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GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION GROUP CALLS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY IN FERGUSON



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 14, 2014

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Gun Violence Prevention Group Calls for Accountability in Ferguson

Washington, DC—In response to the ongoing situation in Ferguson, Mo., the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence released the below statement today:

The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence (CSGV) is closely watching the situation in Ferguson, Missouri and we are deeply disturbed by what we see unfolding there. Our hearts go out to the family of Michael Brown, Jr. as they deal with an unimaginable loss.

Part of the basic social contract created by our Constitution is that government be transparent and accountable to the people. That is clearly not happening in Ferguson at this time. The Ferguson Police Department has yet to release the name of the officer who shot and killed teenager Michael Brown, who was unarmed. They have assaulted, arrested and held journalists who were exercising their First Amendment rights without filing charges or completing any paperwork. They have responded to largely peaceful protests with a heavily militarized force (approximately 70 SWAT members and an armored vehicle) and trained loaded weapons on Ferguson residents, including children. They have deployed tear gas and bean bag rounds against protesters and news media. This state of affairs is unthinkable in the United States of America.

For years, we have differed with the pro-gun movement over the use of coercive force in a democratic society. It is our contention that states with unregulated private militias are rarely, if ever, functional.

That said, the government's "monopoly on force" must be subject to civilian control, and it comes with tremendous responsibility to adhere to democratic principles of good governance. The Ferguson Police Department has breached their responsibility under any test.

For this reason, we are pleased to see that the Department of Justice and FBI have launched their own investigations into the killing of Michael Brown. Oversight of this nature is critical in ensuring transparency. Missouri Governor Jay Nixon must also step forward and address a dangerous and escalating situation. There must be accountability for Ferguson police officers who are engaging in excesses. If they cannot discharge their duties in a professional manner, they need to be replaced, immediately.

The situation in Ferguson should also be cause for reflection on the continuing arms race between civilians and law enforcement in our country. We must recognize that Ferguson is not the norm. The overwhelming majority of law enforcement officers are good men and women who are legitimately concerned about the type of firepower they are now being confronted with on America's streets. This arms race is making our neighborhoods more dangerous and benefitting only one party: the gun industry, which sees continuing escalation as a business opportunity. We must all come together—civilians and law enforcement alike—to curb the proliferation of military-style firepower in our society.

To their credit, the family of Michael Brown, Jr. is calling for a different solution to the profound divide in their community. "Michael would have wanted no violence," said Michael Brown, Sr. "We need justice for our son." We urge all residents of Ferguson—and concerned citizens across America—to heed the Brown family's request. As we express our outrage to these tragic events, let us recall, too, the words of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force."

Finally, we acknowledge the comparisons that many are drawing between what is happening in Ferguson and the armed standoff that took place at the Bundy ranch this past April. The dramatic differences in law enforcement response to the two events are difficult to ignore. Why are white pro-gun activists able to point loaded firearms at law enforcement and avoid accountability under the law altogether while unarmed, peaceful African-American citizens are met with a militarized police force and mass arrests? The most important idea in American political philosophy is that of equality. That principle has been sorely tested by these events, and must ultimately be vindicated by the rule of law.

The **Coalition to Stop Gun Violence** seeks to secure freedom from gun violence through research, strategic engagement and effective policy advocacy.

Add your opinion

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THE DISCUSSION

Emily Evans: *August 14, 2014 10:11 pm*

I agree on all points and would like to see justice served for the Brown family and the community at large.

Maria Mollenkopf: *August 14, 2014 8:07 pm*

Someone needs to take control in this city. The people who live there don't need it. The police have lost all control!

Mark Shulgasser: *August 14, 2014 6:49 pm*

The National Guard must disarm the Ferguson uprising immediately and decisively.

Sandra: *August 14, 2014 6:41 pm*

I am so sickened by the horror taking place in Ferguson. We need to reign in our police.

