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| **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** |

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|   **American Association for Access, Equity and Diversity****Statement on One of the Lessons of Ferguson:** **The Need for Diversity and Inclusion** |

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| ***Association calls on policy makers to take positive, affirmative, action-oriented steps to promote equal employment opportunity and to increase diversity and inclusion in their departmental workforces*** |

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| For Immediate Release: December 3, 2014Contact:  Shirley J. Wilcher  240-893-9475 execdir@aaaed.org execdir@affirmativeaction.org |

Washington, DC, December 1, 2014 - We at the American Association for Access, Equity and Diversity (AAAED), an organization of equal opportunity, institutional equity and diversity professionals, learned that the grand jury convened by St. Louis County prosecuting attorney Robert McCulloch will not indict Officer Darren Wilson in the shooting death of unarmed 18 year-old Michael Brown.  We extend our deepest condolences to the family of Mr. Brown.

AAAED makes it a policy and practice not to comment or advocate on behalf of individuals in personal or legal matters.  Setting legal matters aside, AAAED observes that since the shooting in August, 2014, Ferguson, Missouri has been the locus of peaceful demonstrations and lootings and has been the center of both national and international debate.  International agencies including Amnesty International have expressed concern about this incident and the world’s media outlets have sent observers to witness the human rights implications of the shooting and its aftermath.

Relevant to the central mission of AAAED, we note that the Ferguson Police Department has 50 white police officers and three or four African American officers in a city whose population is 67 percent African American.  While some may assert that African Americans in this geographic area are not interested in opportunities with this police department, our organization’s 40 years of experience and our nation’s employment practice changes demonstrate otherwise in countless employment diversification initiatives in the public, private and governmental sectors.  People of color will, and do, apply for jobs when the opportunities are real and they are genuinely wanted as applicants and workers.

We are reminded of the W. E. B. Du Bois quote:  “…the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line.”  And so we note this problem continues, unabated and with more scrutiny as to the nature and systemization of the “color line”, in our 21st century.

We know that representational diversity in all elements of U.S. society, in particular diversifying schools and the workforce, does break down barriers as well as stereotypes.  Breaking down barriers and stereotypes are foundational elements to undoing systematized racism and discrimination.

We urge the Ferguson, MO police department, and police departments nationwide at the town, city, county, state and national levels, to take positive, affirmative, action-oriented steps to increase diversity in their departmental workforce and provide training for the necessary interpersonal and intercultural skill building necessary to dismantle systematized barriers and stereotypes in order to serve their communities.  We call on these agencies to make use of the skills of Diversity and Equal Employment Opportunity specialists, including those who are members of AAAED, to guide them in achieving a diverse workforce with nuanced community and cultural understanding skills.

We also urge the Congress to pass the End Racial Profiling Act, which we have called for in the past.  We know that legislation can be a catalyst for positive societal change. And change we must as a society to finally address the ongoing “problem of the color line”.