

Students for Equity and Justice Demand Letter

To Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms and The Atlanta Police Department:

The Students for Equity and Justice (Georgia State, Morehouse, Oglethorpe, Clark Atlanta, and Spelman) are deeply saddened by the recent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arberry, and countless other black men and women who were slain due to police brutality or racial violence. These on-going instances of racism, hate, and unequal justice have had us all question and take a critical look at the systems in that prevent African-Americans from experiencing true equity. Our scrutinization led to our compilation of the following five demands:

(1) Adopt “duty to intervene law”

This law requires officers who are witness to fellow officer(s)’ exertion of excessive force on citizens must actively halt use of any inappropriate and undue force. Because of George Floyd’s tragic death, the last few days lead government and law enforcement officials across the country to call for the adoption of this policy. Departments such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC) and Tompkins County (NY) have already introduced the policy as a commitment to accountability and the protection of citizens. A portion of the Tompkins Co. legislation (G.O. 311 Duty to Intervene) states:

“Any officer present and observing another officer using force that he/she reasonably believes to be clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances shall intercede to prevent the use of unreasonable force, if and when the officer has a realistic opportunity to prevent harm.”

This measure will ensure the accountability of our officers when allowing and observing misconduct during the policing of our citizens.

(2) Yearly Accountability System for Police Officers

Derek Chauvin, the officer responsible for the murder of George Floyd, was the recipient of at least 18 misconduct complaints and two letters of reprimand. All three officers involved in the murder of Breonna Taylor had records with reprimands and condemnations. These are clear indications that officers who commit the most heinous malpractice have typically done so in the past, albeit to a lesser degree.

In a 2015 study of 2,331 officers, 37% of the officers represented all complaints filed, including 16% representing all use of excessive force complaints filed. This data shows that the same group of officers are typically accumulating the majority of complaints filed. The study also mentions that officers with previous complaints are more likely to engage and are at a greater risk for involvement in serious misconduct in the future (Research Gate, 2015).

We are demanding Atlanta PD to develop a yearly system for reviewing officers' adherence to the conduct by which all officers swear. Officers who accrue complaint(s) over the year's span should be subject to dismissal based on the frequency and/or severity of complaints as well as a deliberation by the Office of Professional Standards. If applicable to the officer, this file should be reviewed for their recertification as well to ensure that the best officers are keeping our citizens protected.

(3) Mandated police training for high school students

In the summer of 2016, Philando Castile was shot and killed by a police officer during a routine traffic stop while he was reaching for his wallet to display his license. The reasoning for the stop was because Castillo "resembled" a suspect in a robbery a few days earlier. In another instance of misconduct on June 7, 2019, Emerald Black, a pregnant mother with her fiancé, was pulled over by police because of "bad registration". The police officers ordered her out of the car and proceeded to stomp on her, causing her to miscarry.

Police are constantly racially profiling and targeting people of color when on the road. In the Stanford Open Policing Project, researchers reviewed over 100 million police stops across 14 states. Results showed that people of color were pulled over 20% more often than their white counterparts, confirming a bias aimed against African Americans.

With this threat, we are demanding a police training course be added to the Driver's Education curriculum as well as training for students in public schools between 10th and 12th grade. The course will teach future motorists traffic laws and protocol if pulled over. Training will clarify grey areas when people are pulled over and will hopefully protect and save lives.

(4) Enforce Hate Crime Law in Georgia Statewide

When it comes to the adoption of the Hate Crime Law, 46 out of the 50 states in the U.S. have put their foot down in compliance to stop Hate Crimes. Only four states remain unaccountable to the Hate Crime Law and it is saddening that Georgia has yet to make what

could be a significant change to make our state a better and safer place. States have taken a stand against crimes and behaviors that target based on the color of one's skin, race/ethnicity, and gender. As the other states will not tolerate such crime or behavior, Georgia's reputation is severely damaged by ignoring inequities in factual practice and we cannot stand by while such crimes continue to hurt people mentally and physically.

In November 2019, a 16 year old female high school student from Gainesville, Georgia plotted an attack against Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Her plan was inspired by a White Supremacist attack on an African American Church in Charleston, South Carolina. More recently, in February, Ahmaud Arbury was stalked and murdered by racist men as he jogged in a neighborhood close to his home. As he lay dying, the men continued to make racial slurs.

These instances of hate crimes are only a few examples in the state of Georgia. The city of Atlanta and the state of Georgia represent one of the most diverse parts of the United States. Without Hate Crime laws, minorities remain vulnerable targets for people who have no regard for others, hate based on differences. Without a Hate Crime law, Georgia will be a catalyst for such behaviors. We must pass the Hate Crime law for the State of Georgia.

(5) Increase in Public Defender's and Community Development Budget

According to the City of Atlanta's proposed budget for fiscal year 2021, the city of Atlanta has allotted the Atlanta Police Department \$217,565,960, a 5.90% increase from fiscal year 2020. This allotment is an egregious act toward the people of Atlanta from a moral and fiscal point-of-view. Morally, the city of Atlanta, through the Atlanta Police Department has a history of denying citizens basic rights. The further implementation of the APD's budget will further such practices.

Fiscally, the City of Atlanta is wasting taxpayers money by increasing the budget of APD while our communities are aching for development. The Office of Community Development has a proposed budget of \$313,400. In comparison to the APD's budget, we believe that this is a slap in the face to black and brown communities that have made the City of Atlanta into the "Black Mecca". We demand a \$10,000,000 increase in the budget of the Office of Community Development.

Furthermore, the Public Defender's Office has been allotted \$3,898,182. Due to the prevalent wealth gap in the City of Atlanta, black and brown people often cannot afford an attorney. Therefore the Public Defender's Office is an integral part of the justice system. We demand an increase of the Public Defender's Office by \$10,000,000.

We love Atlanta and our five demands, mainly, are in an effort to prevent the unnecessary slaying of black lives, which encompass a majority of Atlanta. However, in the execution of these demands, we believe that Atlanta would be a safer and more equitable city for all residents regardless of color. As an Atlanta native and drum major for justice, Martin Luther King Jr., once said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Signed,

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