

Ambitious teenagers groping in the infinite information infrastructure of the modern world often find themselves to be discouraged and confused while exploring the meaning of leadership. There are so many factors that go into leadership that a single definition is impossible and differing opinions and philosophies blur the meaning further. But, just as in life our true character is revealed during times of crisis and hardship, perhaps the true meaning of leadership can be revealed by studying how leaders and organizations act during crises.

This was the essence of all our discussion and dialog at the November YLDP session at Houston TranStar Transportation & Emergency Management Center, and with our revered keynote speaker Hon. Judge Ed Emmett.

I gained invaluable insight into what makes a leader in the political arena and how it relates to dealing with crises. While touring the Houston TranStar facility, I was in awe of the well-planned security protocols in place and the information handling capacity of this amazing facility. But, as everyone soon realized, even such a facility would not be effective without leadership. Houston TranStar is a unique emergency management facility because in addition to its technology, it allows for all emergency services (i.e First Responders, local Police departments, and Homeland Security) to coordinate their efforts for efficient management of crises. And, as Hon. Judge Ed Emmett explained, it was his job as the leader to trust Houston TranStar and relay key information to the general public to maintain calm. Thus, during our Q&A session with Judge Emmett, I realized that leaders are responsible for the people delivering the results versus the results themselves. That is why mutual trust, cooperation, and communication are such important characteristics of leadership. But most importantly, I learned that no matter what the context, leadership is a service and acting as such is the essence of leadership...and life.

Thanks to the cultivating dialog with Hon. Judge Emmett and touring Houston TranStar through YLDP, my fellow YLDP members and I finally felt like we had taken our first confident step in understanding the true meaning of leadership.