



June 5, 2020

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Gentlemen,

We are reaching out to the Department of Justice because justice is what we seek, and justice is what the family and loved ones of Dion Johnson deserve. We pray that you will listen and that you will take action.

As you may know, Mr. Johnson – a 28-year-old African American man from Phoenix -- was shot and killed by an Arizona Department of Public Safety trooper early on Memorial Day morning along an onramp of the Loop 101 freeway. Media reports and briefings with DPS Director Heston Silbert have so far only revealed that there was "a struggle" that resulted in the trooper firing his gun at an unarmed Mr. Johnson inside his car and killing him. This happened shortly after the trooper found Mr. Johnson asleep in his car. The trooper reportedly was not equipped with a body camera or a dash camera. This is truly unfortunate because there exists no evidence to show if the trooper's version of events and decision to use deadly force was justified, according to DPS.

The questions surrounding Mr. Johnson's death do not end there. Fortunately, industrious members of the media were able to locate extended video from an Arizona Department of Transportation camera that shows the aftermath of the shooting. The footage shows two troopers standing over Mr. Johnson, now outside his car and still clearly alive and writhing in pain, for nearly six minutes while an ambulance sits parked a short distance away. The scene was secure, and Mr. Johnson no longer posed a threat (if he ever did). These troopers stood there for six agonizing minutes while the life of the only other witness to this shooting slipped away.

The actions of these troopers need to be thoroughly and independently investigated. Director Silbert appropriately handed off the investigation to this shooting to another agency, but we and Mr. Johnson's family strongly oppose his choice of the Phoenix Police Department.

It's impossible to see how handing over the investigation of Dion Johnson's death to one of the deadliest police departments in the country will result in the objectivity and transparency his family, our communities and our constituents are demanding. Phoenix Police had the highest number of officer-involved shootings of any department in the country last year with 44.

Because of the current distrust between communities of color and local law enforcement in Arizona over issues of police brutality and racial profiling, and because of the potential civil rights implications of this incident, we respectfully request that the Department of Justice step in to oversee this investigation. We make this request in consultation with Mr. Johnson's family, and in our capacities as elected officials – Arizona's only African American statewide elected official, and two of Arizona's three African American state legislators.

Your immediate attention to this matter will mean more than you can measure to Mr. Johnson's family and will be deeply appreciated by communities in Arizona that are hurting and looking for answers.

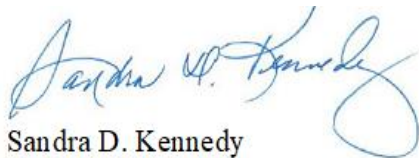
Sincerely,



Reginald Bolding, Jr.
Arizona House of Representatives
Democratic Whip
Legislative District 27



Dr. Geraldine Peten
Arizona House of Representatives
Legislative District 4



Sandra D. Kennedy
Commissioner