

Introduction:

Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Feinstein, Senators, brothers, sisters, and friends, my name is Doug Logan, Jr., President of Grimke' Seminary and Former Pastor of Epiphany Camden in Camden, NJ. I have been asked to speak to you today about the national plea for racial equality, the developing conversation regarding police brutality, and the urgent demands for change.

I come to you today not only as a black man, but also as a Christian clergyman who worked with the city of Camden, NJ in 2013-2014 to revamp, re-team, and retool the police department for a more effective police force for the City of Camden.

I have lived in the inner-city for most of my life. Many Americans wouldn't drive through my Camden block after dark. I speak as someone who has not only observed great injustices but also experienced them firsthand because of the color of my skin. In spite of all this, however, I speak today not as someone who is filled with rage, but as someone who is filled with hope.

I am hopeful that we can recover some common ground in this country, starting with a renewed understanding of justice. It must be a vision of justice as the equitable treatment of all people, who are worthy of dignity, respect, and fairness, having been "created equal" and "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." And it must be a vision of justice built on the commitment of all people—and their government—to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Anything less than this will not provide us with the common ground needed to strive for justice in more than name only. Yet I am hopeful.

I pray that you **LISTEN**

to the cries, shouts, and screams of Black and brown and many white people for a new way and new day of real justice.

I am hopeful that we can reconnect such a vision of justice to our shared dream for a society that promises "liberty and justice for all." It is clear from the cry in the streets that many of our nation's citizens do not feel they have equal access to these realities. In view of America's long history of racial injustices, that seems undoubtedly true. As a man, who has grown up under the difficult circumstances of inner-city America and lived among what some would call the "the urban poor", I have been taught that racism is but one of many problems facing impoverished minority communities, and anyone who blames everything on racism—past or present—has failed to consider the complexities of those realities and the frailties of the human soul. Yet I am hopeful.

I am hopeful that we can restore the proper view of police in our society as those who have been entrusted by—and thus will be held accountable to—God, the government, and the people. Theirs is an entrusted stewardship, which comes with great responsibility and greater accountability, since they are permitted to use force to secure order and keep the peace, yet without molesting or denying justice in the process. A police force is a necessary public servant to uphold justice in the midst of societal injustices and should be an agent upholding the good for all peoples.

Toward this end, let us consider the best statistical data, wherever it is available, to fairly evaluate the rates of police misconduct against minorities. But let us also listen to the stories of people from minority communities, who almost invariably report statistically unquantifiable instances of bias, prejudice, and unfair treatment at the hands of those who ought to be protecting them. This is not

true of the majority of officers, I am sure. But if even 10% of the police force harbors hate in their hearts for those who look differently, then we have—and will continue to have—a huge problem.

We have to **listen** to the Black and Brown communities as they cry out on social media outlets. As they cry out on the streets in rallies, peaceful protests, and marches. Let us listen and not just jump straight to statistics which is the practice of some. You see, the pain, pressures, and problems on the block are often not data that is collected or recorded. Therefore, let's listen to the cries of pains, fears, and hopes of Black and brown Americans. We must not ignore the cries for justice. Let us listen. Let us learn.

Then I pray that after listening we would **LEARN**
from the pain and the actual problem upon us.

Let us, therefore, investigate police misconduct and put in place the best possible measures for their accountability. At a minimum, this means standardized policies and procedures regarding the appropriate use of potentially lethal force across our nation's police departments. It is not always easy to draw a line in these matters, I freely admit, but perhaps we can start by not allowing officers to put their knee on a man's neck for nearly 9 minutes—and then let us move on from there.

While police officers must be empowered and protected to uphold justice as well as considered innocent until proven guilty, there must also be stricter punishments for those who disregard the justice they are entrusted to uphold. This includes stricter punishments for police chiefs and public judges who overlook repeated infractions of officers in these regards. I have read that Derek Chauvin had at least 17 complaints of misconduct against him—including violent misconduct—over his 19 years as an officer. That's almost one instance of reported misconduct *every year* of service.!

