

NAACP NEWS

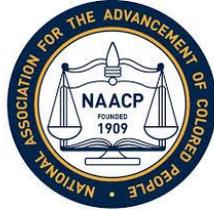
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PRESS RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

GEORGIA NAACP CALLS FOR CONTINUED PROTEST

NAACP Calls on Ambassador Young to Stand with Protestors or Retire

ATLANTA, GEORGIA - *The Georgia NAACP issued the following Press Release regarding ongoing protests in Atlanta and around Georgia in the wake of the latest fatal police shootings of 37-year old Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and 32-year old Philando Castile in St. Paul, Minnesota.*

Despite calls from Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed and former Ambassador Andrew Young, the Georgia NAACP calls on all activists, protesters, and organizers to remain vigilant and keep on mobilizing in the streets in the push for change.

In nearly a dozen cities across Georgia this past weekend, Americans by the tens of thousands exercised their constitutional rights and protested against a broken apparatus of policing and an ill-functioning criminal justice system that appears incapable of rendering justice for Black and Brown people cut down in deadly encounters with law enforcement. "We have marched, rallied, held town halls, teach-ins, pray ins, organized, and held voter registrations drives" said Francys Johnson, Statesboro Attorney and President of the Georgia NAACP.

Responding to criticism from former Ambassador and Atlanta Mayor, Andrew Young that characterized the protesters as "unlovable little brats", the Georgia NAACP demanded Ambassador Young use his clout to demand meaningful change in the police practices in the United States or go quickly and quietly into a well-deserved retirement.

"While not discounting Andrew Young's historical contributions to this Nation's progress; Mr. Young cannot cloak himself with the memory of Dr. King and expect that serious students of the Civil Rights Movement will not call foul on his statements denigrating legitimate protest only to appease his establishment and corporate friends" said Johnson.

"Mayor Reed should be patient and also stop putting words in Dr. King's mouth. If Dr. King were alive he would be in the streets with the protesters. But he is not alive; we are. It is for us, the living, to serve this present age," said Johnson.

The NAACP and *#blacklivesmatter* held the largest protest march to date with over 10,000 protesters last Friday. There were no reported issues of violence with any of the protesters.

Yet, Atlanta Police Chief Turner shared worries with Ambassador Young that officers may lose their cool under the impact of relentless heat and stress. "If they expect young people to keep their cool; we should expect trained peace officers to not lose theirs," Johnson suggested.

Many saw the collaboration traditional and millennials as a step towards uniting what has been a fractured coalition of differing tactics and methodology.

"Let me dispel the narrative that traditional and millennial organizations can't work together. We are dying in the street...young, old, gay, straight, educated and uneducated. Now is the time for every older NAACP'er, SCLC'er, and member of every mainline church denomination, fraternity, sorority and every other organization founded to liberate African Americans from the yokes of oppression to unite with the new millennial efforts like #blacklivesmatter and #ATLriseup," said Johnson.

"As a people, the reality of the proximity of violence to the lives of people of color is mournful. Sometimes that grief looks like prayer and song in church," he said. "Other times it looks like feet in the street."

Johnson denounced last Thursday's police shootings in Dallas, where one sniper assassinated five officers and injured seven others before being killed by police. He said the debate stirred by the shootings "only galvanized us, strengthened our resolve."

"The Georgia NAACP condemns this violence. It is antithetical to our core values as Americans. Change must come to policing in America but it cannot and will not come at the end of a barrel of a gun," said Johnson.

The Georgia NAACP and all our civil and human rights partners remain committed to seeking criminal justice reform. "Beyond heartbreaking, these latest tragedy calls for officials to break the inertia that may paralyze local and state authorities eliminating racial disparities across the criminal justice system and in policing specifically," said Johnson.

"We are not here to only protest; we offer solutions. Specifically, all state and municipal authorities should ensure their agencies policing practices adhere to the Justice Department protocols and the Presidential Commission on 21st Century Policing. Last year nearly 1000 people lost their lives in police custody across the United States. These tragedies, as well as our communities and country, demand wholesale reform" said Johnson.

According to Gerald Griggs, Atlanta Civil Rights Attorney and Georgia NAACP Criminal Justice Committee Chair, this is precisely why the NAACP is calling for the Protect with Respect Policing Reform Agenda. "First, we are calling on states to pass comprehensive racial profiling laws. One racial profiling law, co-authored and passed with the support of the NAACP in Missouri enabled the Department of Justice to hold the Ferguson Police Department accountable through its 'pattern and practice' investigation," said Griggs.

Other demands include full support of and passage of two crucial pieces of federal legislation. Last summer, the NAACP led a 1,002-mile march from Selma, Alabama to Washington DC to demand members of Congress pass the Law Enforcement Trust and Integrity Act (LETIA) and the End Racial Profiling Act. LETIA addresses the issue of police accountability and trust between police departments and their communities. The legislation also provides incentives for police organizations to adopt standards to ensure that incidents of misconduct are reduced through management training and protocols. ERPA would create a federal prohibition on racial profiling, mandate data collection, provide funding for law enforcement retraining and withhold funding to law enforcement agencies that do not comply.

Yet, the Georgia NAACP acknowledges this is a political problem as well. Next, week both presumptive presidential candidates are expected to appear before the 107th Annual NAACP National Convention in Cincinnati. "Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump must seriously address criminal justice reform. We want them to clearly state their commitment to address criminal justice reform and the issues of racial profiling, use of excessive force, and stop and frisk abuses. As the two candidates lead rallies and fundraising events seeking our support and our vote, we must demand that they support legislation to reform our fractured criminal justice system and end the murder of black and brown men and women at the hands of police," said Johnson.

Peaceful protests are planned to continue around Metro Atlanta and in Dublin, Macon, Savannah, and Valdosta.

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For more information about the work of the Georgia NAACP, please visit our website at www.naacpga.org.

Founded in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. The Georgia NAACP has had an unbroken presence in Georgia since 1917. The Georgia NAACP maintains a network of branches throughout Georgia, from cities to small rural counties. The Georgia NAACP has been the most effective and consistent advocates for civil and human rights in Georgia. The NAACP's half-million adult and youth members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors.