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LDF Media
212-965-2200 / media@naacpldf.org

LDF Issues Statement on Minneapolis Police Department's Fatal Shooting of Amir Locke

On Wednesday, police officers in the Minneapolis Police Department's (MPD) SWAT team executed a no-knock warrant at a residential address in Minneapolis, Minnesota, during which Officer Mark Hanneman fatally shot a 22-year-old Black man, Amir Locke, seconds after entering the home where he lay sleeping. Mr. Locke was not named in the search warrant.

In response to the tragic killing of Mr. Locke, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) Associate Director-Counsel Janai Nelson issued the following statement:

“We are outraged at the senseless killing of Amir Locke — which was both egregious and avoidable — and stand with his family as they call for accountability in his name. LDF has long recognized the inherent, life-threatening danger and terror caused by no-knock warrants, a practice that grew out of the infamous War on Drugs and has resulted in the deaths of Breonna Taylor and countless others, including now, Mr. Locke.

“The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act would have banned the use of no-knock warrants federally, but Congress failed to pass this critical legislation despite the demands of tens of millions of protestors to create a just public safety system. State and local jurisdictions have also largely failed to protect their residents by outlawing these and other draconian law enforcement practices and excessive uses of force.

“This past Wednesday, we witnessed the horrifying effects of Congressional, state, and local failure to fully ban no-knock warrants in the same city where George Floyd was also brutally murdered by members of MPD and where the recently-enacted limitation on the use of no-knocks warrants appears to have had little effect. It took law enforcement only seconds after entering the residence where Mr. Locke was asleep with a warrant that did not even bear his name to shoot and kill him in a harrowing sequence that is emblematic of ongoing police brutality against Black people.

“Despite the Minneapolis Police Department instituting a policy that ostensibly limits the use of no-knock warrants, frequent usage of this overly aggressive practice persists. MPD has also demonstrated dishonesty and lacked transparency in its handling of the incident. In their official communications to the public, MPD falsely painted Mr. Locke as a suspect, despite officials admitting that they did not actually know if he was a suspect. Moreover, all currently available evidence suggests that Mr. Locke was in lawful possession of a firearm when killed.

“We demand an immediate, rigorous, transparent, and comprehensive investigation into the officers involved in this incident, as well as into the full circumstances surrounding

the issuance and execution of the no-knock warrant that precipitated Mr. Locke's killing. In addition, the U.S. Department of Justice's pattern-or practice investigation of MPD, which it initiated in April 2021, must address the agency's continuing use of no-knock warrants and its continuing failure to protect Minneapolis residents, especially its Black residents, from excessive uses of force.

"Mr. Locke should still be alive, and his tragic death underscores the urgent need to re-envision systems of public safety throughout our country and to ensure no-knock warrants are fully outlawed nation-wide. We extend our deepest condolences to the loved ones and family of Mr. Locke during this painful time and to the Minneapolis community that has been rocked by another loathsome incident of fatal police violence."

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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. 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. 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.

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