



June 21, 2017

Submitted via email to:

Mayor Ed Murray

Council President Bruce Harrell

Councilmember Lorena Gonzalez

Councilmember Tim Burgess

Councilmember Lisa Herbold

Councilmember Kshama Sawant

Councilmember Rob Johnson

Councilmember Debora Juarez

Councilmember Mike O'Brien

Councilmember Sally Bagshaw

Chief of Police Kathleen O'Toole

United States Attorney Annette L. Hayes, c/o Public
Affairs Emily Langlie

Cc: Community Police Commission Director Fe Lopez,
Office for Civil Rights Director Patricia Lally

Re: Seattle Women's Commission's Deep Concern for the Killing of Charleena Lyles

Dear Mayor Murray, Councilmembers, Chief O'Toole, and U.S. Attorney Hayes

As you know, Charleena Lyles was shot and killed on Sunday, June 18th by two Seattle Police Department (SPD) officers in her home with her children. For several years, the Women's Commission has advised the City that we believe officers are still significantly under trained and not adequately equipped to handle situations such as this involving mental health, domestic violence, and sexual assault. Even with the compliance with the Federal Consent Decree and recent legislation passed to improve SPD, our concerns have not been fully assuaged. Additionally, there is little confidence from this Commission of the SPD's facility to ensure the protection of black women and other women of color as it stands today. We will be joining the Human Rights Commission, Commission for People with disAbilities, LGBTQ Commission, and the Community Police Commission in calling for a full and transparent investigation to make apparent to Ms. Lyles' family and the public including:

- whether it is standard procedure to discharge lethal weapons in a home where children are present,
- whether the officers involved were following department procedure in using their lethal force weapons rather than their less lethal options of pepper spray or a taser,
- whether given the fact that it can clearly be heard on the tape that the officers knew who they were interacting with if Ms. Lyles' race was a causative factor in their judgment to use deadly force rather than less deadly means of restraining her,
- whether given the fact that it can clearly be heard on the tape that the officers knew who they were interacting with if Ms. Lyles' past history with the Department was a causative factor in their judgment to use deadly force rather than less deadly means of restraining her,
- whether given the fact that it can clearly be heard on the tape that the officers knew who they were interacting with if the officers followed department procedure or were negligent in neglecting to ask for additional support from mental health professionals in assisting Ms. Lyles' when she called the police for help on a non-emergency matter,
- and finally, if the officers here were in compliance with SPD policies and procedures in taking these actions, whether these are the policies and procedures that should govern their conduct.

We will follow the investigation closely, and will continue to push the Mayor's office and the SPD for adequately equipped officers in helping the residents of Seattle. And when we say equipped, we mean officers armed with the best possible mental health training, not bullets. Officers armed with empathy and non-lethal force options, not solely lethal service weapons. Officers armed with the best possible training in domestic and intimate partner violence, not lethal force techniques and body armor.

As we now know, having heard the tapes and read the transcripts, that the officers involved A) did not call for back up from the Crisis Intervention Unit in advance and B) were not carrying a taser or non-lethal weapons to use in the place of lethal force; we demand that there be accountability by the SPD for their actions. Since 2015, Seattle Police have shot and killed five people in addition Ms. Lyles. Those killed were Damarius Butts, 19, (African American); Che Taylor, 46, (African American); Michael L. Taylor, 44, (Asian); Raymond Azevedo, 35, (white); and Samuel Smith, 27, (white). While the use of force overall by the Seattle Police Department dropped by 11 percent between 2014 to 2016, the numbers showed a concerning race disproportionality, namely: 33 percent of force cases were toward African Americans, even though only 8 percent of Seattle is black.

Our bottom line stands here: You should never call the Seattle Police Department for assistance on a burglary while home with your children and end up dead at the end of their weapons. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Charleena Lyles's family and her community, and we ask for swift, transparent, and ethical justice be served.

In addition to City improvements, please know that we will be monitoring how recommendations from the joint legislative task force on the use of deadly force in community policing will impact Seattle residents. Lastly, we would like to formally invite Chief O'Toole to an upcoming full Commission meeting at City Hall to update the Commission directly on what steps are being taken, where the investigation is, and what is being done to prevent anything like this happening again as well as to allow the Commission to express its ongoing concerns.

Thank you.

Signed by Commission Co-Chairs Morgan Beach, Teresa Springer, Idabelle Fosse, and Tracey Whitten with the approval of the full Commission.