



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
SEATTLE KING COUNTY BRANCH

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“Those who would hold us accountable must recognize their responsibility to participate in our work” – Author Unknown

The Seattle King County NAACP stands in opposition to the City of Seattle and Department of Justice’ motion to release the Seattle Police Department from remaining Consent Decree oversight by termination of the sustainment plan. We will join with other community organizations and the office of Councilmember Kshama Sawant asking that the Court DENY the motion.

The City argues that the very passage of time since January 2018 when the Court found the city in full compliance with Phase I and beginning Phase II is sufficient satisfactory evidence of reform such that they be benevolently released from federal oversight. The NAACP for the following reasons disagrees.

In May 2019 the Court presiding over the Decree since its 2012 inception lauded the Police Department’s improvements in areas such as crisis intervention, stops and detentions, and use of force; however, the Court sharply criticized the city’s “longstanding inability to address officer accountability;” finding that the City had fallen partially out of compliance with the Consent Decree. The Court ordered that before the City could be released from federal oversight, it had to respond to those deficiencies, including the closed-door appeal process for officers who have been fired or disciplined.

In December 2019 the city filed “City of Seattle’s Notice of Accountability Assessment,” which determined that the Department’s accountability system did not require wholesale change, but that it could benefit from “additional fine-tuning and refinement.” With the assessment in hand the city determined that it “could turn to developing a framework to address the Court’s concerns.” Other than the assessment and expressed idea to develop a framework to address the Court’s concerns, the City has done nothing more to substantiate that release from the sustainment plan is appropriate.

The Police Department Chief asserts, “We’ve come a long way from where we’ve started with the federal Consent Decree,” touting the Department’s body-worn cameras, “full and unfettered access to all records”, a review board that reviews use of force; and remarking use of force is down to less than 2 percent of

overall calls. Even if what the Chief says is true, there have been no significant strides made to engage community—especially those communities most negatively impacted by police accountability issues. It should be noted, the City did not engage members of the community in making its’ assessment, or even to develop the promised framework.

Instead of engaging members of the community to develop the framework, the City has engaged with the Department of Justice in a motion to be released from the Decree. It cannot be overlooked that the current Department of Justice under the Trump Administration has significantly withdrawn support for consent decrees nationally. In this regard, the role of the Court, as a part of the checks and balance of our government, is essential in ensuring that all accountability measures are effectively put in place regardless of who is in the Executive Office.

Additionally, the City makes the motion during the Covid-19 global pandemic health crisis, when most of the City and Washington state are closed, our communities are under the Governor’s Order to stay at home, and our most vulnerable communities, if not all communities, are struggling through devastating economic, mental, and physical health stresses caused by the crisis—with communities of color impacted by disproportionate infection and death rates. The City’s motion is truly an insult to the Community and flouts the Court’s order to address the deficiencies in officer accountability. Upon this premise, the City expects the Court and Community to trust it will make “top priority” reform in the area of disciplinary appeals and public transparency in the next round of collective bargaining negotiations without having federal oversight.

And, while the City’s use of force might be down, the NAACP overwhelmingly agrees with other community organizations that communities of color—most affected by the health crisis, are still experiencing police abuses including excessive use of force. For us, things have not changed. In June 2017 Charleena Lyles, pregnant, was shot by the Seattle Police while inside of her home, in front of her three young children. In December 2018 Iosia Faletogo was shot in the head by Seattle Police after a traffic stop. In May 2020, Shaun Fuhr was shot in the head running away from Seattle Police while he was holding his toddler.

The NAACP condemns the premature motion to end the Consent Decree and its’ police accountability oversight. The City’s motion fails to address the specific concerns of the Court to ensure that police

accountability provisions are secured; its motion neglects its' duty of transparency and respect to the residents it represents and is obligated to protect from unconstitutional policing. Until the City meets its obligations to address the deficiencies in police accountability it should not be released from federal oversight.

Signed by the NAACP Seattle King County, and our community partners, who co-sign in solidarity, below.

Carolyn Riley Payne

Carolyn Riley-Payne
President Seattle King County NAACP

Signed in solidarity,

Marcos Martinez,
Casa Latina

Linh Thai,
The Seattle's Vietnamese Leadership Institute

Jay Hollingsworth,
Chair of the John T. Williams Committee

Harriett Walden,
Mother's for Police Accountability

Shaude Moore,
Seattle MLK Coalition

Rev. Angela Ying
Senior Pastor, Bethany United Church of Christ

Larry Gossett,
Former King County Council member Larry Gossett

Tim Harris,
Real Change Newspaper

Mckenna Lux,
Policy Manager, CAIR-WA

Robert Getch,
Beacon Hill Safe Streets

Jackie Vaughn,
SURGE

Aneelah Afzali,
Executive Director and MAPS-AMEN(American Muslim Empowerment Network)

Eddie Rye Jr, Community Leader

Estela Ortega,
Executive Director, El Centro de la Raza

Africa Town Community Land

African Youth United

Ayan Musse, Community Organizer

City Council member Kshama Sawant

Nikkita Oliver,
Community Organizer

Andrew Kidde,
Rainier Valley Greenways

Mazaska Talks

Last Real Indians

Bob Barnes, Community Leader

Minister Lemuel Charleston

El Comite

Rich Stolz,
Executive Director, One America

Cary Moon, Community Leader

Board and Staff of Faith Action Network:

Rev. Carol Jensen

Rev. Nigel Tabernacle-Hamilton

Rev. Lee Carney Hartman

Rev. Jim Castro Lang

Rev. Ken Jones

Rabbi Ruth Zlotnick

Rev. Paul Benz

Jonis Davis

Sara Franklin

Sabina Khan

Elisa DeGooyer

Tara Miller Berry

