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Chinese American Citizens Alliance

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1044 Stockton Street, San Francisco, California 94108 • Telephone/Fax (415)829-9332

National Lodge
ESTABLISHED 1895

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: info@cacanational.org

Chinese American Citizens Alliance Supports Nationwide Response to Liang Verdict

Protests to Focus on Uneven Policing Policies, Judicial System Inequities and Urban Blight

San Francisco, CA--February 18, 2016. The Chinese American Citizens Alliance supports the planned weekend protests for their drawing attention to policing policies that treat people of color unevenly, judicial systems that indict people selectively and irresponsible housing authorities that allow people to live in dangerous, festering conditions. These are the issues that demand attention following the tragic death of Akai Gurley and the troublesome verdict rendered to Peter Liang, who has been dismissed from NYPD.

For Gurley's family and friends, the Alliance extends its profound and deepest sympathies. No child should live without her father. No one should be forced to live in building conditions that cause police officers to be fearful of being ambushed. Patrick Lynch, Police Union President described conditions succinctly: "Dimly lit stairways and dilapidated conditions create fertile ground for violent crime while the constant presence of illegal firearms creates a dangerous and highly volatile environment for police officers and residents alike." A resident was quoted as saying it should not take the death of a resident to change a light bulb, yet "Dark hallways, a lack of security cameras and spotty elevator service are par for the course in Brooklyn's notorious Louis H. Pink Houses, which tenants say is completely neglected by the city." (*Living in Fear at Dark & Deadly Hellhole Houses*, New York Post, 11/22/2014)

The New York Housing Authority's neglect of the living conditions for Gurley and his neighbors who must continue to live there contributed to the circumstances that led to the tragic accidental shooting by Liang. He was an inexperienced officer, one year younger than Gurley, yet he was assigned to patrol an area police knew to lack community-police trust.



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We have no argument with those demanding police accountability. In fact, we believe that because we have entrusted an officer with a badge of authority and a firearm, he or she should be held to higher standard of judgment and knowledge than civilians. In that regard, it is indisputable that Peter Liang failed at several levels. He discharged his gun inadvertently. He and his equally inexperienced partner did not render immediate, emergency aid to Gurley. But considering the stressful conditions he was operating under, his youth and inexperience, and his shock and remorse, any conviction should be balanced by compassion and fairness. The conviction should be either set aside or the sentence should be for probation only. Nothing is served by placing this young man in jail.

The Alliance would make the same recommendation for officers in similar circumstances, regardless of race. However, the recommendation for sentencing begs the question as to why Peter Liang was indicted at all. There were other cases worse in their circumstances than what happened accidentally in the Liang-Gurley case. It cannot be ignored that the indictment selectively chose a Chinese American to be a sacrificial lamb to deflect public criticisms of police over-using force, and one cannot ignore the suspicion that Liang's indictment intentionally served to pit one ethnic community against another when the issues of safe housing and community policing are common concerns for all.

The Chinese American Citizens Alliance stands with other organizations to call attention to the issues above. We will confer with them on next steps in response to the Liang verdict.

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1044 Stockton St. San Francisco, CA

Web: www.CACAnational.org

Chinese American Citizens Alliance

The Chinese American Citizens Alliance, established in 1895, is among the oldest civil rights organizations in the United States. Headquartered in San Francisco with chapter/lodges in Albuquerque (NM), Boston (MA), Chicago (IL), Greater San Gabriel Valley (CA), Houston (TX), Las Vegas (NV), Los Angeles (CA), Mississippi, Oakland (CA), Peninsula (CA), Portland (OR), Phoenix (AZ), Salinas (CA), San Antonio (TX), San Francisco (CA), Seattle (WA), Tucson (AZ), and Washington, D.C., the Alliance addresses issues regarding voter education, political participation, racial discrimination and hate crimes, youth leadership training programs and equal employment opportunities for all Chinese Americans.