

Sixty Black Leaders Condemn Sheriff Joe Arpaio

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For more information contact Jill Garvey 312-266-0319 or visit www.newcomm.org

CHICAGO ‐ An advertisement appears in today's edition of The Arizona Republic newspaper comparing Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio to the infamous 1960s Birmingham public safety commissioner Theophilus Eugene •Connor. The strongly worded statement was sponsored by the Center for New Community and signed by sixty prominent Black leaders from twenty-three states.

These leaders chose an historic time to make their concerns public, on the eve of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. “It is shameful that these appalling actions by Sheriff Arpaio have gone unchecked for so long,” said Center for New Community Chair, Rev. Kazi Joshua. “The number of Black leaders who spoke out in today's newspaper should send a clear message to the Department of Justice that this is an urgent civil rights crisis that requires immediate action."

The advertisement details the most alarming actions taken by Sheriff Joe Arpaio and the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, including:

- The humiliation of over 200 individuals chained in shackles and marched through the streets of Phoenix, and their segregation based on national origin;
- Use of Sheriff's Office resources to harass public officials, civic organizations, newspapers, and community leaders publicly opposed to Sheriff Joe Arpaio's negligent actions;
- Profiling of individuals based on their ethnicity and language.
- Irresponsible remarks and actions that denigrate his office, including stating on national television that “it's an honor” to be compared with the Ku Klux Klan, and public photographs with a self-identified neo-Nazi.

In addition to detailing the actions of Sheriff Arpaio, the advertisement stated, “As Black and African American leaders we call on Attorney General of the United States Eric H. Holder and the Department of Justice to prove once and for all that this is not Arpaio's America.”

“We are deeply troubled about the growing level of racism and racial division seen in Maricopa County,” stated James E. Johnson, Jr., a former county commissioner from Eagle County, Colorado and current Center for New Community organizer, “and the unwillingness of national political leaders to step forward to condemn activities that dehumanize people within the community.”

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The Center for New Community is a national organization committed to building community, justice, and equality. The Center is grounded in many faith traditions, and builds community where the dignity and value of all humanity is manifest. Based in Chicago, the organization defends democracy, empowers communities, and promotes equality in its commitments to cultivate civic life and advance systemic change in partnership with local leaders, organizations, congregations, and other institutions.