

National Black Church Initiative

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For immediate release
PRESS RELEASE

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National Black Church Initiative Hails Resignation of Officer in the Death of Oscar Grant

Black Church is deeply concerned about police brutality

Washington, DC – The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of 34,000 African American churches around the country, has expressed satisfaction over the resignation of Officer Mehserle who allegedly fatally shot Oscar Grant in the back. NBCI is deeply concerned about the uneasy environment that exists between the Bay Area Rapid Transit police and the city police when dealing with young African American black males. The job of the church here is to help lower the temperature between these two groups of citizens and remind them of their moral responsibility to one another. It is also the job of the church to seek peace as well as justice for all who have been wronged.

The Rev. Anthony Evans, President of NBCI, stated, “I understand this to be the first step in the legal process and I wish to urge the Oakland police union and all related organizations that will defend the officer in this horrendous crime against humanity and the family that the right thing to do is to tell the truth - nothing but the truth. We could ill afford to have the African American community on edge once again and seeing the police as their enemy. As a responsible cleric I have asked our member churches in the NBCI Western Faith Command to reach out to both communities to help lower the tension that exists.”

Justice must prevail in this case, like in all cases. If it seems that justice is denied because of racism or the stereotypical image of young black males’ character, we are afraid that the church may be unable to hold back the tidal wave of frustration and anger at not only the police, but at the entire justice system. NBCI is considering taking the extraordinary step of asking the Justice Department to look into any violation of the civil rights of Mr.

Grant prior to the conviction of the officer. The Justice Department does have the authority to conduct a parallel investigation along with the District Attorney's office, only to make their findings after the case has been decided. One thing is for sure, NBCI will not allow the local District Attorney's office to put that young man's character on the stand. The issue is not his character; the issue is the untimely and possibly illegal death at the hands of a sworn law official. The police's job is to protect and not kill.

The Rev. Mark McClary, Chair of NBCI Minister Alliance, states, "I'm afraid that this young man's death may just be the kindling to start a brush fire in Oakland that may be too big to put out if cooler heads don't prevail. As clerics we are responsible for creating the type of environment where justice can be administered fairly, minorities can be safe despite their station or any stereotypical characteristic on themselves and that policemen are equally safe to do their jobs, which are to protect the public from needless violence."

The National Black Church Initiative will work with area clergy, law enforcement and elected officials so that justice can roll down like water and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.

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.