



For Immediate Release
Thursday, June 20, 2019

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LDF Responds to Disturbing Police Incident Involving Black Family in Phoenix

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) condemns the actions of the Phoenix Police Department in a recently released [video](#) in which officers held Dravon Ames, his pregnant fiancée Iesha Harper, and their two children—a one-year-old and four-year-old— at gunpoint and threatened to kill Mr. Ames and Ms. Harper. Ms. Harper was holding her one-year-old in her arms and holding the hand of her four-year-old during the encounter.

“There can be no justification for this ugly and brutal conduct by law enforcement officers toward an unarmed family,” said Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of LDF. “This video is yet another display of policing that reflects an abuse of power, unnecessary force, and escalation on the part of the officers in response to minor alleged offenses, and more disturbingly, a complete disregard for the humanity of people of color who law enforcement officers are sworn to protect and serve.”

While apologies offered by [Mayor Kate Gallego](#) and [Chief Jeri Williams](#) have been swift, they do not mitigate the damage done to the individuals involved – including the young children who were traumatized by this appalling conduct by armed officers of the law.

It would be convenient to say this is an isolated incident, but the history of policing in Phoenix suggests otherwise. Phoenix police officers were involved in a [disturbingly high number](#) of officer-involved shootings in 2018. Moreover, just weeks before this video was made public, the Phoenix Police Department was forced to respond to [282 posts](#) from 97 current and former police officers referring to Black people as “thugs” and calling for violence against people for exercising their First Amendment rights.

We join the calls for transparent, thorough, and professional investigations of the incident, including the release of the names of all officers involved in this incident, and all available videos and 911 tapes. We will continue to closely monitor actions

taken by local officials as the investigation of this incident proceeds and will support demands made by Phoenix residents for sound police reforms.

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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 and 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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