

Resolution to Discourage Bias-Motivated 911 Calls

Whereas, the press has reported numerous instances of people throughout the nation calling 911 claiming suspicious activity by individuals when the callers were apparently motivated by explicit or implicit bias against the race or ethnicity of the individual, not by suspicious or dangerous actions.

Whereas, callers to 911 have targeted African Americans and other minorities while they were sleeping during a break from studying on a college campus, using membership in a community swimming pool, shopping, waiting for a meeting at a coffee shop, canvassing for an election, selling water, cutting grass, entering and repairing houses they own, and otherwise going about normal activities

Whereas, The Department of Homeland Security states that, "Factors such as race, ethnicity, and/or religious affiliation are not suspicious. The public should only report suspicious behavior and situations...."

Whereas, individuals who are the subject of bias-motivated 911 calls are unnecessarily detained, humiliated, and put in danger.

Whereas, the Alexandria Police Department strongly encourages residents to call 911 if they believe they have a reasonable concern about their safety or the safety of others.

Whereas, bias-motivated calls to 911 wastefully deploy law enforcement resources against lawful activity.

Whereas, states throughout the nation have statutes on their books that prohibit making false reports to police.

Whereas, 911 dispatchers seek to determine whether a caller can articulate a factual basis for their suspicions and provide police officers with as much information about the situation as possible.

Whereas, the vast majority of police officers conduct themselves professionally and appropriately in cases involving bias-motivated calls to 911.

Whereas, the Alexandria Police Department and Department of Emergency Communications follow nationally-accredited best practices in law enforcement and public safety telecommunications.

Whereas, retail stores and other public facilities, such as Starbucks and CVS, have disciplined employees who have made bias-motivated calls to 911.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Alexandria Democratic Committee urges 911 centers to continue to train dispatchers to attempt to determine if there is a reasonable concern for a caller's safety or the safety of others, or if a person is calling only because of explicit or implicit bias toward minority group members.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Alexandria Democratic Committee urges that 911 dispatchers continue to convey to officers information about a call that suggests they have reason to doubt the facts reported by the caller.

BE IT RESOLVED, The Alexandria Democratic Committee urges police departments to publicize that, “Factors such as race, ethnicity, and/or religious affiliation are not suspicious” and that they will fully enforce statutes regarding false reports to law enforcement officials.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Alexandria Democratic Committee urges police departments to mount public relations efforts in traditional and social media to discourage improper and illegal use of the 911 system and to use it to report truly dangerous or suspicious activity.

BE IT RESOLVED, The Alexandria Democratic Committee urges all police departments to follow nationally-accredited best practices in law enforcement and public safety telecommunications such as those adopted by the Alexandria Police Department.

BE IT RESOLVED, The Alexandria Democratic Committee commends retail companies such as Starbucks and CVS for disciplining employees who make 911 calls without proper justification.

Background and Related Links

<https://www.aclu.org/blog/racial-justice/race-and-criminal-justice/how-police-can-stop-being-weaponized-bias-motivated>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/911-dispatchers-sit-between-police-and-people-of-color-they-need-better-training/2018/05/25/124b2bd6-5acf-11e8-858f-12becb4d6067_story.html?utm_term=.a85a585f00ed Want to stop more Starbucks scenarios? Train these people. By Jessica W. Gillooly May 25

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/09/nyregion/yale-black-student-nap.html> May 9, 2018 -The Yale campus. A graduate student in the university's African studies program said she was harassed for taking a nap in a common area.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/07/05/a-black-lawmaker-was-campaigning-door-to-door-in-her-district-a-constituent-called-911/?utm_term=.f8a1ffab5024 Jul 3, 2018 - A black lawmaker was canvassing door to door in her district. A constituent called 911.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/06/24/an-8-year-old-tried-selling-water-for-a-trip-to-disneyland-a-white-woman-threatened-to-call-police/?utm_term=.40b085bbf2b9 Jun 23, 2018 - Woman appears to call police on girl selling water.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/living-while-black-viral-videos-raise-concerns-about-everyday-racial-profiling/2018/05/29/d4bd630a-5b74-11e8-8836-a4a123c359ab_story.html?utm_term=.9cf0be4c2799 May 29, 2018 -

by Cleve R. Wootson Jr. May 30. The transgression wasn't what he did, but who he is: He was real estate investing while black.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/06/30/a-white-woman-called-police-on-a-black-12-year-old-for-mowing-grass/?utm_term=.b346247a030c Jun 30, 2018 - A white woman called the police on Reggie Fields, a black 12-year-old, for mowing the lawn in Maple Heights, Ohio.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/calling-the-police-on-black-people-isnt-a-starbucks-problem-its-an-america-problem/2018/04/18/e871d504-4330-11e8-ad8f-27a8c409298b_story.html?utm_term=.707f5a4312a2 May 25, 2018 - Calling the police on black people isn't a Starbucks problem. It's an America problem.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-watch/wp/2018/04/17/what-white-people-can-learn-from-the-starbucks-arrests/?utm_term=.9c6d57f1001e Apr 17, 2018. [What white people can learn from the Starbucks](#) arrests.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2018/07/29/police-held-mission-impossible-actor-ving-rhames-at-gunpoint-for-entering-his-own-home/?utm_term=.a9730fd694a7 Police held 'Mission: Impossible' actor Ving Rhames at gunpoint for entering his own home