

# National Black Church Initiative

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## National Black Church Initiative Condemns the Shooting of Oakland Police Officers

*The Black Church hopes to help lower the tension in the community*

Washington, DC – The National Black Church Initiative, a national coalition of African American churches, condemns the killing of four police officers. This is a tragedy for not only the Oakland community, but for our nation. There is no way that we can build civil society when those who give their lives to protect our safeties are the targets of our frustration and anger.

NBCI extends its deepest sympathy to Sgt. Mark Dunakin, Sgt. Ervin Romans, Sgt. Daniel Sakai and Officer John Hege's families and friends. These officers acted bravely in the line of duty, representing the finest attribute of the American character. No one should ever doubt their loyalty of service, their commitment to the community and their families, and their love for being a police officer and protecting the innocent. The Black Church will not sit silently by and allow these officers to lose their lives without expressing our eternal love for their service and their commitment to humanity. If it hurts one community it hurts us all. Somehow we must work hard to make these officers lives a living memorial for what is good in our society, and how goodness can come from a tragic situation.

NBCI has instructed its member churches in the Oakland area to reach out to the bereaved families and offer them our full love and commitment. NBCI is hopeful that these killings do not undermine the progress that has been made over the years between the Oakland police department and the community.

The Rev. Anthony Evans, President of the National Black Church Initiative, sates, "I am baffled by the senseless death of these young officers. The amount of killing in the Oakland area must stop. We must never look at the police as the enemy, but as our

friends. I can only continue to cry and pray for these officers' families and loved ones as they attempt to deal with this unspeakable tragedy. NBCI will utilize whatever resources necessary to reach out to these families and honor them on behalf of their loved ones who have served the Oakland community with such bravery."

These deaths represent a crossroad for the Oakland community. They can either seek to build on these deaths or spiral into chaos. NBCI believes in the genuine good will of the community ethos. A community can decide its own destiny; all it needs is the will to make community. Martin Luther King, Jr. asked, in one of his famous works, "Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?" Oakland must also answer this question. NBCI is committed to utilizing its vast network of faith based and community based organizations to help Oakland move in the direction of building a civil society if Oakland chooses to do so. In the coming weeks we will work with affinity organizations toward this end.

Rev. Mark McClary, chair of NBCI Minister Alliance, states, "This was a senseless tragedy, but it also brings forth a golden opportunity to bring people together and move toward making a beloved community.

#### About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of 16,000 African-American and Latino member churches works to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare. In addition to our member churches, we have 18,000 sister churches. NBCI is a faith-based health organization dedicated to providing critical wellness information and preventive health screening to all of its members. The African-American community ranks first in eleven different health risk categories. NBCI's purpose is to partner with national health officials to provide health education, reduce racial health disparities, and increase access to quality healthcare.