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LDF Media
media@naacpldf.org

LDF Issues Statement on Conviction of Sean Grayson in Murder of Sonya Massey

On Wednesday, former Illinois Deputy Sheriff Sean Grayson was convicted of second-degree murder in the killing of Sonya Massey, a Black woman who called 911 for support.

In response, [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) Associate Director-Counsel Todd A. Cox issued the following statement:

“Our hearts go out to Sonya Massey’s loved ones and the pain they have endured since her unconscionable death. We are hopeful this jury verdict provides some degree of solace for this tragic loss. Deputy Sheriff Sean Grayson’s callous violence reflects a failure of our public safety system that treats people who call for help as threats to the officers sworn to protect them. This happens too often for people who are Black or experiencing mental illness and especially for those who are both, like Ms. Massey herself. Vulnerable people in need should not have to fear for their lives when they call 911 for help.

“While the conviction of former Deputy Sheriff Grayson for second-degree murder is a step towards accountability, it will not bring Sonya Massey back. It also does not lessen the need for the difficult work ahead to prevent more senseless police killings.

“We must honor Sonya Massey with more than a singular conviction. We must build a public safety system that has mental health practitioners available to speak with 911 callers, crisis responders rather than armed law enforcement when police involvement is unnecessary, and safe places for people in crisis to stabilize and access resources. Until then, every 911 call by a Black person in crisis risks ending in tragedy.”

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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.