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September 22, 2016

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The Honorable Loretta E. Lynch
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Lynch:

On behalf of the Members of the Congressional Black Caucus we come to you today to urge you to aggressively pursue investigations, indictments and prosecutions, through the Office of Civil Rights, against any and all law enforcement officers who harm or kill innocent, unarmed Black men, women and children.

In 2016, 173 Black people have died at the hands of the very law enforcement officers who have been sworn to protect and serve them.

Our citizens have prayed, rallied, held press conferences, insisted on better training by police departments, and demanded the use of body cameras to record the actions of law enforcement officers. Meanwhile, many of the victims have held their hands high and cooperated, yet law enforcement officers have not been deterred from targeting, profiling, and killing African Americans.

Even when body cameras are worn, the technology's utility is thwarted when officers lose, drop or fail to turn on their cameras, and the incidents are not recorded. Without these video recordings we hear the same excuses from police officers justifying the killing of Black men and women, such as: "He appeared to be reaching for a weapon," "He appeared to fit the description of someone that just committed a crime in the area," or "I feared for my life." Law enforcement officers only seem to offer these excuses after killing Black people.

It is time for the Department of Justice to take aggressive action and put an end to what appears to be the targeting and profiling of African Americans that result in their death. Officers enjoy the presumption of credibility, whereas victims endure the presumption of guilt. For too long this dynamic has helped to protect law enforcement officers from being brought to justice. We demand thorough investigations in a reasonable time frame and we will not continue to ask our people to be patient without any hope for change.

Madam Attorney General, you have the unique opportunity and constitutional responsibility to change this narrative. We believe that every person whose civil rights may have been violated is entitled to a full and complete investigation by the Department



of Justice. We demand an expansion of "pattern-and-practice" investigations into rogue police departments and greater transparency in the process by which the determinations on these investigations are made. We also demand that victims have the right to request independent investigations, autopsies and prosecutions. The recording of police confrontations and killings by citizens who document these incidents with their cameras and cellphones and share through social media, have provided you with more evidence than ever before to prosecute these cases and ensure those responsible are brought to justice.

The Members of the Congressional Black Caucus will not rest until we have determined that you are using the full power of your office and performing the fullness of your duty to bring about fairness and justice to victims, families and communities who have suffered for far too long at the hands of law enforcement. Americans of all backgrounds have mobilized to express their outrage and fear that our country has lost its way. The world is watching and these killings cannot continue to go unaddressed or ignored by our government.

Madam Attorney General, you have the authority and the resources to address these matters. We urge you to aggressively utilize all that is available to you and your office to ensure these killings do not continue.

Very truly yours,


G. K. Butterfield
Chairman
The Congressional Black Caucus


Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

12-02

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