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200 W. Washington Street ❖ Indianapolis, IN 46204 ❖ (317) 232-9991

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"Seeking a Common Agenda and Speaking in a Unified Voice"

AACI Statement on the Failure of the Police Merit Board to Fire Officers Dinnsen and Howard

On the morning of June 29th, the actions of officers Michael Dinnsen and Carlton Howard—who shot Aaron Bailey after he was involved in a car accident—resulted in yet another death of an unarmed African-American without accountability in Marion County. The Police Merit Board failed the community by rejecting the recommendation of IMPD Chief Bryan Roach to terminate the employment of the officers. IMPD officers should have the training, skill, and expectation that encounters with citizens should be resolved by means other than lethal force—even when citizens flee. Lethal force should be the last resort. Chief Roach, who has 30 years of law enforcement experience, determined that Officer Dinnsen and Officer Howard violated IMPD policies that were designed to keep us safe. Consequently, those officers have no place in our community. Although we have no choice but to accept their authority as officers, because they were allowed to keep their jobs, they have lost respect in the community due to the failure to uphold the oath they took to protect and serve the community.

Criminal justice systems across the country are facing a crisis of legitimacy. Indianapolis' criminal justice leadership faces this challenge with broad segments of the community that feel there are different systems of justice. We cannot have two systems of justice. It is an open question as to when the last time a police officer in Indianapolis has been prosecuted for killing an African-American in Marion County. While some segments of the community will move on, we cannot and we will continue to fight for justice. We still remember Michael Taylor, Brandon Johnson, Christopher Gudlow, Mack Long and many others who either lost their lives or who had their rights violated by a system that unjustly criminalizes African-Americans.

The criminal justice system is supposed to be about public safety; however, many in our community do not feel safe. How can African-Americans in Indianapolis continue to be shot with impunity and leaders in the criminal justice system not be concerned?

We appreciate Chief Roach and his transparency as well as his commitment to due process, however the outcome requires that city leadership produce accountability—accountability beyond the special prosecutor report or the transcripts of the latest hearing. We demand the accountability of action. Officer Dinnsen and Officer Howard should have lost the privilege of serving our community but they did not. Unfortunately this will result in a further deterioration of community and police relation, as well as a loss of public trust. We recognize not all officers are bad, but bad behavior such as this erodes the faith of those who still want to believe in the good of IMPD.

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