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MARJORIE R. ESMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

March 18, 2009

Mr. Russell Mills
Chief of Police
City of Homer
420 East Main Street
Homer, LA 71040

Via: U.S. Mail and Facsimile to (318) 927-4057
Re: Intent to Engage in Racial Profiling

Dear Mr. Mills:

This letter is written in response to a statement attributed to you by the Chicago Times, which quotes you as saying that "if I see three or four young black men walking down the street, I have to stop them and check their names. I want them to be afraid every time they see the police that they might get arrested." If you did make this statement, or a statement indicating your intent to stop people for no reason other than the color of their skin, we request that you disavow that statement and indicate that you will not engage in racial profiling in the future.

As the chief of police, you are surely aware that it is unlawful to arrest someone, or to stop and question someone, simply because of the color of his or her skin. It is your job, as the chief law enforcement official of the City of Homer, to protect all residents of that community, which includes protecting them from wrongful police conduct. Surely you realize that there is no valid presumption that a group of young African American men are criminals simply because of their skin color.

Your stated policy of targeting young African American men is both overtly racist and a violation of the law, and it is also bad police policy. I am sure you want to maximize the resources of your office. Racial profiling results in bad policing. There are several important policy goals that should prevent you from encouraging your deputies to engage in racial profiling. Briefly:

- You have a finite amount of resources. It is a waste of police time and taxpayer money to encourage officers to stop people based on skin color. While police are busy stopping young black men, those resources are diverted from the actual task of the police—preventing or capturing those who have broken the law.
- Racial profiling results in the overrepresentation of minorities in jail facilities for minor crimes, as violent criminals of all races remain free to terrorize members of the community.

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- As recent events in Homer indicate, racial profiling increases tensions between persons of color and the police force. This increases the likelihood of violence in interactions between members of the community and police, endangering both officers and community members. The increased tension also will hinder police investigations of crime, as community members are hesitant to cooperate with investigations, questioning whether the police are trustworthy, and whether they will protect them.

We understand that you are concerned about violence and crime, as a police chief should be. We all are concerned about violence and crime. The solution, however, is for you to target people based on their behavior, not based on age, skin color, or appearance. If Homer has a crime problem, by all means target the criminals. Targeting people based on their skin color is not the solution.

We hope that you will immediately retract your statements and clarify the intent of your comments. Being treated like a criminal because of one's race is humiliating and scary. It also violates the law. The Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution protect people from being arrested simply for the color of his or her skin. Article I, Section 3 of the Louisiana Constitution prohibits discrimination based on race. Your comments indicate that you may have violated those provisions, and we hope that you and the police officers of Homer will discontinue in racial profiling or discrimination immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marjorie Esman" followed by a stylized flourish or mark.

Marjorie Esman
Executive Director