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White House Criminal Justice Forum: Obama Says Black Lives Matter Is Legit



President Obama speaks during White House criminal justice forum. Also in the conversation were moderator Bill Keller, editor-in-chief of the Marshall Project; Los Angeles Police Chief Charlie Beck; and Colorado U. S. Attorney John Walsh. PHOTO: Cheriss May/Howard University News Service

By **Courtne' Dixon**
WASHINGTON (TriceEdneyWire.com) - The Black Lives Matter movement, which many have embraced and others have claimed is anti-police, received an endorsement from the nation's highest law enforcement officer, President Barack Obama, during a special White House session to deal with reforming the nation's criminal justice system. Speaking to law enforcement officials, including 50 of the nation's top police chiefs Oct. 22, Obama said the movement is addressing an important

issue - deaths of unarmed Black men and women at the hands of law enforcement - and is not racist or exclusionary, as its critics have claimed. "I think the reason that the organizers used the phrase 'Black Lives Matter' was not because they said they were suggesting nobody else's lives matter," Obama said. "Rather, what they were suggesting was there is a specific problem that is happening in the African American community that's not happening in other communities." And that is a legitimate issue that we've got to address."

The Black Lives Matter movement began shortly after the acquittal 2013 of volunteer security guard George Zimmerman in the shooting death of unarmed African-American teen Trayvon Martin and has grown continuously with the police-related deaths of numerous unarmed black men across the nation. Obama said one of the issues that needs to be addressed is the disproportionate imprisonment of African Americans and Latinos. They represent 60 percent of the prison population although

Americans and Latinos only represent 13 and 17 percent of the population respectively, according to Whitehouse.gov. In Washington, African-Americans represent over 90 percent of the prison population, although they only account for 49 percent of the city's population. "The problem of racial justice or injustice in the society has been a running theme in this country's history for a very long time," Obama said, "and so, we just have to make sure that all of us own it."

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