NAACP Legal Defense Fund Statement on Guilty Verdicts for Baltimore Detectives Marcus Taylor and Daniel Hersl

Today, Baltimore Police Department (BPD) Detectives Marcus Taylor and Daniel Hersl were found guilty at trial of racketeering, racketeering conspiracy, and other charges as part of a criminal conspiracy based out of the BPD’s Gun Trace Task Force. NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Sherrilyn Ifill issued the following statement in response:

“Beyond the guilty verdict and prior guilty pleas in this case, it’s time to talk about what comes next for the city of Baltimore. This corruption went on unabated for nearly 10 years and was only brought to light as a result of a federal investigation. Neither City Hall, BPD’s Internal Affairs, nor the State’s Attorney’s Office was able to uncover and hold accountable the officers at the heart of this criminal conspiracy. Residents deserve new procedures, practices, regulations, safety valves, and training across city agencies – including the State’s Attorney’s office – to ensure that this cannot happen again.

“What we learned from this case is precisely what has been missing from the national dialogue on policing. Like with DOJ’s blistering report on the BPD, we heard testimony that affirmed the gross misconduct that communities have complained of for years. Far too often, the voices of community members are disbelieved or dismissed. Going forward, city leaders, law enforcement officials, and the media must be diligent in centering conversations about policing around residents’ lived experiences. It shouldn’t take federal investigations to recognize and trust the community.

“City leaders should also focus on taking steps to prevent police corruption, such as training officers on constitutional policing and developing an early intervention system to identify problem officers – both of which are required by the consent decree. We’re working to ensure that the consent decree process produces real results, but that can’t be all. It is critical that the community’s mistrust of law enforcement, which has been validated by these proceedings, is understood and that structural changes are made well-beyond just the BPD.”

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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.