

The Coalition for
Justice and Fairness to
Reform Law Enforcement

OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT

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CONTACT: WardHill Omni Media

LaToya Henry, (313) 447-6404 (c)

Tonie Bell, (313) 802-1817 (c)

DETROIT – Good morning. We have come together as a community to address the most recent and critical issues between the African American community, black and brown males in particular, with the criminal justice system. These issues did not just begin with Ferguson and New York. These issues are both systemic and historic, reflecting discrimination, racial profiling, and a basic lack of respect and appreciation on the part of some in the criminal justice system for the people they are duty bound to both protect and to serve. Let us say at the very outset, this is not an indictment of all police officers or persons in the law enforcement community. However, it is a calling out of those negative forces and individuals who neither protect, serve, respect, nor preserve the lives of those who they are charged to secure. We agree with Attorney General Eric Holder who recently announced to all Federal Enforcement Agencies the necessity to adopt stricter policies to curb racial profiling. According to Attorney General Holder:

“I have repeatedly made clear that profiling law enforcement is not only wrong, it is profoundly misguided and ineffective. Particularly in light of certain recent incidents we’ve seen at the local level and the widespread concerns about trust in the criminal justice process. It is imperative that we take every possible action to institute strong and sound policing practices.”

Both President Barack Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder have concluded that America has a problem. The problem that America has, which goes back hundreds of years, is the enforcement and fairness of justice to all of America’s sons and daughters, regardless of race, sex, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation. The resolution of this problem has been made acutely urgent as we have witnessed the number of African American males who have been killed in cities all across this country by members of the law enforcement community. It is further exacerbated when a system such as the grand jury, as currently structured, is now seen as a pathway toward the elimination of any charges brought against police officers involved in the shooting or choking deaths of black males.

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It has led to demonstrations not only in this nation, but across the globe in the cry for justice and fairness. Some have even taken to the streets and utilized methods other than peaceful non-violence to demonstrate their outrage over these recent events. No city in America can escape from or believe that it is beyond such outrage or activity particularly when injustice is prevailing. In the 60s, there were over 120 cities that were involved in civil disturbances, which some referred to as rioting, at the same time that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was heavily engaged in peaceful non-violent protests.

We are not here to articulate steps that individuals should take for demonstrating their concerns over this issue. We are here as a coalition to articulate what steps as community, law enforcement, civil rights organizations, students, community activists, public officials, and others can take in order to address this most pressing situation. It is our intention to meet with our publicly elected officials from both the local and State Government in order to address number one, what plans are currently in place to address these issues. In addition, if plans do not exist, we would like to implement strategies and policies that can be employed in order to ensure respect both for the community and law enforcement. We hope to reduce or eliminate any threat to physical harm of citizens or businesses, and to create a model that could serve our City and this nation when everyone is respected. Among the priorities that we will be discussing with the officials previously identified are:

- Current programs and plans already in existence.
- A reduction of militarization in the engagement of policing.
- Removal and non-use of military equipment, more closely associated with war (for examples, Afghanistan and Iraq.)
- The increased educational training and a cultural orientation for those engaged in policing in the engagement with the citizens of this community. (The City of New York has recently announced a program to re-train 35,000 police officers in community policing. We support this effort.)
- A restoration of full powers provided by the City charter for the elected Board of Police Commissioners.
- The implementation of mandatory use of body cameras and other devices to assist in monitoring, for the safety of both police and community as encouraged and funded by President Obama and Attorney General Holder.
- Implementation of racial profiling legislation and an end to racial profiling.

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- Data collection on the death of individuals, particularly monitored by police officers or law enforcement agencies.
- An implementation of policies to bring Jobs, Jobs, Jobs and adequate training for the citizens in economically distressed communities.
- Residency requirement for police officers

These programs are not new. As a matter of fact, if one refers to the Kerner Commission Report of 1967, it was made very clear at that time for their necessity. The conclusion of the report as evidenced by the words of Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, a distinguished and perceptive scholar, who was called as one of the first witnesses for this commission give us all a stark reminder as to where we are. Dr. Clark said:

"I read that report...of the 1919 riot in Chicago, and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '35, the report of the investigating committee on the Harlem riot of '43, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot. I must again in candor say to you members of this Commission--it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland--with the same moving picture re-shown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction."

In the words of President Barack Obama, "the time for talk is over". The time for action is now.

Partial List of Members of the Coalition.

ACLU of Michigan	LA SED
Arab-American Civil Rights League	Michigan Black Bar Owners Association
Black Family Development	Michigan Black Chamber of Commerce
CAIR Michigan	Michigan Legislative Black Caucus
Change Agent Consortium	Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion
Detroit Board of Police Commissioners	Moore Black Press Inc.
Detroit Branch NAACP	MOSES
Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance	Office of Congresswoman-Elect Brenda Lawrence
Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality	Office of Congressman John Conyers, Jr.
Ecumenical Theological Seminary	Peace Action of Michigan
Fannie Lou Hamer PAC	Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.
Freedom Institute	

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