



## **Statement by the East Bay Community Law Center in solidarity with the #blacklivesmatter protests in Berkeley, CA**

December 8, 2014

The staff of the [East Bay Community Law Center](#) stand in solidarity with the #blacklivesmatter protests in Berkeley, CA over the killings of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, and the countless other people of color who have died at the hands of the police. We are concerned that the Berkeley police response to demonstrators on the nights of December 6 and 7 far exceeds what is needed and called for. We demand an inquiry into the use of [tear gas, rubber bullets, "kettling"](#) and other tactics used by the Berkeley police on demonstrators exercising their fundamental constitutional rights of assembly and speech.

The protests in Berkeley reflect outrage with a criminal justice system in which race, wealth and state power -- not truth, accountability and culpability -- dictate outcomes. This is what the clients and staff of EBCLC experience daily in courthouses and jails, as well as social services offices, schools and on the streets. What is new -- and gives us hope -- is the public outcry. The protests in Berkeley and across the country suggest a critical turning point in the conversation about racialized poverty and the over-policing of communities of color.

Berkeley has a proud history of public protest. It fits that Berkeley be a leading voice in the #blacklivesmatter protests taking place across the nation. Of all police departments, the Berkeley police should be well prepared to respond to protests in careful and measured ways. But a measured response is not what [we have seen](#) over the past two days.

Many, particularly in the media, have tried to justify the heightened police response because of a few acts of vandalism and property destruction, which appear to have been carried out by a small group of demonstrators. EBCLC does not condone property destruction and supports those small businesses impacted. However, there are ways to protect both protesters and businesses without relying on, and sanctioning, police violence. In the days to come, protesters in Berkeley and across the nation who take to the streets to voice their outrage against police violence should have their rights protected -- not their bodies endangered by a further escalation of state-sanctioned force.

EBCLC stands in solidarity with the protesters in Berkeley and demands an inquiry into the Berkeley Police Department's use of force on protesters.