Statement from African American Policy Forum: The Killing of Sonya Massey is Yet Another Chilling Reminder of Why We Must Continue the Advocacy Work to #SayHerName

“The African American Policy Forum (AAPF) condemns the killing of Sonya Massey, a 36-year-old Black woman from Springfield, Illinois. Massey, like Breonna Taylor, Atatiana Jefferson, and Korryn Gaines before her, was killed in her home by law enforcement earlier this month. Shortly after midnight on July 6, two Sangamon County sheriff’s deputies responded to a 911 call Massey made to report a possible “prowler” around her home. Instead of getting the assistance she sought, the interaction ended with Deputy Sean Grayson shooting at Massey, hitting her in the face and killing her. Footage shows that Grayson then told his partner not to give Massey medical attention.

As noted in our book, *#SayHerName Black Women’s Stories of Police Violence and Public Silence*, Black women are disproportionately affected by state-sanctioned violence, whether they are in their vehicles, at home, or experiencing a mental health crisis. Many of them are mothers, and their murders create a ripple effect of loss — parents without daughters, children without mothers, siblings without a sister. Their deaths often occur in contexts where they should have been protected, rather than targeted: routine traffic stops, wellness checks, —and now when the police are called for a suspected intruder. The lethal force Grayson used is a reminder that Black women are seldom viewed as damsels in distress. Instead Black women are frequently mischaracterized in ways that contribute to their vulnerability.

AAPF condemns Massey’s death and calls for justice for her family. But we must also ensure that her life will never be forgotten. The first of many steps in that process is to ‘Say Her Name' and tell her story. It is also to resist the forces that attempt to censor our ability to name, trace and historicize the conditions of our vulnerability at the hands of white supremacy. So while we advocate for justice for Massey’s death, let us remember and uplift her as she was in life. Sonya Massey was a daughter, mother, friend, and Black woman with strong faith, even in her final words. Her life mattered. We won’t let history forget to #SayHerName.”