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A Statement by the National Black Sisters' Conference on the murder of Tyre Nichols

The New Year is barely a month old. We have just celebrated the national holiday honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the warrior of peace, and the world sadly commemorated International Holocaust Remembrance Day. In a few days, we will celebrate Black History Month as we honor the achievements and contributions of African Americans in the struggle for freedom.

Yet here we are again grieving the death of another young Black man, Tyre Nichols, whose life was taken at the hands of five Black police officers on a night in a quiet Memphis neighborhood.

Tyre Nichols' life at the age of 29 was taken before he had a chance to fulfill his purpose. This young man was not a person to be feared or perceived to be a threat. He was a son, father, and contributor to society; respected and loved by all who knew him. His only crime was being Black in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Violence against African Americans has been a fact of life in this country since the first slave patrols were created in the 1700s to apprehend runaway slaves. Historically, the system was designed to institutionalize terror against Black people.

The five Black police officers who brutally took Tyre's life as he cried out for his mother; were indoctrinated into a corrupt system and freely chose to perpetrate violence against other Black people in the name of institutionalized racism.

Unfortunately, police violence is not new. The video of the incident is no different from other police footage, and the only difference is that the majority of the officers are Black!

In speaking to this fact, Mr. Nichols' mother, RowVaugh Wells, stated:

"...And what they are doing to black communities is wrong. We're not worried about the race of the police officers, and we're worried about the conduct of the police officers. Policing in this country is focused on control, subordination and violence...society views black people as inherently dangerous and criminal..."

The National Black Sisters Conference is worried too! **When will we wake up as a nation?**

How many lives will it take? How often must we bear witness to the senseless killing of African Americans by the police? Where is the collective voice of our religious communities, African American organizations, and Church? The prophet Micah's words speak to what the righteous are called to do: "The just God demands justice!" God demands a change of heart.

As we move into Black History Month, how will we answer a mother's prophetic words on the sad occasion of her son's death? What will we remember? How will this modern-day Black genocide be eradicated? Where do we go from here?

With righteous indignation, we all must act! Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. writes in his book, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* "Freedom is not won by passive acceptance of suffering. A struggle wins freedom against suffering." Let this be our rallying cry for justice!

As the National Black Sisters' Conference, we are demanding **JUSTICE FOR TYRE!** and calling for:

- **Immediate passage of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021 by Congress**
- **More progressive oversight and accountability of police departments by the Justice Department**
- **Local and State reform of policing, and**
- **The end to police brutality that continues to plague Black and poor communities**

Finally, we call on our Church to speak out in the name of the Gospel. This killing is a pro-life issue that is just as important as protecting the life of the unborn.

Tyre's spirit cries out for justice, and we will continue to stand in the gap, crying out in the name of justice for our people.

United in the struggle for justice,

The National Black Sisters' Conference

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Established in August 1968, the National Black Sisters' Conference (NBSC) is an inclusive Catholic organization of vowed Black Catholic Women Religious and Associates from many congregations of religious across the United States. The NBSC holds an annual meeting and co-sponsors a joint conference of Black Catholic women religious, clergy, brothers, seminarians, deacons and their wives.

www.nbsc68.com