



For Immediate Release
Thursday, July 30 2020

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

LDF Files Complaint Against City of Louisville for Military-Style Response to Peaceful Protests

Today, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), the Kentucky American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU-KY), and law firm Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Maazel LLP (ECBAWM) filed a complaint against the City of Louisville for the Louisville Metro Police Department's (LMPD) repeated use of force and intimidation in response to peaceful protesters demonstrating against police violence. The complaint, which is filed on behalf of people who were subject to and injured by the LMPD's militaristic response, seeks both monetary relief for individual protesters and injunctive relief barring LMPD from engaging in further efforts to silence protesters demanding justice.

In recent months, the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor have sparked demonstrations advocating for the elimination of racist and violent policing across all 50 states. Those protests remain ongoing to this day, both in Louisville, where Taylor was killed, and across the country. LMPD's response to these largely peaceful demonstrations has been violent; throughout late May and June, the LMPD used tear gas, flashbangs, pepper balls, batons, and other military-grade technology on protesters. Through June and July, LMPD has engaged in mass arrests, rounding up dozens—if not hundreds—of peaceful protesters and charging them with unwarranted felonies. In one high-profile incident, LMPD's militarized response led to yet another senseless death. David McAtee, a local Black restaurant owner, died after the National Guard and LMPD opened fire on him at his restaurant on May 31, 2020.

“Louisville residents are demanding accountability from their police department in this unprecedented moment in our country's history. Yet instead of engaging seriously with the community they have sworn to protect, LMPD has chosen to subject these peaceful protesters to the very same violence they are demonstrating against,” said LDF Assistant Counsel Ashok Chandran. “It is unacceptable for police officers to brutalize anyone engaged in peaceful protesting. It is an unconscionably cruel irony when those protesters are organizing against police abuse itself. The LMPD's use of force has already cost Breonna Taylor and David McAtee their lives. Their legacies, and the brave protesters we represent, are demanding justice, and this lawsuit will hopefully help bring it to them.”

“Thousands of Louisville residents took to the streets demanding justice for Breonna Taylor and an end to excessive use of police force against Black people. The Louisville Metro Police Department responded to these demonstrations with *even more* excessive force, meeting peaceful protesters with tear gas, pepper balls, and flashbang grenades,” said Heather Gatnarek, Staff Attorney for ACLU-KY. “Instead of protecting First Amendment rights, law enforcement targeted peaceful protesters and journalists. This lawsuit seeks to ensure these horrific scenes never play out on our streets again. Kentuckians must be able to raise their voices to protect Black lives without fear of police violence.”

“Louisville is using weapons of war against its own citizens,” said ECBAWM partner Sam Shapiro. “It is trying to silence peaceful protestors through unjustified arrests and trumped-up charges. Shockingly, its mayor and the leadership of the LMPD are endorsing this unconstitutional conduct. Our clients are committed to fighting back against these practices. They are bringing this case to make Louisville safe for all peaceful protestors.”

LDF is committed to protecting the constitutional right to peacefully protest and ensuring law enforcement officers are held accountable for their actions to the fullest of the law.

Read the complaint [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](#).