



# JPA

Juvenile Protective Association



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## Listening in a Turbulent Time

It's only September and the first month of school but already emotions are running high. In a recent edition of EDWeek (9/24/17), there is an interesting piece on schools' reactions to their athletes' "taking a knee." The article underscores students' rights to do so, as affirmed by the courts. It also encourages educators to see these acts as teachable moments.

I understand there are many differing opinions about this topic. What I liked most about the article was its call to action, encouraging us to engage in meaningful dialogue about difficult topics. I know how hard this can be. I sympathize with the athletes' right to free speech and non-violent public protest – even on the field. But some of my grad school friends on Facebook find such displays deeply disturbing – after all, some of them literally put their life on the line for our country. For many of them, the Pledge of Allegiance should be above politics. In their view, the Pledge is a rallying cry that should bring all Americans together.

Judging, blaming, punishing. There's too much of that going around these days. So, while I understand it's often challenging to hear each other, let alone try to appreciate someone's opposing point of view, that is absolutely what's required of adults who want to preserve and protect our democracy - and our sanity! Whether it's in the classroom or across the dinner table, let's model the kind of behavior we hope to see in our young people and in our schools. While holding our own deeply-felt opinions and respecting each other's life experiences, let's try to listen a little more carefully, suspend our tendency to blame, and withhold judgment. We might just learn a thing or two. And, the kids are worth it.

*Karen*