

National Youth Alliance for Boys and Men of Color

#BLM Commitments & Call To Action

July 2016

Opening Statement

[The National Youth Alliance for Boys and Men of Color](#) was born in response to the My Brother's Keeper initiative launched in 2014. We bring together five networks of youth organizing groups to amplify the voices of young men of color and support young people organizing to address systemic inequality. However, our organizing roots started many, many years before that -- born in response to many of our youth of color have so often been the target of state violence, especially those living in low-income communities that have so often been the target of public divestment *except* when it comes to our policing.

As many of you, we were re-traumatized by the horror of watching the recorded murder of Alton Sterling, only to feel this deepen with the live Facebook streaming of Philando Castile's murder a few hours later. Our hearts are heavy for Quinyetta McMillan and Cameron Sterling, and for Diamond Reynolds and the Castile family.

Many of our members have already released respective statements. However, after taking time to reflect internally and as a collective, our Organizing Council wanted to release this public statement of commitments and calls to action:

Acknowledge the Moment

We explicitly and unapologetically name our rage, our pain, our trauma, our fear, and our struggle as well as our resilience, our sacredness, our healing, our power, and our love

In the spirit of our ancestor, [Fannie Lou Hamer](#): "We are sick and tired of being sick and tired!" We are sick and tired of making statement after statement, call to action after call to action, hashtag after hashtag, vigil after vigil, case after case, (non)indictment after (non)indictment, (non)verdict after (non)verdict for generations after generations only to still see -- literally, on recorded video and live stream -- the murder of our loved ones -- Black and Brown and Beautiful -- at the hands of law enforcement system that continuously absolves it own self from guilt.

We are sick and tired of being eloquent about both the injustices of our deaths and sacredness of our lives to a system so deeply embedded in White Supremacy that it considers the simple affirmation "*Black Lives Matter*" an act of [terror](#), [treason](#) and as if this were not insulting enough, even as [lynching](#). Please, let that sink in.

That as of last month, both [Jasmine Abdullah](#) (Richards) and [Maile Hampton](#) in separate demonstrations reacted to protect others from police assault and potentially becoming the next victim of this modern lynching, were instead convicted of lynching. That within the same month, the only officer charged for [Freddie Gray](#)'s death in Baltimore was [acquitted](#) by his judge. And the LA Police Commission ruled the murder of Redel Jones did not violate its own rules for deadly force. And as of today - *a year to the date of [Sandra Bland](#)'s unwarranted arrest, brutalization and 'unsolved' asphyxiation* - the only charge was the former state trooper in the case faced was perjury, for falsifying his arrest report.

This "Justice" System has now intimated with these rulings that we lynch ourselves, sever our own spines, choke ourselves to strangulation, fracture our own heads, reach for guns while handcuffed face-down with knees on necks, and only have ourselves to blame when law enforcement feels threatened to use lethal force when policing unarmed Black "[Demon Hulks Superpredators](#), [Thugs](#), [Wide-Set Nosed](#), [Probable Juveniles](#)". Or simply put, that our lives don't matter in the eyes of the law as much as their sense of safety and order, if at all.

We have beloved sons, brothers, nephews, uncles, fathers, husbands and partners who have been ripped away from us in the most traumatically violent of ways. And we also have our mothers, sisters and children who are (and have been for a long time) hurting -- along with those who have also been taken -- and that hurts us deeply as well. So we #SayHerName to remember Redel Jones, Sandra Bland, [Mya Hall](#), [Rekia Boyd](#) -- and lift up Diamond Reynolds and her daughter who comforted each other even after witnessing the murder of Philando Castile, and Quinyetta McMillan who even in the pain of losing Alton Sterling thought of her son "I hurt more for him and his loss. As a parent, one of the greatest fears is to see your child hurt and know there's nothing you can do about it."

For all those who have been lost and have lost - We mourn and hurt with them, fear for those who look like them, exasperated and enraged that we must continually prove their humanity as well as our own.

Acknowledge the Roots:

We explicitly and unapologetically name white supremacy, and the systems designed to reinforce and reaffirm it, as the root for the unmitigated injustice that leads to the murder of unarmed Black and Brown, and often poor and working class, bodies at the hands of an armed and militarized police force.

