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November 29, 2016

Metropolitan Council Office
Metro Historic Courthouse
One Public Square, Suite 204
P. O. Box 196300
Nashville, TN 37219-630

Dear At-Large Councilman Bob Mendes:

First and foremost, thank you and Council Lady At-Large Erica Gilmore for sponsoring the resolution requiring that the Metro Nashville Police Department respond to the *Driving While Black* report on racial profiling in MNPd traffic stops and for sponsoring the ordinance amending section 2.44.115 of the Metropolitan Code of Laws requiring MNPd to provide traffic stop reports to the Metro Council.

We understand that you and Council Lady At-Large Gilmore presented the resolution and amendment to the Public Safety Committee and, as a result of some questions and concerns from some members of the committee as well as members of the FOP, the resolution was deferred with the suggestion that Gideon's Army meet with some members of the Metro Nashville Police Department to ensure that the police department understands the data and methodology used in the report prior to them making a public response before Metro Council.

We agreed to meet with members of the MNPd with two requests. The first being that you facilitate the meeting and second, that we record the meeting for public transparency. Since the latter request could not be accommodated, Gideon's Army has decided that it is best to not meet privately with members of the MNPd at this time. As a team, we are committed to upholding democratic practices and having a closed meeting with MNPd undermines this public safety concern.

While we originally agreed to meet with MNPd under the conditions outlined above, we do not find it necessary to restate the source of data and methodology used to generate this report. If



<https://drivingwhileblacknashville.wordpress.com/>

one looks at the various reports such as the U.S. Justice Department studies of the Ferguson and Baltimore police departments, as well as academic studies of police accountability, none of them were subject to the same kind of scrutiny assigned to the *Driving While Black* study. The data and methodology as well as the names and academic qualifications of those who conducted the research are stated in the report. The *Driving While Black* report is a thorough and academically-rigorous study that was co-produced by and/or received consultation from 60 participants. Some of the consultants currently work at Vanderbilt University, Meharry Medical College, and Middle Tennessee State University. Collectively, the group has published dozens of peer-reviewed essays that are highly respected in the academy.

Next, we understand that members of MNPd who were present at the committee meeting as well as members of the Public Safety Committee needed more time to review the report. We see more value in spending time to discussing the methodology with elected officials once they have read and had time to process the information. We feel that it is the responsibility of the Public Safety Committee, Metro Council and MNPd to become well informed of the report's findings and the responsibility of MNPd to respond to Council's resolution with full transparency to the public. Once the Metropolitan Council has read the report, elected officials are more than welcome to submit methodological questions to Gideon's Army that we will gladly answer in a timely manner, prior to the next scheduled council meeting. We are also willing to present to council, especially if it is attached to a public hearing for optimal transparency.

Lastly, we are hoping that council can act immediately on the report, especially given the results of the recent election. In specific response to the incoming federal administration's insistence that law enforcement agencies be used to crackdown on immigrants and people of the Muslim faith, Metro Council moved forward with a near unanimous resolution, signed by 39/40 council members, denouncing the current anti-immigrant/anti-Muslim political climate. Mayor Megan Barry seconded these concerns saying: "I do not believe local resources should be used to enforce federal immigration administrative polices." She followed by insisting that Metro Police are "not immigration police" and will not target or profile immigrants in our Metropolitan Nashville communities.

However, the same urgency is not afforded to low-income black and Latino residents and visitors who are the target of harsh policing in Nashville's version of stop and frisk. We are concerned that, unless council makes a concerted effort to advance police accountability legislation and re-define public safety, MNPd will continue its racial profiling practices, but with the full support of the US Justice Department.

Gideon's Army is committed to pushing Nashville to build a culture of health and be the best it can be—a model city for justice and peace-building intentionally engineered on the deep



foundation of Restorative Justice. If we are really committed, as Mayor Barry says, to making sure our city “remains a warm and welcoming city that treats everyone with respect,” it is imperative that we understand that we inherited these racialized systems and that racialization, no matter how good and caring the individual officer, is woven into the very fabric of policing. If we want a healthy Nashville, one that is warm and welcoming, it has to be racially just and the starting point on the road to justice is transparency. Thank you for sponsoring a resolution and amendment that require open and honest reporting. Let us commit to collaboratively resisting systemic racism and protecting the civil rights of *all* people.

Again, thank you and Council Lady At-Large Erica Gilmore for your leadership. I trust that this has clarified our position and also left an open door for members of the Public Safety Committee to get answers to any methodological questions they may have. I have attached the abbreviated booklet that is comprised of the report’s most significant highlights. I understand that the next Council meeting is December 6th. Members of Gideon’s Army will be present should the Council have any questions. In the meantime, should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Rasheedat Fetuga
Founder, Gideon’s Army

cc: Megan Barry, Mayor
David Briley, Vice Mayor

Public Safety Committee Members

Pardue, Doug, Chair
Jacobia Dowell
Mike Freeman
Erica Gilmore, Council Lady At-Large
Holly Huevo
Bill Pridemore
Mary Carolyn Roberts, Vice Chair
Robert Swope

Council Members At-Large

John Cooper
Sharon Hurt
Jim Schulman

