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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Civil Rights Groups Reach Settlement in Police Violence Case on Behalf of Peaceful Protesters

LOUISVILLE, KY - After five years, the ACLU of Kentucky, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF), and law firm Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Maazel LLP (ECBAWM) reached a settlement in *Attica Scott, et. al. v. Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government, et. al.* on behalf of plaintiffs who were subjected to excessive force by the Louisville Metro Police Department in violation of their First and Fourth Amendment rights.

During the summer of 2020, the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor sparked demonstrations advocating for the elimination of racist and violent policing across all 50 states. The City of Louisville's response to these largely peaceful demonstrations was violent. On each of the early days of protests, and on numerous instances that followed, LMPD fired tear gas, flash bangs, pepperballs, and other military-grade weapons indiscriminately into large crowds, causing injury to peaceful protesters exercising their fundamental right to make their voices heard in support of racial justice.

Hearing calls from our plaintiffs and countless advocates throughout the community, Louisville has now made changes to its policies on protest response. Some of those key changes include prohibiting the use of chemical and direct impact weapons for the purposes of moving or managing crowds at peaceful protests and creating a Civilian Review and Accountability Board. While these changes mark a step in the right direction, the ACLU of Kentucky, LDF, and plaintiffs in this case remain committed to advocating for greater change needed to protect the First Amendment rights of all protesters in Louisville and to fully achieve the reforms sought by racial justice protesters who took to the streets in 2020 and remain fighting today.

"It has been an honor to stand beside the thousands of individuals who flooded downtown Louisville in 2020 to make our voices heard and each of the plaintiffs in this lawsuit," said **Plaintiff Attica Scott**. "Make no mistake: We will keep fighting for a better vision of public safety in Louisville—one that promotes equal justice for all and protects Black people and other people of color from violence at the hands of LMPD—and I will remain steadfast in lifting up the voices of my fellow Louisvillians in that fight."

"I never expected we would have to do something like this. When I went to the protests that first night, I went because I felt so emotionally connected to Breonna Taylor and her story and the injustice that happened to her. I would have never known what that summer turned into and it has changed me forever," said **Plaintiff Kayla Meisner**. "I have had a lifelong love and pride for the city of Louisville and to see it in its darkest moments was really hard. I am very happy that we can consider this a positive step forward. Hopefully the next time we have to protest an injustice we can do so safely, without fear or intimidation."

“For too many people, myself included, the impact of police violence in response to racial justice protests is still being felt today,” said **Plaintiff Patrick Moore**, a peaceful protester who was shot in his left eye with a pepper ball. “After four surgeries, I still cannot fully see out of my left eye. Five years later, that night, that pain, that fear, haven’t left me. By joining this lawsuit, I hoped to force Louisville Metro leadership to confront the real and lasting consequences of their actions. City leadership assured us that LMPD policy now restricts the use of pepper balls to disperse protests and absent permission from the Chief of Police, and for that I am grateful. To rebuild trust, Metro Government and LMPD—from the Mayor on down to rank-and-file officers—must listen to the people of Louisville: recognize our humanity. Understand that our calls for accountability, transparency, and an end to police violence are not unreasonable. They are rooted in our hope for a safer, better, and more just city.”

“My love for the people of Louisville is what brought me out to the protests in the first place and why I am very grateful to be a part of this process,” said **Plaintiff Stevana Schauer**. “We will want to see these injustices righted and wins like these are a small step forward in this fight that we must continue.”

“I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support and advocacy of LDF and ACLU throughout this process,” said **Plaintiff Corbin Smith**. “What happened to me during the Louisville protests was wrong, and their commitment to seeking accountability is a reminder of why we must continue pushing for justice and meaningful reform in our communities. I also want to recognize the people of Louisville who continue to stand up for what’s right, and the seven others represented in this case for their courage in sharing their stories and seeking justice alongside me.”

“I am grateful for the powerful opportunity to work alongside the protestors, organizers, and legal counsel who’ve fought for justice for Breonna Taylor and all victims of police brutality these past five years,” said **Plaintiff Willa Tinsley**. “The horrific police violence I witnessed and was subject to in the summer of 2020 is indefensible. The struggle against this kind of brutality in the streets and the courtroom is what stands between us and the encroachment of intractable state violence in our communities. Although Louisville Metro attempted to silence us with punitive intimidation, this experience has only deepened my conviction of the importance and urgency of this work. I have confidence in our powerful Louisville community to continue it.”

“Words can’t express how truly grateful I am to have been a part of such an impactful journey,” said **Plaintiff Tyler Weakley**. “Although the past five years have had some traumatic moments, I am grateful for what I have learned in the process. Being able to be a part of a change in the City of Louisville in the midst of so much chaos will be something I never forget. I want to express the biggest thank you to the entire team for helping us accomplish this goal and create even more open doors for change in the future.”

“We want to thank everyone who fought alongside the Alliance during the summer of 2020 and continuing today. Organizations and individuals throughout the City have come together in the trenches to work toward the very goals of racial justice our organization has long represented,” said **the Board of Directors of the Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression**. “Five years later, the people of Louisville are still reckoning with the harms caused by our leadership during the racial justice protests. Night after night, members of the Alliance went home with bruises, swelling, rashes, and coughs. Exposure to tear gas and chemical munitions left us struggling to breathe. And nearly five years later, we have

experienced vision loss, hearing difficulties, and lasting trauma from repeat exposure to these so-called crowd control weapons—all because, like so many of our fellow Louisvillians, we dared to speak truth to power. Through this settlement, we hope to continue to advocate for the rights of Black Louisvillians and we urge our City leadership to work with us in that mission.”

“The First Amendment protects our right to peacefully protest,” said **Corey Shapiro, legal director for the ACLU of Kentucky**. “We are pleased with this outcome for our clients, and we look forward to continuing to work on policy changes with LMPD. We will always protect protesters’ right to express themselves peacefully without fear of police violence.”

“This settlement represents a hard-fought resolution to an incredibly important case,” said **Sam Shapiro of ECBAWM**. “We are proud to have defended the constitutional rights of our brave and steadfast clients, and are hopeful this resolution is a step towards longer lasting changes that will allow Louisvillians to protest peacefully without fear of violence.”

“For five years, our clients have fought tirelessly to ensure the right of all Louisvillians to make their voices heard,” said **Catherine Logue, Assistant Counsel for LDF**. “Much work remains to be done, but we hope that this settlement will send a clear message to the City of Louisville about the costs of using force to silence and suppress peaceful protesters. The use of tear gas and other indiscriminate force at peaceful protests plainly violates the First and Fourth Amendment rights of all those impacted. At LDF, we have, and will, always stand up for the right to protest free from police violence.”

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Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. 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 Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF 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.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Kentucky is freedom's watchdog, working daily in the courts, legislature, and communities to defend individual rights and personal freedoms. For additional information, visit our website at: www.aclu-ky.org.