We are sick and tired of this tired sickness¹ that makes us sick and tired. But we do not have the privilege to remain silent in the midst of our weariness. As [Audre Lorde reminds us](#) it does not protect us, or save us: "We can learn to work and speak when we are afraid in the same way we have learned to work and speak when we are tired."

¹ White Supremacy

In the past week alone, we have lost [Alton Sterling](#), [Philando Castile](#), [Anthony Nunez](#), [Vinson Ramos](#), [Pedro Erick Villanueva](#)². And in the past month, we are still processing the pain from massacre of [Brown and Black LGBTQ](#) loved ones at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando.

So we must speak, because they no longer can *except* through us. Because we have the power to speak from the intersections: We heal while we mourn, we organize while we hurt, we act while we pray, we resist while we fear, we love while we rage. We hold space enough for all of this to exist so that we may finally have space to be fully human.

Acknowledge Our People:

*We explicitly and unapologetically reaffirm our radical love --
An unapologetic, unconditional and unyielding love for ourselves, our families and communities,
and our movement.*

For Ourselves - To those of us who need to be reminded you are loved, remember that we love you in the full sacredness of your humanity. Your blackness, your brownness, your bodies, your queerness, your masculinities, your femininities, your strengths, your imperfections, your beauty, your voices, your dreams, your magic, your creativity, your resistance, your laughter, your love, your being, your soul -- We love you.

For Our Communities - To the loved ones we lost and to those who lost loved ones. Remember our ancestors who inspire us, our elders who encourage us, our families -- chosen and gifted -- who care for us, our generation who moves and struggles to transform a new world with us. We love you.

For Our Movement - To those who are committed to transformative action for justice and liberation. From transformative leadership of [#BlackLivesMatter](#), [BYP100](#) and the [Movement For Black Lives](#) to the new generation of organizers, activists and allies who are newly mobilized, woke and ready to move with power: We Love You!

Acknowledge the Urgency For Action:

We explicitly and unapologetically call ourselves to action. Because Radical Love at its best is a verb -- a practice of intentional, committed actions.

The Alliance is led by an Organizing Council consisting of 5 key youth organizing networks and is coordinated by the [Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing](#) and the [Movement Strategy Center](#) -- collectively representing tens of thousands of young people of color who are organizing every day to address the inequities we experience:

² [Adding to [over 200](#) total *reported* cases of police fatally shooting Black and Brown people in this year alone. And the [at least 430](#) total *reported* cases in 2015].

- [The Alliance for Educational Justice](#)
- [Community Justice Network for Youth](#)
- [Dignity In Schools Campaign](#)
- [Opportunity Youth United](#)
- [Sons and Brothers](#) (Alliance for Boys and Men of Color)

The National Youth Alliance is launching the [Justice Reinvestment Campaign Fund](#) to support local youth campaigns designed to divest public expenditures in punitive systems that contributes to the criminalization of our youth, and reinvest **our money** back into **our communities** towards systems of educational, economic and restorative justice! Our city, state and federal budgets must reflect **our values** and we must value education and community restoration over incarceration. That this is the only way to bring real safety for all of us.

By supporting these campaigns and coordinating the work of our networks, we will support a wave of organizing by young people to bring justice to our communities.

In addition, here's what we will do to take action now and invite you to join us:

1. **COMMITTING TO THE MOVEMENT:** We are re-commit ourselves and our organizations to the Movement for Black Lives by signing the pledge [here!](#)
2. **SUPPORTING OUR YOUTH LEADERSHIP:** Our members have been active and stay active on these issues, because it is their experience. As one of our youth leaders said "I face this every day." Below is a listing of Members Actions and Responses that you can support now!
3. **SIGN ON TO OUR PLEDGE:** As a member organization of the National Youth Alliance, you can also sign this commitment by adding your logo [here](#).

Thank you for committing to this work. While our hearts are heavy with every loss we still have not fully healed from... our my hearts are full in knowing our community is rooted in a radical, unapologetic love for our folks.

And in that spirit, we invoke the teachings from our elder, Assata Shakur:

It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and protect each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains!



SUPPORT FROM OUR MEMBERS:

