



National Latina/o Psychological Association

Asociación Nacional de Psicología Latina

NLPA POSITION STATEMENT ON THE EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE BY POLICE January 2015

The National Latina/o Psychological Association (NLPA) condemns the disproportionate and sometimes deadly use of force by law enforcement against people of color. We mourn the tragic loss of so many Black lives at the hands of the police officers who are sworn to serve and protect them and join our voices with those of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. We also strongly denounce the harming or killing of police officers. Communities and the law enforcement agencies in which they serve, are meant to complement – not antagonize – each other. The escalating and divisive violence signals a need to take swift action to change the nature of relationships between community members and law enforcement officers. Ultimately, if we want our voices, protests, and demonstrations to matter, then an organized and concerted push for social change is necessary.

This needless loss of life is happening against the backdrop of a justice system that all too often deals with people of color unfairly (e.g., Hetey & Eberhart, 2014; Plant & Peruche, 2005), and this in turn creates distrust and animosity (e.g., Pew Research Center, 2014). When individuals within law enforcement behave towards people of color as if they are the enemy rather than as part of the communities that they are sworn to serve, it is reasonable to question whether the justice system recognizes and treats all individuals as being created equal.

The NLPA is committed to efforts that can transform the justice system into one that is affirmative of the rights of all people. These include increasing the culturally responsive training of all law enforcement officers to recognize and challenge the manner in which society's undervaluing of the lives of people of color influences their own behaviors (e.g., Plant & Peruche, 2005) and achieving ethnic and racial minority representation equivalent to local demographics throughout the justice system (e.g., Ashkenas & Park, 2014). We see in each child of color the promise of a future judge, lawyer, or law enforcement officer. We mourn the immeasurable tragedy of lost promises.

References

- Ashkenas, J. & Park, H. (2014, September 4). The race gap in America's police departments. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from www.newyorktimes.com.
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- Pew Research Center (2014). *Few say police forces nationally do well in treating races equally*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Plant, E. A., & Peruche, B. M. (2005). The consequences of race for police officers' responses to criminal suspects. *Psychological Science*, 16(3), 180-183.