



U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

CL:JV:CH:CB:ES:MC
DJ: 207-42-6

*Special Litigation Section - PHB
950 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington DC 20530*

September 26, 2014

Chief Thomas Jackson
Police Chief
City of Ferguson
222 S. Florissant Road
Ferguson, MO 63135

Re: Ferguson Police Department Investigation: Bracelets

Dear Chief Jackson:

We write to confirm our understanding that you will prohibit Ferguson Police Department officers from wearing "I am Darren Wilson" bracelets while in uniform and on duty. We write also to confirm our understanding that you will ensure that other municipal police agencies prohibit their officers from wearing these bracelets while working in Ferguson.

As we discussed yesterday, Ferguson residents told Department of Justice Civil Rights Division officials during our community interviews on Wednesday evening that law enforcement officers policing at protest sites in Ferguson on Tuesday were wearing these bracelets. Residents observed that these bracelets upset and agitated people. We were shown pictures of officers wearing these bracelets. It further was reported to us that some officers affirmatively displaying these bracelets had black tape over their name plates. The practice of not wearing, or obscuring, name plates violates your own department's policies, which we advised you earlier this week when we requested that you end the practice immediately.

To be clear, the pictures do not indicate which law enforcement agencies the officers wearing these bracelets were from, and we have no other evidence confirming that Ferguson police officers were wearing these bracelets. However, as you are all too aware, the actions of other police officers while in Ferguson can impact your community as much as the actions of your own officers. For this reason, the Department of Justice COPS office has spoken with County Police Chief Belmar and State Highway Patrol Superintendent, Colonel Ron Replogle, who have assured us that County and State law enforcement officers will be prohibited from wearing these bracelets.

We are keenly aware of the importance of individual expression of opinions, even those that some find offensive, insensitive, or harmful. We also acknowledge that the message that many officers intend to convey by wearing these bracelets may be different than the message received by many of those who see these bracelets.

Nonetheless, there is no question that police departments can and should closely regulate officers' professional appearance and behavior, particularly where, as here, the expressive accessory itself is exacerbating an already tense atmosphere between law enforcement and residents in Ferguson. These bracelets reinforce the very "us versus them" mentality that many residents of Ferguson believe exists.

Due to the strong interest in this issue, later today we will be publically releasing this letter, as well as the letter we provided to you on Tuesday regarding officer name plates. Please do not hesitate to call me if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Christy E. Lopez
Deputy Chief
Special Litigation Section
Civil Rights Division
United States Department of Justice

cc: John Shaw
Ferguson City Manager

Stephanie Karr
City Attorney