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W.Va. ORGANIZATIONS REBUKE FBI OVER RACIALLY CHARGED LEAKED INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - Today the American Civil Liberties Union of West Virginia (ACLU-WV) and Call to Action for Racial Equality (CARE) along with five additional groups sent a letter to the field office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) covering West Virginia that raises concerns over a leaked intelligence assessment published in August 2017. The document singled out "Black Identity Extremists" as a "very likely threat" to engage in violence aimed at law enforcement personnel.

"The federal government has a long history of spying on American citizens because of their constitutionally protected activities. The FBI has especially targeted African American leaders through the years with intrusive surveillance and shameful smear campaigns," says Joseph Cohen, ACLU-WV Executive Director. "When we saw that the FBI had created this new classification of so-called 'Black Identity Extremists' and singled them out as a threat, we immediately became concerned that the racism that has historically driven federal law enforcement actions could have influenced this new assessment."

The content of the leaked document not only raises constitutional concerns about the government spying on targeted groups for exercising their 1st Amendment rights but also provides historical and social context against this type of institutional behavior.

"Black leaders, such as myself, work tirelessly to uplift communities of color which have experienced a long-standing history of generational trauma and state-sanctioned violence," says Gabrielle Chapman, Executive Director of CARE. "We must not move backwards, we must not repeat history and black leaders should never feel inferior, afraid or silenced within our own bodies."

The letter is addressed to Robert Johnson, Special Agent in Charge, at the FBI Pittsburgh Field Office. All groups signing on to the letter are listed as follows:

American Civil Liberties Union of West Virginia
Call to Action for Racial Equality
West Virginia FREE
American Friends Service Committee
West Virginia Healthy Kids and Families
West Virginia Citizens Action Group



Planned Parenthood South Atlantic

The leaked intelligence assessment and the letter in response can be found in the hyperlinks provided. ACLU-WV Executive Director, Joseph Cohen, will be live on Facebook at 10 am, November 1, 2017 to discuss both in more detail.

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