What kind of institution retains an employee under such conditions? Where is the justice in this? Why are police officers allowed seventeen offences? This is unsafe and is eroding the community's trust. I've heard it said there are just a few bad apples. Well bad apples, that train new officers, often teach them their Bad apple practices. Now we have multigenerational bad apples patrolling our streets with conduct that has brought about a culture of Bad police and dare I say, a culture of bad policing.

If you want to rebuild the trust with the police in the Black & Brown communities, then policing must be reformed in a manner as I have briefly sketched above. This cannot be done without listening to what people are saying, learning from the best available data, and loving others in accordance with the demands of justice. It is a long road, but I remain hopeful.

Above all, I am hopeful that the public failures of police officers—men and women just like us—will cause us to reconsider our fundamentally flawed reliance on the police to fix “upstream problems.” For the police will never be more than a downstream solution. They are the end of the line. They are the last resort for a civilized society, which, if it were filled with virtuous citizens, would need no police and would have many fewer laws. In the absence of a virtuous people, however, our laws and our law-enforcement agencies serve as an imperfect necessity in a terribly unjust world. Without the justice of God, then we are left with as many claims to justice as there are people in society. This will never bring justice or peace.

My parents always taught me to “leave the world better than I found it.” And that is what we must do if we truly care about justice.

In Camden NJ after the city restructured the police force I remember the police coming to my Block in small groups of 2 or 3. They would talk to my family and my neighbors. They built relationships and rapport with us. They did the hard work of regaining trust and restoring confidence in the police’s ability to provide safety in the city with the Residents in mind.

Our problems in Camden were not going to be solved overnight - We needed slowcooker vision. We labored towards a comprehensive overhaul of the structure of the police force. We re-structured the leadership, management, and very police themselves. We achieved a changed police culture by restoring trust in effective public servants. Although Camden did not become a resort overnight, we did make great progress for a better, safer city as we witnessed the significantly reduced crime rate.

I pray that we will institute wise and helpful legislation that will help to heal our country and leave a future legacy of grace. We must deal with these problems of our police countrywide by investing in both our police and the people for a positive multigenerational impact that our grandkids and great-grandkids can have a better, safer, relationship with police.

We have **Listened**, and we have **Learned...**
and now we must **Legislate**

If we listen to the people and learn from both our cities and other cities’ successes, I believe we can see comprehensive improvements in our police departments through wise and timely legislation.

This means doing everything you can, as representatives of your states and as the highest lawmakers in the land, to see to it that American funds programs that support the kind of institutions that can remedy the mind and heart of our society—institutions like families, churches, schools, and charities, to say nothing of the upstream economic reforms that are needed to incentivize and enable people to overcome poverty and the crime that correlates with it. Following the examples of Camden, NJ, and Governor Como of New York, we need you to radically intervene in the policing problems: to review, and rewrite training, and tactics methods for our police. We must uphold the just rules and regulations with consistency. We must seek to pass laws that will hold police at the highest standard and equip them with the best training. We must provide greater accountability in order to help improve the performance of the police force and rebuild their relationship with our black and brown communities across our country. We must invite Black and brown people to have a seat at the revisioning table.

Psalm 33:5 tells us that God “loves righteousness and justice.” This is why God calls us to “Love your neighbor as yourself” in Matthew 22:39. We’ve made great strides in our country over the last 50 years, but as Dr. Martin Luther King once observed, “We have come a long, long way, but we still have a long way to go.” This still rings true today.

One of my heros and my fraternity brother, John Lewis, reminds us that "Fifty years later, those of us who are committed to the cause of justice need to pace ourselves because our struggle does not

last for one day, one week or one year, but it is the struggle of a lifetime, and each generation must do its part,"

I pray for our nation, I pray for our cities, I pray for the police, I pray for the president, legislatures, and judges I pray for our black, brown, and white brothers and sisters, I pray for my three mixed adult sons and my Puerto-Rican grandkids that we all will do our part to protect all Americans from what happened to George Floyd.

I remain hopeful that together, with wise judgments and with unbiased, nonpartisan commitment to the common good, we can accomplish much for the sake of justice.

Thank you all for this great opportunity and privilege to stand before you today.