



Driving progress
through partnership

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Via Overnight Mail and Email (herdinas@charleston-sc.gov)

Susan J. Herdina, Esq.
Corporation Counsel for City of Charleston
50 Broad Street
Charleston, SC 29401

Re: Unconstitutional Arrests of Nonviolent Protesters by Charleston Police

Ms. Herdina:

Our firm represents entertainment company Roc Nation LLC (“Roc Nation”). As a business that is founded, owned, and managed by Americans of color, and that counts numerous individuals among its client base who have personal experience with our criminal justice system and its systemic biases, Roc Nation is deeply concerned with the confluence of police overreach and racial discrimination in modern law enforcement. In recent days, certain officers from the Charleston Police Department have exemplified these disturbing trends by arresting protesters in the peaceful exercise of their First Amendment rights. We write to you to demand that Chief of Police Luther Reynolds act immediately and decisively to remedy these abuses, and ensure that going forward, protesters’ constitutional rights are respected by the law enforcement officers he oversees.

As you are aware, in the last several days protests have arisen in communities across the nation, which not only mourn the tragic and needless killing of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, but call out for justice in law enforcement and an end to the extrajudicial killings of black Americans at the hands of the very police who are bound to protect them. Charleston is no exception. Thousands in your community have taken to the streets to peacefully exercise their constitutional rights to speech, assembly, and petition for redress of grievances.

It has come to Roc Nation’s attention that in the course of retaliating against and attempting to control these protests, some of Charleston’s police have gone so far as to arrest nonviolent, nonthreatening protesters solely on the basis of their constitutionally protected speech. Eyewitness footage of such an unlawful arrest can be found here: <https://twitter.com/sweeetdee/status/1267319103167107072>. Here one sees a single protester—who does not threaten, provoke, or even approach the dozens of armed police officers facing him, kneeling peacefully and expressing his well-justified grief—hailed away from his fellows and unceremoniously arrested by multiple officers. A more clear-cut violation of this protester’s First Amendment rights could hardly be imagined. It is our understanding that this is not an isolated incident.

Roc Nation calls on Chief Reynolds to remedy this overreach in the only way possible: immediately dismiss all charges against and release all individuals in the custody of the Charleston Police

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Department who have been arrested without lawful cause, and take all appropriate measures—including discipline of the officers responsible, and enhanced training—to ensure that such abuses are not repeated.

Roc Nation urges Chief Reynolds, and the entire Charleston Police Department, to do what is right. Honor these protesters' human and constitutional right to protest. Respect their entitlement to speak out regarding the enduring specter of racism in our nation—which all too often finds its expression in violence by law enforcement officers. **Act now to release all protesters who have been arrested without lawful cause, and make it known that further acts of repression by Charleston police will not be tolerated.** Solidarity with those who are peacefully and lawfully speaking out today is a critical first step to restoring trust tomorrow between the Charleston Police Department and the communities it serves.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Jordan W. Siev