Quinn Gregory: *August 14, 2014 6:25 pm*

"This state of affairs is unthinkable in the United States of America."

Unfortunately, this state of affairs is all too thinkable. In fact it must be acknowledged intellectually, and it must be believed emotionally, because it is the stark, dark reality of America.

The differences between the Bundy event and the Ferguson event are readily explainable in the context of the state of affairs. It structures economic, political, legal, and even physical control of the nation in a centuries old, well-defined hierarchy with white, wealthy men at the top, and all categories of non-whites well down the sequence. The clash at the Bundy ranch was an impermissible attempt by the forces of the non-white president and his non-white law enforcement chief to exert economic control over a wealthy white man. The police war in Ferguson is yet another instance of the very permissible exertion of physical control over blacks.

Deadly violence is a fundamental element of American culture. From its birth in a bloody war against Britain, and its growth through the genocide of Native Americans, it has been understood and accepted that if need be, control should be taken by lethal force, and that lethal force should be used to resist being controlled. The use of deadly force is not only condoned in the culture, it is popularized and celebrated.

The most commonly used approach for lethally and forcefully exerting control is of course the use of guns. Guns are specifically designed to kill, and the gun industry happily exploits the desire for killing power, indiscriminately taking the money of anyone who can pay. The drive for corporate wealth fuels conflicts involving guns: it would not be surprising to see Wayne LaPierre make a statement hinting that all cities reassess their readiness for civil uprisings in the wake of Ferguson.

We at Newscool Americans applaud and support the principled stand of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence against the excesses of gun ownership and use. We complement those principles with a different approach: we must change the culture of "control by lethal force". Only when demand for guns goes away will the supply of guns dry up, and the distribution of guns among the population dwindle to nothing. Only then will gun violence stop.

Newscool Americans
No guns. No gun violence.

Dan: *August 14, 2014 6:20 pm*

I believe the riot police were in response to the part of the mob that started looting and burning buildings, etc. I'm not exactly which came first but wanted to make sure people were aware of the looting. Here's one of many videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5_ZrN30dDg&list=PLiWf5XernCSmSSiWai2pr6j1S_TBj7MP

Alene bishop: *August 14, 2014 5:10 pm*

All police in the United States should have video cameras on their uniforms

Mark Katsouros: *August 14, 2014 4:11 pm*

This is a challenging situation that is exposing a number of issues—from freedom of speech to gun regulation to police violence to racism. One of my fears is that the police and government, in this particular situation, are actually contributing to the beliefs (however wacko some of us may feel they are) that we must arm the populace to protect ourselves. We must implement the rule of law with equality, transparency, and accountability, and we must do what we can, as a society, to minimize violence and work towards peace, understanding, and reasonableness.

Betsy Shapiro: *August 14, 2014 3:58 pm*

Thank you for your statement. It is beautifully and truthfully written. We need your voice. I appreciate your work.

Jacqueline Harrison: *August 14, 2014 3:38 pm*

Thank you for all you do!!!

100+

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Capt. Ron Johnson & #MO State Highway Patrol Officers deserve tremendous credit for their GREAT police work in #Ferguson. Keeping #Peace.

26 minutes ago · Reply · Retweet · Favorite

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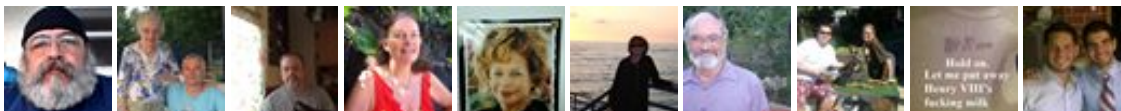
More good news...



Ballmer Joins Billionaires Pushing Washington Gun Control

Fundraising for a gun-control campaign in Washington state is outpacing opponents by a ratio of 4-to-1, fueled by contributions from former Microsoft Corp. executives Bill Gates, Steve Ballmer and Jon Shirley.

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The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence seeks to secure freedom from gun violence through research,

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