

DON'T SHOOT COALITION

Don't Shoot makes demands in response to Grand Jury announcement

Diverse local coalition redoubles efforts for justice and accountability

For Immediate Release – November 24, 2014

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St. Louis, MO – Don't Shoot, a coalition of approximately 50 local organizations formed in the wake of the police shooting of Michael Brown, renewed its call for police accountability and oversight following the Grand Jury's decision not to hold Officer Wilson criminally responsible for killing Brown.

“We will redouble our efforts to secure justice for Michael Brown and demand police and criminal justice system reforms across the board,” said Michael T. McPhearson, co-chair of the Don't Shoot Coalition and executive director for Veterans For Peace. “We learned a long time ago that police are not held accountable for killing people and especially not black and brown people. Instead, law enforcement and the judicial system have been used most aggressively and unfairly against us.”

The Don't Shoot Coalition calls for:

1. A thorough Federal investigation of possible criminal violations by Officer Wilson.
2. Amnesty for all those engaging in protest activity including dismissal of all state, county and municipal charges against individuals participating in civil disobedience since the August 9, 2014 shooting.
3. Police practices and criminal justice reforms that address systemic and prolific racial bias in policing.

Justice for Michael Brown remains a critical concern for Don't Shoot. Now that Missouri's Grand Jury has declined to file any charges against Officer Wilson, Don't Shoot looks to the Federal government to continue its investigations into the shooting and into the Ferguson Police Department. Don't Shoot urges the Department of Justice expend every possible resource to realize a fair and just outcome.

“Don't Shoot also seeks amnesty for the protestors arrested as a result of engaging in civil disobedience,” said Montague Simmons of the Organization for Black Struggle. “We ask all involved government agencies to drop these charges. How can you prosecute people for taking action to change a guilty system?”

Don't Shoot's vision for police practices is based on the concept that the role of police is to defend the safety and constitutional rights of the citizens they serve, and in which the first priority is preservation of life.

“Policing priorities should reflect community priorities. We need to shift the fundamental power dynamic between the broader community and those it assigns to protect them and keep the peace.” said Don’t Shoot member John Chasnoff. Don’t Shoot also wants to see police agencies engage the best and most progressive practices and meet the highest standards for professionalism in the field.

To achieve this vision, Don’t Shoot has developed a significant agenda of long-term reforms needed at the municipal, county, state and federal levels (in part outlined in [Don’t Shoot’s October 22, 2014 letter to the Department of Justice](#)). Its immediate priorities for reform include:

- Establishment of an independent county-wide Citizen Review Board to review serious complaints of police misconduct, make policy recommendations and report on the activities of departments. For such an entity to be effective, it must independently commissioned and empowered with adequate funding, subpoena power and access to Internal Affairs files.
- Strengthening Missouri’s racial profiling bill to include repercussions for departments that have demonstrated patterns of racial profiling or failed to comply with the law.
- Expanding Missouri’s training requirements for officers to include mandatory in-service training on topics such as: interacting with people with mental illnesses, use of force, responding to sexual assault, unarmed combat, conflict resolution, anti-racism and other critical issues.
- Revision of Missouri law to allow individuals with prior felony convictions to serve on juries.

“We will not allow the Grand Jury’s decision to set us back,” said Denise Lieberman, Don’t Shoot co-chair and Senior Attorney with Advancement Project, which on Saturday filed a [legal demand letter](#) on behalf of coalition partners promising to protect the constitutional rights of demonstrators in the wake of the decision. “We view this as a beginning, not an end. We look forward to working with people from all concerned communities to bring a new era of change and end the fear and suffering of communities targeted and harassed by police.”

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