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Grand Jury Fails to Indict Three Louisville Metro Police Department Officers for Killing of Breonna Taylor; Indicts One Officer for Wanton Endangerment in Shooting into Neighboring Apartment

Today, a grand jury in Louisville, Kentucky, indicted only one of the three police officers involved in the killing of Breonna Taylor more than six months ago. None of the officers were charged for killing Taylor. Only one officer, former Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) officer Brett Hankison, was charged with three counts of wanton endangerment in the first degree for reportedly shooting into the apartment next door to Taylor. A warrant has been issued for his arrest. LMPD officers shot and killed Taylor after entering her residence unannounced in the early morning hours of March 13, 2020, while executing a search warrant.

Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) released the following statement in response to the grand jury's decision:

“It has been more than six months since Breonna Taylor was shot multiple times and killed in her own home. It took sustained protests across the nation, along with relentless advocacy from her family, to begin the process to hold her killers accountable. And yet today, not one of the three officers involved has been charged for the killing of Ms. Taylor. Only one officer was charged with shooting into a nearby apartment.

“What this means is that no one will face accountability for taking the life of a promising young Black woman – an EMT worker who, after working multiple shifts, was sleeping in her bed. This is a devastating blow for the Taylor family, for the Louisville community, and for the Black community that has been working for justice for Ms. Taylor across the nation. Today's announcement reaffirms that we need a drastic transformation in the regime of impunity that protects police officers who kill innocent Black people, and in how we define and support public safety infrastructures in our country.

“There is still more we would like to know. We call on Attorney General Cameron to release the full grand jury transcripts, so that the public can understand how this case was presented. The transcripts in the case brought before the grand jury in St. Louis County after the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson were made public by the State's Attorney after he announced that there would be no indictment of Officer Darren Wilson. We call on the prosecutor to release the grand jury transcripts in this case.

“As the state’s criminal charges against the officer proceed, LDF will await the outcome of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s separate investigation and the LMPD’s internal investigation of the officers involved in Ms. Taylor’s killing. LDF also joins with the over 200 national and local organizations demanding that the U.S. Department of Justice conduct a civil rights investigation of the LMPD to determine if it has engaged in a pattern or practice of unlawful policing.

“Lastly, LDF filed suit in July against the City of Louisville, challenging LMPD’s unconstitutional conduct and brutality against protesters who demanded justice for Ms. Taylor during May and June of this year. Protesters then were met with live ammunition, projectiles, and excessive force. Tonight, residents of Louisville are already out peacefully protesting today’s grand jury decision. We call on the LMPD to exercise restraint as they engage with protesters exercising their First Amendment rights as the night unfolds. We will be closely monitoring the actions of the department as they engage with protesters.

“Since Ms. Taylor’s death, the city of Louisville has banned no-knock search warrants. But the cost of progress should never be Black lives. Transformational change is needed in police accountability and public safety measures at the federal, state, and local levels. LDF will remain vigilant in demanding elected officials and policymakers take significant action to address police violence and misconduct. We will continue to protect the rights of demonstrators in Louisville to protest and urge local officials to do the same.”

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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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