
CYNTHIA MCKINNEY, PHD

Open Letter to the President

Doing Nothing Is Not An Option

June 11, 2020

Mr. President:

I pen this note to you at a time of great peril for our country. The militarization of the police, and their training by foreign powers, has created a culture of intolerance and intimidation far removed from community-oriented policing. It is an inescapable fact that, for many, the police are to be feared: as Matt Taibbi notes in his book, *The Divide*, the police, the FBI, and the Department of Justice all give the rich a free pass because the rich have an infinite supply of lawyers and instead, law enforcement goes after poor people – Blacks are being arrested, at midnight, standing alone in front of their homes, for the crime of “blocking pedestrian traffic.”

As I was about to send this, I received a copy of a brilliant, authentic letter from Dr. Kathleen Cleaver and other original Black Panther Party members, addressed to Black (Hip-Hop) artists, some of whom have, in the past, been surveilled by elements of the US government and local police departments in a COINTELPRO redux. Their letter also makes reference to past US government “search and destroy” missions against the Black community by the FBI with abuses far greater than the recent FBI abuses against you and your campaign staff.

Within your Constitutional powers rests the ability to fashion a solution that “goes big,” is informed by principles of restorative justice, and has the potential to end criminal police behavior and prosecutorial misconduct, as we witnessed in recent cases in Minnesota and Georgia.

If you were to issue an Executive Order on June 19, 2020, that pardons both Native American and Black Panther leaders still in jail for defending their communities from government assault; and also create a National Police Safety Board (NPSB) able to respond to police incidents with the same degree of speed and competence displayed by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB); and simultaneously declare that the police will be de-militarized, subject to the rule of law when they abuse their armed force, and that they will no longer receive training from foreign powers, I believe you will find a surge of support from previously-apathetic communities that did not vote in 2016.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Ann McKinney, PhD