED , BECAUSE YOU YOU ENTERED INTO A RO MANTIC RELATIONSHIP WITH AN ATTORNEY PRACTICING IN YOUR COURT, AND THEN WH IL E THE RELATIONSHIP WAS ON GOING , CONTINUED TO PRESIDE OVER CASES IN WHICH THE ATTORNEY WAS COUNSEL. YOUR BEHAV IOR LED THE JUDICIAL QUALIFICATIONS COMMISSION TO CHARGE YOU WITH VIOLATIONS OF THREE CANONS OF THE CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT. YOU HAVE ST IPD STIPULATED THAT YOU ENGAGED IN THE MISCONDUCT AL LEGED BY THE J QC AND THAT YOUR AC TIONS VIOLATED THE CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT. THE ALLEGATIONS TO WHICH YOUYOU STIP ULATED SPECIFIED THAT YOU YOU GR ANTED NUMEROUS CONTINUEANCES REQUESTED BY THE ATTORNEY I N FIVE CASES AND THAT YOU DISMISSED THE CHARGES IN FOUR TRAFFIC CASE S IN WHICH THE ATTORNEY REPRESENTEDDEFENDANTS. YOUR ACTIONS VI OLATED CANON S 1 , 2 AND THREE OF THE CODE OF JUD ICIAL CONDUCT. CANON ONE PROVIDES A N INDEPENDENT AND HONORABLE JUDICIARY IS INDISPENSIBLE TO JUST ICE IN OUR SOCIETY. A JUDGE SHOUL D PARTICIPATE IN ESTABLISHING , MAINTAINING AND ENFOR CING H IGH STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND SHALL PERSONALLY OBSE RVE THESE STANDARDS, SO THAT THE INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDI CIARY MAY BE PRESERVED. THE CONDITIONS OF THIS CODE SHOULD BE CONSTRUED AND APPLIED TO FURTHER THAT OBJECTIVE. CANON 2 -A PROVIDES IN PERTINENT PART THAT A JUDGE SHALL ACT AT ALL TIMES IN A MANNER THAT PROMOTES PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE INTEGRITY AND IMPARTIALITY OF THE JUDICIARY. CANON 2-B STATES THAT A JUDGE SHALL NOT ALLOW FA MILY ,

SOCIAL, POLITICAL OR OTHER RELATIONSHIPS TO INFLUENCE THE JUDGE'S JUDICIAL CONDUCTOR JUDGMENT. CANON 3-B-5 PROVIDES THAT A JUDGE SHALL PERFORM JUDICIAL DUTIES WITHOUT BIAS OR PREJUDICE, AND CANON 3 -B-A SPECIFIES THAT A JUDGE SHALL DISPOSE OF ALL JUDICIAL MATTERS PROMPTLY , EFFICIENTLY AND FAIRLY. JUDGE ADAMS , ENG AGING IN A ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP WITH AN ATTORNEY PRACTICING BEFORE YOU VIOLATED ALL OF THESE PROVISIONS. YOU FA ILED TO MAINTAIN HIGH STANDARDS OF CONDUCT, SO THAT THE INTEGRITY OF THE JUDICIARY WOULD BE PRESERVED , VIOLATING CANON ONE , AND YOU FAILED TO ACT IN A MANNER PROMOTING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIARY , VIOL ATING CANON 2- A. FURTHER, AND MORE SPECIFIC TO THIS CASE , YOUR MIS CONDUCT TENDED TO CREATE THE IMPRESSION THAT YOU ALLOWED A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP TO INFLUENCE YOUR JUDG MENT, CONT RARY TO CANON 2-B , AND THAT YOU W OULD HAVE DIFFICULTY PERFORMING YOUR JUDICIAL DUTIES FAI RLY AND WITHOUT BIAS, CONTRARY T O CANON 3-B -5 AND 3-B-8. A JUDGE'S ROLE AS A DET ACHED DECISION-MAKER IN A LE GAL SYSTEM THAT OPERATES IN FULL VIEW OF THE PUBLIC CARRIES SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES . THE JUDGE MUST NOT ONLY BE FAIR AND IMPA RTIAL , BUT MUST AT ALL TIMES AP PEAR T O HAVE NO PERSONAL RE ASON TO FAVORA PARTICU LAR SIDE OR RESULT. THE COMM ENTARY TO CANON 2-A ADDRESSES MISCONDUCT, CREATING AN APPEAR ANCE OF IMPROPRIETY. IRRESPONSIBLE OR IMPR OPER CONDUCT BY JUDGE S E RODES PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIARY . A JUDGE MUST A VOID ALL IMPROPRIETY AND APPE ARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY. A JUDGE MUST EXPECT TO BE THE SUBJ ECT OF CONSTANT PUBLIC SCRUTINY. THE T E ST FOR APPEARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY IS WHETHER THE CONDUCT WOULD C REATE , IN REASONABLE MI NDS , WITH KNOWLEDGE OF ALL RELEVANT CIRCUMSTANCES , THAT A REASONABLE INQ UIRY WOULD DISCLOSE A PERCEPTION THAT THE JUDGE'S ABILITY TO CARRY OUT JUDICIAL RESPONSIBILITY WITH INTEGRITY , IMPARTIALITY AND CONFIDENCE, IS IMPAIRED. PUBLIC TRUST IN A JUDGE'S IMPARTIALITY CANNOT BE T AKEN FOR GRANTED . JUDGE ADAMS, WHEN YOU INDULGED IN A ROM ANTIC RELATIONSHIP WITH AN ATTORNEY PRACTICING BEFORE YOU , YOU PLACED THE PUBLIC'S TRUST IN JEOP ARDY. THE INT IMATE RELATIONSHIP WAS CONTRARILY CONTRARY TO YOUR OBLI GATION TO MAIN TAIN DETACHED NEUT RALITY, AS TO THE LITIGA NTS AND LAWYERS ON WHO APPEAR IN YOUR COURTROOM , IN PRESIDING OVER CASES IN WHICH THE LA WYER SERVED AS COUNSEL DURING THE RELATIONSHIP. YOU COMPRO MISED THE SI NGLE MOST IMPORTANT SOURCE OF YOUR AUTHORITY, THE PER ACCEPTS OF THE LEGAL COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC THAT A JUDGE IS ABSOLUTELY IMPARTIAL IN DECIDING CASES. IN YOUR APPEARANCE BEFORE THE JQC INVESTIGATIVE PA NEL , YOU YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN RIGHT FROM THE START THAT WH AT YOU WERE D OING WAS ABSOLUTELY WRONG. WHILE YOU HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED YOUR WRONGDOING , THE HA RMYOU HAVE CAUSED BY YOUR ACTIONS CANNOT BE UND ONE. AS YOU HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED , THE CONTINUEANCES YOU GRANTED TO THE ATTORNEY WITH WHOM YOU WERE INVOLVED , CAUSED YOUR IMPART IALITY TO BE BROU GHT INTO QUESTION. AT THE V ERY LEAST , THE CONTINUEANCES AND DISMISSAL S CREATED THE APPEARANCE OF IMPROPRIETY . YOU YOU VIOLATED THE CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT , BY FAI LING TO PERSONALLY OBSERVE HIGH STANDARDS OF CONDUCT, BY CREATING THE APPEARAN CE THAT A PERSONAL RELATI ONSHIP INFLUENCED YOUR JUDGMENT , AND BY CREATING THE APPEARANCE OR BIAS IN THE PERFORMANCE OF YOUR JUDICIAL DUTIES. IN DETERMINING THAT YOU SHOULD BE REPRIM ANDED FOR YOUR CONDUCT , R ATHER THAN A MORE SE VERE S ANCTION , WE HAVE TA KEN INTO AC COUNT SEVERAL FA CTORS IN YOUR FAVOR . FIRST , YOU HAVE ACCEPTED FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR MISCONDUCT DURI NG THE RELATIONSHIP , WHICH LA STED APPROXIMATELY TWO MONTHS . FURTHER , THE JQC RECOGNIZED THAT YOU HAVE OTHERWISE UNBLEMISHED RECORD IN YOUR LONG TE NURE AS A JUDGE AND THAT YOU HAVE BEEN ACTIVE IN YOUR COMMUNITY. FINALLY , OUR REVIEW OF THE RECORD REV EALS NO E VIDENCE THAT THE RELATIONSHIP ACTUALLY INFL UENCED YOUR ACTIONS IN AN Y OF THE CASES INVOLVING THE ATTORNEY WITH WHOM YOU WERE INVOLVED. IF EV IDENCE HAD BEEN DEMONSTRATED THAT THE RELATIONSHIP AFFECTED ANY OF YOUR RULINGS , YO U CAN BE CERTAIN THAT WE WOULD HAVE IMPOSED A ST RONGER SANCTION. FURTHER , AS WE AL WAYS RE MIND JUDGES IN YOUR PO SITION , A SUBSEQUENT VIOLATION OF THE CANON S GOVERNING YOUR CONDUCT WILL BE DEALT WITH FAR MORE HARSHLY , BUT THIS COURT SINCERELY HOPES THAT THIS WILL BE THE ONLY APPEARANCE

BEFORE THIS COURT , AND THAT JUDGE ADAMS, YOU YOU WILL GO FORTH AND ATT EMPT TO REPAIR THE HARM THAT YOU HAVE DONE IN YOUR ACTIONS , EACH AND EVERYDAY ON THE BENCH , AND MAKE YOU AND THIS COURT PROUD ONCE A GAIN , THAT YOU ARE A JUDGE IN OUR JUDICIAL SYSTEM , IN THE GREATEST JUDICIARY IN THE COUNTRY. JUDGE ADAMS , YOUR PUBLIC REPRIMAND IS CONCLUDED. YOU NOW MAY LEAVE THE COURTROOM .