

Turn Your Ache Into Action:

Suggestions for writing Letters Regarding the shooting of Timothy Johnson

Timothy McCree Johnson, 37, was shot and killed by Fairfax County officers on the evening of Feb. 22. The Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) said it happened after Johnson allegedly stole sunglasses from the Nordstrom store at Tysons Corner Center.

Opening Ideas -

- In 1963, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote from the jail in Birmingham, Alabama: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." It is because of this eternal truth that I write this letter.
- Timothy Johnson was unarmed. Force used by FCPD was unjustified, regardless of his story. Shoplifting alone should never lead to the tragic loss of human life.
- We acknowledge the importance of good law enforcement and the daily risk to officers' lives. We are grateful for all who serve.

Calling Leaders to action -

- We reject a system that elevates consumer goods over human lives. Inconsistent or unclear loss prevention policies may have led to Johnson's death and unnecessarily endangered law enforcement officers. We ask our business communities to continue to refine their loss prevention policies.
- We call upon the Commonwealth Attorney of Fairfax County to bring criminal charges in the Johnson case where appropriate.
- We call upon the leadership of Fairfax County to ensure Fairfax County Police provides training and accountability across the force to address the dramatic increase in officer involved shootings.

Closing Ideas -

- In the same letter, Dr. King states: "We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed." We each become oppressors ourselves when we remain silent; therefore, we are demanding justice for the life of Timothy Johnson, and we are demanding the appropriate resources for those who police and secure our lives so that they can do so with both safety and compassion.
- In our country, sadly, a black person is three times as likely as a white person to be killed by police.
- Please hear our call and take action; your actions will speak louder than any words possibly could to model a society that sees all humans as divinely created, all with the same human rights.

Consider mailing a letter to – The Board of Supervisors of Fairfax County; The Commonwealth Attorney of Fairfax County; Business owners/leaders in your community.