



For Immediate Release
Friday, May 7, 2021

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LDF Calls For an End to Over-Policing of Black Communities and a Transformation of Public Safety in Tulsa, Oklahoma

Today, less than one month before the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) released “We Are Not Lesser,” a report examining the pronounced disparities in Tulsa’s policing practices, including its arrests of Black youth, Black adults, and uses of force against Black Tulsans.

“We Are Not Lesser” draws on official data and the testimony and accounts provided by Tulsa residents at multiple public convenings from June through September of 2019. The report calls for the city to remedy the Tulsa Police Department’s disparate enforcement practices against Black Tulsans and invest in services and programs that would reduce its reliance on policing, offering a number of recommendations including:

- Reducing the city’s over-reliance on policing services by investing in community-based programs and services to address issues to which law enforcement officers are ill-equipped to respond.
- Improving transparency into officers’ actions by collecting and routinely publishing data regarding officers’ enforcement activity.
- Decreasing racial disparities in arrests by decriminalizing or repealing minor offenses.
- Reducing police interactions with youth to prevent their involvement in the criminal legal system.

“The Mayor, City Council, and Tulsa Police must act swiftly to address the disproportionate arrests and uses of force against Black Tulsans and the over-investment in policing at the expense of services that would better address Tulsans’ underlying needs,” said LDF President and Director-Counsel Sherrilyn Ifill. “Year after year, these disparities have been comprehensively documented, examined, and brought to the forefront of conversations surrounding justice in Tulsa’s public safety system. The Tulsa community has mobilized and advocated to address these deep inequities, and their calls have been ignored for too long. It is time for the Mayor, City Council, and the Tulsa Police Department to act and adopt transformative measures that will address these injustices experienced by communities of color in Tulsa.”

According to the report, “Last summer, Tulsans, like millions of Americans nationwide, organized and participated in mass demonstrations to protest police violence, to demand accountability for police misconduct and brutality, and to urge a rethinking of the public safety framework. Tulsa’s protests mirrored those that took place in every one of the 50 states in the aftermath of the recent police killings of George Floyd in Minnesota, Breonna Taylor in Kentucky, Carlos Ingram-Lopez in Arizona, Tony McDade in Florida, and Rayshard Brooks in Georgia. But, as the testimony throughout the Tulsa City Council public listening sessions and special meetings demonstrates, members of Tulsa’s Black and

Latinx communities have long been demanding the City take action to address racial bias in Tulsa's policing practices.

“[The Tulsa Police Department's] own data show that its officers: arrest Black youth three times more than white youth; arrest Black adults two times more than white adults; and use force against Black adults three times more than Latinx adults, while white adults are half as likely to have force used against them when compared to Black adults.

“As the city of Tulsa plans activities to commemorate the 100th anniversary of this country's worst race massacre, it must also commit to addressing the reality of contemporary racial discrimination and inequality in Tulsa. Any effort by the city of Tulsa to honestly confront past racial injustice must include a willingness to acknowledge and address the contemporary manifestations of historical discrimination and a clear commitment to implementing measures that can result in change. In Tulsa, such an effort must include the adoption of transformative public safety policies and strategies to ensure Tulsans are safe in their communities regardless of their race, ethnicity or national origin. Tulsans deserve nothing less.”

Read the full report [here](#).

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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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