



National Pan-Hellenic Council, Inc.

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Beyond the Ferguson Grand Jury Decision

A joint statement from the presidents of the National Pan-Hellenic Council

By now we learned that the Grand Jury chose to not indict Officer Darren Wilson for the shooting death of Michael Brown. As members of the Divine Nine, organizations founded by African-American men and women, we unfortunately know that deaths like the death of Michael Brown -- and the legal proceedings that follow -- are too common.

Since the death of Michael Brown, we have seen the deaths of too many other people of color at the hands of police officers. On November 12, the Spirit House Project held a day of remembrance, at which time they read the names of 1000 black and brown victims of police or other state-sanctioned killings since 2007. As the Spirit House Project continues their research into deaths of people of color at the hands of police officers, there is no doubt more instances will be uncovered.

What we are dealing with goes beyond Ferguson!

These systemic issues will only be tackled by organized collaborative efforts of nonviolent protest as well as policy implementation. Our police forces should be spending less time militarizing and more time with cultural competency training. Bills such as the Universal Respect Act, are aimed at limiting racial profiling. Additionally, we have heard the call from Michael Brown's family requesting mandatory use of body cameras by all police departments across the nation.

We will continue to raise our voices and urge our members and others to do so, against the rising militarization of law enforcement. We find it repulsive when illegal acts of looting, arson and attacks on others are done in the name of 'justice for Michael Brown'. It is equally offensive when some hijack peaceful protest for their own criminal agenda. In both instances, those people should be held accountable.

Many members of the Divine Nine have participated in nonviolent protests in Ferguson and in other communities around the United States. We support the exercise of their Constitutional right to free speech. We do not condone acts of violence – by protestors or police – in the furtherance of the change that has to take place.

As one organization representing nine fraternities and sororities, our hearts and prayers go out to all those suffering because of Michael Brown's death.

Each of us is invested in our communities as we have been throughout the years. As advocates of and for our communities, we will continue to fight to provide equal justice for black and brown people in America. We will work to change the narrative that perpetuates the stereotype that black and brown people are dangerous and threatening. We are continuing to work together to ensure that equal justice truly prevails.