

NAACP NEWS

Tennessee State Conference
Gloria J. Sweet-Love, President



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 8, 2016

Tennessee State Conference NAACP President Gloria Sweet-Love today issued the following statement regarding the tragic events this week in Louisiana, Minnesota, and Texas.

(Jackson, TN)-As the state's oldest civil rights organization, the Tennessee State Conference NAACP (also called the Tennessee NAACP) has and continues to be on the frontlines in the struggle for criminal justice reform. Like most Americans, we were horrified by the tragic events during the week of July 4th. The fatal shootings of 37-year old Alton Sterling of Baton Rouge, Louisiana and 32-year old Philando Castile of Falcon Heights, Minnesota underscore the need for policy and community interventions in order to halt the unwarranted killings of African Americans by law enforcement.

The slaying of five police officers and the wounding of other law enforcement personnel and protestors in Dallas, Texas on the night of July 7th also remind us of the horrific outcome of gun violence. The shooter in no way represents activists who dedicate their lives to social justice and police reform. In fact, our abiding commitment to nonviolence is best reflected in the spirit of the first responders, community leaders, and public officials assisting with the recovery efforts in these communities.

We extend our sincerest condolences to the victims and their families in Louisiana, Minnesota, and Texas. We celebrate their memory and heroism, and hope that their sacrifices will unite Americans across different racial and ethnic groups and faith traditions.

The Tennessee NAACP holds true and dear to the common refrain that "Violence will not have the last word." To ensure that the traumatic events this week will *not* have the last word, we must recommit ourselves to criminal justice reform and reducing gun violence. We are calling on the state of Tennessee to adopt comprehensive police accountability policies that address racial profiling, zero-tolerance practices, and de-escalation tactics in communities of color. In the recent legislative session, a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers sponsored several bills that attempted to resolve these issues. Although the bills failed to win full support from both chambers in the Tennessee General Assembly, they will be re-introduced during the 2017 legislative session. Adopting these laws is a first, yet necessary step towards preventing tragedies such as those that occurred this week. In addition, at the 107th Annual National Convention scheduled for July 16th - 20th in Cincinnati, Ohio, the NAACP will highlight these areas of concern by featuring an expert panel and hosting a rally.

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: 731-660-5580