



For Immediate Release
Monday, April 13, 2020

LDF Media
212-965-2200 / media@naacpldf.org

**Religious, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Organizations Call On
North Charleston Mayor and Councilmembers to Commission Independent,
Comprehensive Racial Bias Audit of Police Department**

Today, the Charleston Area Justice Ministry (CAJM), the American Civil Liberties Union of South Carolina (ACLU-SC) and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) sent a [letter](#), signed by over 200 area residents and leaders, to North Charleston Mayor Keith Summey and City Councilmembers calling for an independent and comprehensive racial bias audit of the North Charleston Police Department (NCPD). Organizations and signers sent the letter just days after the fifth anniversary of the unlawful shooting of Walter Scott, an unarmed Black man killed on April 4, 2015 by the NCPD during a routine traffic stop. Despite local and national advocates' demands, a publicly released evaluation of the NCPD has yet to occur.

“For five years, we have asked North Charleston officials to take steps to ensure that the murder of an unarmed Black man by a local police officer will not happen again, but officials have offered no comprehensive reforms even though racial disparities in the city’s policing practices continue,” said Monique Dixon, Director of State Advocacy at LDF. “North Charleston owes its residents of color a thorough evaluation of its police department. The list of people of color abused by police officers continues to grow each year. Without an independent, public review, North Charleston communities of color will continue to bear the brunt of actual or perceived racially-biased policing practices.”

The letter to city officials states after the death of Walter Scott and “under public pressure, Mayor Summey and former Police Chief Driggers [invited](#) the U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services Office (DOJ) to conduct and publicly release a comprehensive evaluation of NCPD.” When the DOJ refused to complete the assessment in 2017, city leaders abandoned their commitment to an independent, comprehensive review of NCPD policies and practices. In the meantime, racial disparities in the handling of complaints filed against NCPD officers and traffic stops conducted by officers remain; in 2019 60% of NCPD’s traffic stops were Black persons even though they make up just 46% of North Charleston’s population, according to the letter.

Rev. Cecelia Armstrong, Co-President of CAJM stated, “it has been said that the North Charleston Police want to build significant relationships with the people. Then in good faith, since the people are asking for transparency, the audit would be the best way to build rapport and relationship.”

"Trust between law enforcement and the community is a key component of public safety, and transparency is the cornerstone of trust," said ACLU-SC Legal Director Susan Dunn. "We urge city officials to choose accountability over willful ignorance and approve an independent racial bias audit of the North Charleston Police Department. Without seeking and acknowledging the truth, we cannot build safer communities."

Walter Scott's death is one of [numerous examples](#) of excessive or lethal force used by the NCPD against Black people over the last two decades. In 2011, NCPD officers handcuffed Sheldon Williams and stomped on his face causing facial fractures. In 2018, NCPD officers arrested Arkein Campbell and stunned him with a taser while he was handcuffed on the ground. Both incidents, as well as Scott's death, led to civil suits against the city.

North Charleston officials have repeatedly ignored the community's call to contract an independent company to conduct a racial bias assessment and release a public report. LDF, the CJAM, the ACLU-SC, and the over-200 signers thus far, demand North Charleston Mayor Summey and City Councilmembers hire qualified, independent auditors to review the NCPD's policies and practices and publicly release their findings and recommendations for reform.

Read the letter [here](#).

###

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.

Follow LDF on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

For over 50 years, the ACLU of South Carolina has been our state's guardian of liberty, working in courts, legislatures, and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and the laws of the United States guarantee everyone in this country. Whether it's achieving full equality for LGBT people, establishing new privacy protections for our digital age of widespread government surveillance, ending mass incarceration, or preserving the right to vote or the right to have an abortion, the

ACLU of South Carolina takes up the toughest civil liberties cases and issues to defend all people from government abuse and overreach.

The Charleston Area Justice Ministry (CAJM), is a growing network of faith-based congregations who are culturally, economically, geographically and religiously diverse who come together to make the Charleston area a more just place to live, work, and do business.