



Civil Rights Groups File FOIA Seeking Information About North Charleston Police Department

**FOIA Marks Next Step in Series of Actions to Increase Transparency
Around Racial Disparities in North Charleston Policing**

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NORTH CHARLESTON - The American Civil Liberties Union of South Carolina (ACLU SC) and NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) today filed a [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\) request](#) for information relating to the racial impact of the North Charleston Police Department's (NCPD) policing policies and practices. The information requested includes all documents pertaining to funding or technical assistance from the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) or any other federal agency to the NCPD, general NCPD policies and procedures, NCPD officer training, NCPD traffic stops, NCPD officer use of force, complaints filed against NCPD officers, and disciplinary actions taken against NCPD officers.

Five years ago last month, Walter Scott was brutally murdered by a former officer of the North Charleston Police Department. To mark the anniversary, ACLU SC, LDF, Charleston Area Justice Ministry and over 200 Charleston area residents sent a [letter](#) calling on Mayor Keith Summey and North Charleston City Council Members to approve an independent racial bias audit of its policing practices, a demand that local and national advocates have made in various forms since the murder of Mr. Scott.

In 2016 under public pressure, North Charleston Mayor Keith Summey and former North Charleston Police Chief Eddie Driggers invited the DOJ Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office to conduct and publicly release a comprehensive evaluation of NCPD. In 2017, former Attorney General Jeff Sessions, eliminated the DOJ's years-long practice of holding police departments accountable for their shortcomings and abandoned its review of the NCPD. A lawsuit filed in 2018 by LDF against the DOJ to obtain documents relating to the COPS Office evaluation of NCPD is still pending.

In May 2019, the North Charleston Citizens' Advisory Commission on Police-Community Relations unanimously recommended that city officials commission an independent racial bias audit of the NCPD. Officials [ignored](#) the request and the Commission is now dissolved.

"The only way to effectively solve a problem is to understand the problem," said ACLU of South Carolina Legal Director Susan Dunn. "While it does not take the place of an independent, comprehensive racial bias audit, our FOIA request will bring this community closer to the truth. North Charleston residents deserve a police department and city that leads with transparency and accountability. Without evidence of these values, we cannot build safer communities."

Using information obtained through previous FOIA requests, a 2017 [report](#) by LDF found clear evidence of stark racial disparities in North Charleston policing. Black and white residents represent roughly equal percentages of the total population of North Charleston, however, Black residents filed complaints against NCPD officers almost twice as often as white residents. Despite this fact, the NCPD sustained Black residents' complaints at significantly lower rates (31%) than white residents (50%).

"As we await a response to our letter to city leaders requesting an independent racial bias audit of policing practices, we will begin collecting and analyzing information ourselves," said Monique Dixon, Director of State Advocacy of LDF. "Racial disparities in policing in North Charleston have persisted over the years, yet city officials have done nothing to address the problem. The time for officials to act is long overdue."