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CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS CALL FOR NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING; DEMAND FEDERAL ACTION TO REFORM POLICE

NEW YORK (June 1, 2020) -- The leaders of the nation's leading civil rights and racial justice organizations have issued a joint statement in response to the unrest ravaging America's cities. These leaders and their organizations are:

- Melanie L. Campbell, President and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
- Kristen Clarke, President and Executive Director, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law
- Vanita Gupta, President and CEO, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
- Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund
- Derrick Johnson, President and CEO, NAACP
- Marc H. Morial, President and CEO, National Urban League
- Rev. Al Sharpton, Founder and President, National Action Network

Their statement is below:

"The tragic and senseless loss of Black lives to police-involved violence over the last several years -- and the callous indifference to justice in response -- should have been enough to persuade the nation of the need for dramatic change. The last several days have made it impossible to ignore.

"We call on the nation to join the civil rights community in observing a National Day of Mourning on Thursday, as George Floyd's family prepares for the painful task of laying their loved one to rest. We will spend the day in reflection and prayer for racial reconciliation and an end to the violence that is ravaging the nation.

"Our communities, already saturated in grief over the COVID-19 pandemic, have been pushed to the brink by relentless police brutality and vigilante injustice. Now, white nationalists intent on stoking divisions and discrediting the racial justice movement have smashed their way into this cauldron of anguish and rage.

"There is only one way out of this crisis. The rift between the police and the communities they are sworn to protect can be healed only by a comprehensive and realistic plan for reform and accountability.

"The brutal killings of African Americans by police and vigilantes -- as well as the appalling, inappropriate response by police to peaceful uprisings, highlight the need for comprehensive review and revision of police training procedures, hiring standards and use of force policies.

"We look forward to working closely with members of Congress on a bipartisan basis to advance these policies and other desperately-needed reform measures. We stand with impacted families and communities as they remember and mourn George Floyd, Sean Reed, Breonna Taylor and countless others. We cannot rest until we get true justice for African Americans and other marginalized communities who bear the brunt of police violence."

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