

THE CIVIL RIGHTS COALITION ON POLICE REFORM

May 5, 2015

The Honorable Loretta Lynch
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, DC

Dear Madam Attorney General:

The Civil Rights Coalition on Police Reform and additional national civil and human rights organizations, faith leaders and those committed to the protection of the rights of African Americans and all Americans, come together as a unified collective to urgently request that you open a pattern or practice investigation against the Baltimore Police Department. In the aftermath of the killing of Freddie Gray, the country has once again become more aware of the challenges and concerns of another urban police agency. Yet, the residents of Baltimore, particularly communities of color, have been complaining about these problems for years.

While the Department of Justice has initiated an investigation into the death of Freddie Gray and is gathering information to determine whether any prosecutable civil rights violation occurred, we believe that it is necessary to expand the investigation into the entire police department in light of the long history of complaints and concerns from Baltimore residents.

We understand and appreciate the ongoing efforts by Director of the Department of Justice's COPs office Ron L. Davis to enter into a voluntary collaborative process examining the Baltimore Police Department regarding its use of force policies and practices. Such a process is very important in the array of efforts employed by the Department of Justice to correct inappropriate and ineffective policing practices across the country. Even as we continue to support such collaborative processes generally, we do not believe that such a process is sufficient for Baltimore in light of the historic and entrenched problems existing in the culture of the Baltimore Police Department. We strongly feel that in order to effectively ensure long-term and systemic change in Baltimore – that will have the force of law and continue beyond the current federal and state administrations – it is necessary to initiate a pattern or practice investigation. The comprehensive nature of such an investigation would reach well beyond that of the ongoing collaborative process and will potentially reveal – like in Ferguson – additional problems that otherwise would not have been uncovered.

As organizational leaders we represent millions across this country who feel that time is of the essence. We mourn the loss of Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Rekia Boyd, Freddie Gray and so many others, and remain steadfast in our support for all of the mothers and fathers who have suffered a loss no parent should endure. Even with the six police officers being charged in the death of Freddie Gray,

we are extremely concerned about the situation in Baltimore and urge you to not delay opening an investigation. What has occurred in Baltimore is sadly just the tip of the iceberg, and we believe it is representative of many similarly situated urban police departments across this country. Hence, on behalf of these impacted communities, we urge a comprehensive response by the Department of Justice and look forward to working with you throughout this process.

Signed,

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

- Barbara Arnwine, President and Executive Director
- Tanya Clay House, Public Policy Director

African American Policy Forum

- Professor Kimberly Crenshaw, Founder

A. Phillip Randolph Institute

- Clayola Brown, President

Alliance of Baptists

American Civil Liberties Union

- Michael W. Macleod-Ball, Acting Director
- Jesselyn McCurdy, Senior Legislative Counsel
- Kanya Bennett, Legislative Counsel

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles

- Mee Moua, President

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO

Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America

Beloved Community Center of Greensboro

- Nelson Johnson
- Joyce Johnson

Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100)

- Charlene Carruthers, National Director

Call for Action

- Kristyn Parker-Meyer

Capitol Press Club

- Hazel Trice Edney

Christian Reformed Church in North America

- Peter Vander Meulen, Coordinator, Office of Social Justice

Church of the Brethren, Office of Public Witness

Community Foundations of Southern New Mexico

- Cindy Corona, Executive Director of Ocotillo Institute for Social Justice

DEMOS

- Heather McGhee, President

El Puente

- Luis Garden Acosta, Founder, President/CEO

Empowerment Temple

- Reverend Dr. Jamal Bryant

Equal Justice Society

- Eva Paterson, President
- Allison Elgart, Legal Director

Equity Matters

- Michael Scott, Chief Equity Officer

Faith in Public Life

Franciscan Action Network

Hands Up United

- Rika Tyler
- T Dubb O

Hip Hop Caucus

- Rev. Lennox Yearwood, Jr., President and CEO

Institute of the Black World 21st Century

- Dr. Ron Daniels, President

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

- Wade Henderson, President and CEO
- Nancy Zirkin, Executive Vice-President
- Sakira Cook, Counsel

MP Associates

- Maggie Potapchuk, Founder

Multi-Cultural Resource Center

- Fabina Colon, Director

Muslim Advocates

NAACP

- Cornell William Brooks, President
- Hilary Shelton, Senior Vice President for Advocacy

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

- Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel
- Janai Nelson, Associate Director-Counsel
- Leslie Proff, Director, Washington D.C. Office
- Monique Dixon, Senior Policy Counsel

National Bar Association

- Pamela Means, President

National Cares Mentoring Movement

- Susan L. Taylor, Founder and CEO

National Collaborative for Health Equity

- Brian Smedley, co-founder and Executive Director

National Council of Churches

- Rev. Aundreia Alexander, Associate General Secretary for Action and Advocacy for Justice and Peace

National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

- Melanie Campbell, President

National Dental Association

National Legal Aide and Defender Association

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Pax Christi USA

- Sr. Patricia Chappell, Executive Director

PICO National Network

- Reverend Michael McBride, Director of Urban Strategies

Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA)

Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.

Rainbow PUSH

- Rev. Jesse Jackson, Founder and President

Rosa Parks Institute

- Lila Cabbil, President Emeritus

Social Action Committee – AME Church

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

cc.: Vanita Gupta,
Acting Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
Department of Justice

Ron Davis
Director
Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)
Department of Justice