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## Loretta Lynch sworn in as new US attorney general

By Eric Tucker

WASHINGTON (AP) - Loretta Lynch was sworn in Monday as the 83rd U.S. attorney general, the first African-American woman to serve as the nation's top law enforcement official.

Speaking before family members, Justice Department lawyers and supporters, Lynch said her confirmation as attorney general showed that "we can do anything" and pledged that the agency would "use justice as our compass" in confronting terrorism, cyberattacks and other threats facing the country.

"We can imbue our criminal justice system with both strength and fairness, for the protection of both the needs of victims and the rights of all. We can restore trust and faith both in our laws and in those of us who enforce them," Lynch said, an apparent reference to ongoing efforts to repair relations between police departments and minority communities that they serve.

Vice President Joe Biden administered the oath of office to Lynch at a Justice Department ceremony, calling Lynch an "incredibly qualified" selection. He said Lynch had shown grace during the months-long confirmation process, in which her nomination became caught up in Congress a dispute over human trafficking legislation.

The 55-year-old Lynch was confirmed by the Senate on April 23. She replaced Eric Holder, who left the position April 24 after serving as attorney general for six years.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it's about time - it's about time this woman is being sworn in," Biden said to applause.

She was previously the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York, which encompasses much of New York City, and is expected to serve as the top federal law enforcement official for the remainder of the Obama administration. Lynch isn't expected to make radical departures from Holder's agenda, but she said she hopes to have a productive relationship with Congress. Holder frequently clashed with Republicans on Capitol Hill and was held in contempt during a document dispute stemming from the Fast and Furious federal investigation into gun trafficking.

The Harvard-educated Lynch grew up in North Carolina during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the daughter of a librarian and a fourth-generation Baptist preacher who Biden said would take his child to the courthouse to observe important cases.

"I am here to tell you, if a little girl from North Carolina who used to tell her grandfather in the fields to lift her up on the back of his mule, so she could see way up high, Granddaddy, can become the chief law enforcement officer of the United States of America, then we can do anything," Lynch said.



U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL LORETTA LYNCH

## Each death in Baltimore makes mistrust harder to overcome

By Juliet Linderman

BALTIMORE (AP) - Baltimore's mayor and police commissioner came in making big promises to the inner-city residents and police who spent decades staring each other down in neighborhoods ravaged by crack and heroin. But with each death of a black man in custody, their efforts to overcome mistrust have hit hard walls of skepticism and outrage.

Two and a half years into his job leading the city's police department, Commissioner Anthony Batts is frustrated that the people he was appointed to serve have lost their faith in justice.

"They don't believe what I say," Batts said in an interview April 23 with The Associated Press.

Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake hired Batts in September 2012 after a previous round of police scandals involving excessive use of force, and she was still supporting her commissioner ahead of more protests April 25.

Batts also rejected demands by several African-American ministers that he resign. "That's not going to happen," he announced April 24.

He promised to be as transparent as possible without compromising an investigation that could lead to criminal charges. Six officers have been suspended with pay since Freddie Gray died of a spinal injury he suffered during an arrest Batts characterized as questionable.

Both Batts and the mayor, who took office in 2010, are African-American and no strangers to communities like Sandtown, a set of public housing projects not far from Baltimore's Inner Harbor and the Orioles' baseball stadium where Gray tried to outrun three bicycle cops who spotted him on a street corner on April 12.

Gray, 25, was pinned to the ground and already injured when he was handcuffed and hoisted into a van, police acknowledged April 24. He repeatedly begged for medical help, but officers instead added leg irons and locked him inside again. Gray was eventually hospitalized in critical condition, and died a week later.

Batts, who spent decades policing in Long Beach and Oakland, California, before taking this job, insists he is part of the solution in Baltimore. He said he's fired 50 police employees and reduced officer-involved shootings, and the use-of-force reports police must file dropped from 598 in 2012 to 435 in 2014.

"I have been a reform commissioner. I have taken an organization that has many challenges and faced them head-on," he insisted, even as he acknowledged that some cases have "tarnished this badge and the reputation of the department."

With each death in custody and each police brutality settlement, the trust erodes even more.

A Baltimore Sun investigation revealed last year that the city has paid roughly \$5.7 million in brutality settlements since 2011, involving 102 instances of excessive force.

And taxpayers keep paying: Just days after Gray's death, the city's Board of Estimates approved \$80,000 for 37-year-old Timothy Ashe, whose teeth were punched out by police officer after parking illegally. A week earlier, \$175,000 was awarded to the family of Michael Wudtee, who was fatally shot by a police officer at a gas station in July 2012.

Gray is at least the fifth black man to die after police encounters since Batts took charge:

- Tyrone West, 44, died in July 2013; he stopped breathing after he was tackled and handcuffed by

officers during a traffic stop. The autopsy blamed a heart condition aggravated by the struggle and hot temperatures. An internal review board said the officers were justified, but said officers "made several tactical errors." West's family is suing.

- Anthony Anderson, 46, died in September 2012 after police said they broke up his drug deal. Officers said he fought with them and was slammed to the ground. His death, of internal bleeding from blunt force injuries, was ruled a homicide, but an internal review board ruled officers were justified, and prosecutors declined to charge them.

- George King, 19, died in a hospital in May 2014 after officers shocked him six times with a stun gun. The state's attorney's office filed no charges against police. King's autopsy showed that King died of "acute epidural abscess and meningitis with complications."

- Trayvon Scott, 30, arrested on a charge of attempted murder, died in custody in February 2015 after showing signs of distress in a holding cell. Police called paramedics who took Scott to the hospital, where he died.

After the newspaper's expose last year, Batts asked the U.S. Justice Department to review the department's policies and procedures. Now the Justice Department has opened a second probe, by its Civil Rights division, examining Gray's death.

Batts told the AP that distrust is so pervasive that his best efforts are falling short.

"I bring independent review boards in, and they don't believe what they're saying either. Last week the community told the DOJ folks that they don't believe in that process either. How do you build trust?"

Baltimore had one of the nation's busiest markets for heroin and crack cocaine when Martin O'Malley ran for mayor in 1999. The future Maryland governor and Democratic presidential candidate imposed a "zero tolerance" policy that did reduce crime, but also resulted in thousands of arrests without cause.

In 2010, the ACLU and NAACP reached an \$870,000 settlement with the city that required police to track their arrests. But by 2012, an independent auditor found Baltimore officers still couldn't justify 35 percent of their arrests.

"When we adopted zero tolerance policing we were embedding in the police culture this mindset of being at war with the citizenry," said Sonia Kumar, an attorney at the ACLU. "At no point since then has that mindset been disrupted or challenged in any meaningful way."

Batts and the mayor said they're still battling the legacy of this zero tolerance policy: "Although crime decreased, the high number of arrests for minor offenses ignited a rift between the citizens and the police, which still exists today," they wrote in a report last year.

Residents of Sandtown also say nothing's changed.

"The police will chase you, throw you on the ground," said Davon Crawford, 28. "They're supposed to protect and serve. Who are they protecting?"

Associated Press Writer Amanda Lee Myers in Baltimore contributed to this story.