NAACP Legal Defense Fund Statement on Internal Discipline for Baltimore Police Officers Responsible for Killing Freddie Gray

Today, the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) brought internal charges against five of the officers responsible for killing Freddie Gray, with three of them facing termination, according to the Baltimore Sun. The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) welcomes findings of wrongdoing by investigators from the Montgomery and Howard county police departments, and is eager to learn more when the BPD officially announces the outcome of the investigation.

“Since Mr. Gray’s tragic death, we’ve been adamant about the need for both individual and collective accountability for those responsible,” said Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of LDF. “While none of the officers were found criminally liable in a court of law, we are encouraged that many of those involved reportedly will face administrative repercussions for their misconduct. Final authority in imposing this internal punishment rests with Commissioner Davis, and we call on him to show the city of Baltimore that the BPD will not tolerate behavior that violates the department’s rules by imposing appropriate disciplinary actions, including termination. Ultimately, reforming the BPD requires much more than accountability in this one case, but long-lasting repercussions against all those involved will help engender the trust and credibility necessary to start the next chapter in Baltimore’s relationship with its police force.”

The three BPD officers who are facing possible termination are Caesar Goodson, Brian Rice, and Alicia White. Officers Edward Nero and Garrett Miller, who were responsible for Mr. Gray’s initial arrest, face a five-day suspension without pay. Officer William Porter, who was criminally charged alongside his fellow officers for his role in Mr. Gray’s death, is not facing any administrative accountability.

“Mr. Gray’s death was not simply a result of the misconduct of six officers, but of egregious systemic issues within the BPD,” said Monique Dixon, Deputy Director of Policy and Senior Counsel at LDF. “Ensuring that these individual officers are disciplined for violating policies that led to the death of Freddie Gray is a start, but there’s still a long road ahead for reform. Following this step from the BPD, I urge Baltimore residents and stakeholders to redouble their efforts to change the BPD into the police department the city deserves, and to remain engaged in the implementation of the consent decree.”

As LDF remembers Freddie Gray, we continue to promote unbiased and responsible policing practices in Baltimore and elsewhere. As part of LDF’s Policing Reform Campaign, we advocate for: (a) annual collection, analysis, disaggregation, and public reporting of data on arrests, use-of-force incidents, and pedestrian and traffic stop data; (b) training on implicit bias, de-escalation, use of force, adolescent development, and proper interactions with persons with mental illness and
other disabilities; (c) enforcement of these trainings through close monitoring of police conduct and the imposition of disciplinary actions or retraining; and (d) timely investigation and resolution of civilian complaints against police.

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*Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization and has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.*