



# NATIONAL BLACK JUSTICE COALITION

May 14, 2008

The Honorable Michael B. Mukasey  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Mukasey:

On behalf of the National Black Justice Coalition, the only black gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender civil rights organization in our country, we call upon the U.S. Department of Justice to conduct thorough investigations into the shooting death of Sean Bell and to bring all appropriate federal criminal prosecutions against the police officers involved.

The Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest civil rights organization advocating for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender civil rights, along with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, New York-based Audre Lorde Project and Lambda Legal, join us in this request.

Our members were outraged and dismayed by the acquittal of the police officers whose actions resulted in the death of an innocent man on his wedding day. The New York state courts' failure to hold these officers accountable for their actions is a tragedy of incomplete justice.

We welcomed your announcement of the intention to investigate this incident and to bring criminal prosecutions, if the evidence warrants. We urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to make this matter a top Justice Department priority to ensure that it is conducted promptly and thoroughly and that, if justified, it results in federal criminal prosecutions of the officers involved under 42 U.S.C. §§ 241, 242.

In addition, in light of the numerous incidences of excessive force against African-American men at the hands of New York City police officers, we also urge you to conduct an investigation into the pattern of unlawful police misconduct in violation of federal civil rights laws under 42 U.S.C. §14141.

We are deeply troubled by the continuing pattern of racial incidents across the country – hate crimes, police misconduct, and racial intimidation – that are all-too-often tolerated and ignored by local law enforcement officials and courts. Moreover, despite significant progress in the treatment of LGBT people, the targeting of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals for police abuse and misconduct remains a persistent and widespread problem in the US.

When faced with abuse of individual civil rights we look to the Department of Justice not only to guarantee that those engaging in such actions are held accountable for their behavior, but to send a distinct message from the highest levels of government that such conduct has no place in our American society.

Swift and firm action will demonstrate that our hard-fought federal civil rights laws are not mere empty promises, but will be strictly enforced to guarantee all Americans the full and equal protection of our nation's laws.

We look forward to discussing this important matter with you in the very near future.

Sincerely,

H. Alexander Robinson,  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Black Justice Coalition

Joe Solmonese  
President  
Human Right Campaign

Rea Carey  
Acting Executive Director  
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

Kris Hayashi  
Executive Director  
Audre Lorde Project

Kevin M. Cathcart  
Executive Director  
Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund