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Contact: Jennifer R. Farmer, jenniferr@spotlightpr.org

Grassroots Law Project and Leading Reform District Attorneys Announce Truth, Justice & Reconciliation Commissions to Address Decades of Harm Caused by Law Enforcement and Prosecutorial Overreach

NEW YORK - Today, the Grassroots Law Project and District Attorneys from Boston, Philadelphia, and San Francisco announced the formation of local “*Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commissions*” in each city. For too long, people in these communities have lacked recourse from police violence and prosecutor overreach. People with power have, as a result, abused it without consequence. Now, people are taking to the street to demand massive, structural change. They are insisting that those who have been marginalized for generations redefine what public safety means and have a voice in how our legal system addresses harms. Their message is resonating, and those with power are listening, recognizing that we must give voice to those who have been subject to racist and deeply harmful practices for years.

The first three local commissions will address the serious trauma inflicted by a legal system that has gone largely unchecked for generations. They will begin as pilot projects that will create a process for District Attorneys and their communities to hear from victims of police and prosecutor misconduct and find ways for those victims to heal. This critical project is at its early stages, and the District Attorneys will begin dialogue with their communities – including persons impacted by police violence – and develop policies and structures to help communities heal from the generational trauma resulting from police violence and racial injustice. Each commission will be responsive to the individualized needs of the community.

In addition to a press conference announcing the commissions, The Grassroots Law Project also announced the launch of [this](#) new website which will be updated as the project develops research and policies around this critical issue.

When asked why the initiative is being grounded inside of District Attorneys’ offices, **San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin said:** “*Prosecutors have a special responsibility to promote justice and reconciliation with the communities whose needs have historically been neglected. In San Francisco we are working to not only enact changes and create policies that hold police accountable going forward, but also to build trust with those who have been hurt by the lack of police accountability in the past. We are honored by the opportunity to be part of this*

initiative to heal the wounds created by police abuse, to empower impacted communities, and to seek real justice for all."

"Each Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission will develop processes and plans to allow persons who have experienced current and former instances of harm at the hands of law enforcement to raise concerns, share experiences and achieve justice in a process that will be built with marginalized and oppressed groups at the center," said Rachael Rollins, Suffolk County District Attorney. "We will begin to pursue justice while giving District Attorneys an opportunity to demonstrate that we care about the wrongs of the past, and we want to prevent them in the future."

"Prosecutors have a critical role in helping communities find space to address past wrongs, whether it is through exonerations or through alternative forms of restorative justice or truth and reconciliation," said District Attorney Larry Krasner. "As a civil rights lawyer, I watched how this community suffered from law enforcement and prosecutorial overreach, and I know that these harms went unaddressed for many, if not for most. We cannot go back to fix that, but we can give a voice to those who experienced injustice for years."

"We often hear people say that 'the justice system is broken,' and I honestly understand this conclusion. People see the pain the system causes, and how little justice oppressed communities actually get, and conclude that it's broken, but the truth is much more nefarious," said Shaun King, Co-Founder of the Grassroots Law Project. "This system is not broken. It's functioning exactly the way those who designed and built it intended it to function. It was not built to give marginalized communities justice. It was built to oppress them. And moving forward, we must build brand new pathways for truth, justice, and reconciliation. The old ones will never get us there."

"The deadliest police culture in the developed world, which is also the most incarcerated nation in world history, has devoured individuals, families, and entire communities for generations in this country. Its victims have been disproportionately Black and what some call justice in the United States has been dispensed among racial lines," said Lee Merritt, civil rights attorney and Co-Founder of the Grassroots Law Project. "The TJRC will give communities access to meaningful ways of healing, which have long been absent from this nation's so-called criminal justice system. Creating new institutions to address historic atrocities and modern inequities embedded in the fabric of society is essential if we are ever going to turn the page on America's bloody legacy."

Truth, justice and reconciliation commissions are entities set up to uncover past instances of racial and ethnic injustice that were frequently ignored or even caused by the government. They are designed to map strategies for resolving conflict, and bring true healing and reconciliation to victims of harm. District Attorneys Larry Krasner, Rachael Rollins, and Chesa Boudin spoke on the importance of these commissions on the media conference call in conjunction with

Grassroots Law Project founders Shaun King and Lee Merritt. To access a recording of the call, email jenniferr@spotlightpr.org.