



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**In Our Own Voices: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda  
Statement in Solidarity with the Family of Michael Brown**

This Thanksgiving, we hugged our children, grateful for their presence in the safety of our families, but pained by the necessity to once again explain the horrible tragedy that marked the death of another young Black man. It was a difficult discussion that we know was repeated among Black families across the country.

We cried for the family of Michael Brown who not only had to spend this Thanksgiving with the tragic loss of their son, but also with the travesty of a justice system that refused to grant their family justice.

As Reproductive Justice organizations, we believe that all women have the right to have children, the right to not have children and the right to nurture the children we have in safe and healthy environments. For Lesley McSpadden that meant raising her son Michael, watching him mature, marry, have his own children and grow old. In just a matter of minutes on a hot afternoon in August, Officer Darren Wilson took that right away from her.

For three long months, we joined her in praying that justice would come out of the deliberations of this grand jury, though our prayers were full of doubt that a racist justice system would be turned around overnight. But we hoped, that at a minimum, there would be a trial to account for this brutal murder and the indignity of leaving Michael's body in the hot sun for hours.

Instead of justice, we saw a prosecuting attorney who blamed the victim for his own death, who called witnesses liars, and who casually dismissed his manipulation of the members of the grand jury. Instead of justice, we saw Officer Wilson's coldhearted shrugs during an interview in which he declared that he would not be 'haunted' by the shooting of this unarmed young man.

The grand jury decision to not indict sends a message that the state sanctioned murders of young Black men will continue. And like the aftermath of the 1831 Nat Turner revolution where colonists beheaded enslaved Africans, leaving their heads on the road as warnings to other enslaved Africans who craved freedom, callously leaving Michael's body on the ground in the hot sun was a warning to others that their lives could just as easily be sacrificed.

The laws of this country were not written to protect, respect or serve Black communities. So we call on the U.S. Department of Justice to continue its investigation into police misconduct and excessive use of

force in Ferguson, Missouri. We call on President Obama to take a leadership role in denouncing the biased manipulations of the prosecuting attorney. In this tragic moment in history we seek leadership to move us forward not to hold steady the status quo.

We raise our voices and stand in solidarity with the families of Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Eric Gardner, John Crawford, Trayvon Martin, Joell Anderson, Andy Lopez, Renisha McBride, Oscar Grant, Jordan Davis, Sean Bell, Ezell Ford, Ayanna Standley Jones, Yvette Smith and the countless, countless others who have lost their lives to a lawless police system.

***In Our Own Voices: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda*** is a national initiative formed by five Black women's Reproductive Justice organizations: Black Women for Wellness, Black Women's Health Imperative, New Voices Pittsburgh, SisterLove, Inc. and SPARK Reproductive Justice Now, in partnership with the Communications Consortium Media Center.

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