

DC Black Church Initiative

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THE ACTIONS OF DC COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS ARE NOT ONLY SHAMEFUL, BUT CRIMINAL

DCBCI Believes Higher Principals are at Stake – He Must Be Punished

Washington, D.C. – The District of Columbia Black Church Initiative (DCBCI), a faith-based coalition of 800 churches representing thousands of African Americans, condemns the actions of DC Councilmember Harry Thomas Jr. and calls for his resignation. Councilman Thomas knowingly stole from not only his constituents, but also from the DC Youth Investment Trust Corporation, an organization created by the council to distribute money to local youth organizations.

As an organization actively advocating on behalf of both DC's disadvantaged children and financial literacy, DCBCI finds Councilman Thomas' actions to be particularly egregious. Instead of utilizing his position of power and influence to benefit his constituents, Thomas betrayed the trust endowed to him for his own personal gain, no doubt diminishing the financial landscape of Ward 5. Ward 5, which Thomas was elected to represent, has a 19% poverty rate and a 13% unemployment rate, both higher than the national average.

Unfortunately, this is not the first, nor the last time that America's children will be victimized at the hands of our politicians. Our society has to prioritize the safety of our most vulnerable and aggressively attack those who refuse to protect those in need.

The following are examples of what DCBCI believes to be a war against children:

- Lauren Simon, Treasurer of the Rainbow Connection, an organization that helps children with cancer and rare blood disorders, stole more than \$75,000 from that organization.

- Debra Rucker Brown, Executive Director of Children’s Advocacy Center, stole \$237,000 from the children she was supposed to be looking after.
- Marvin Perry, the former Chief Financial Officer of National Children’s Alliance, along with Sharon Martin and Michael Young were sentenced to jail time for collectively embezzling upwards of \$80,000 in funds from their organization.

The list goes on and on and this pattern is not only disgraceful but morally reprehensible.

Rev. Anthony Evans, President of DCBCI says, “This is stealing, plain and simple. Thomas was a trusted member of society and powerful elected official who knowingly stole money from children, amongst others, during a devastating economic downturn. The impact of Thomas’ actions is intensified given that he stole from the low-income African American children he was elected to represent. The Church, in its infinite mercy, has forgiven him as the teachings of Jesus mandate. Now it is up to society to punish him, not imposing a lenient slap on the wrist to set the highest possible standard of justice for our elected officials. As Jesus said, ‘Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven’ (King James Bible, Matthew 19:14).

DCBCI, as a subsidiary of the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) and a sister organization of the Baby Fund, has a particular interest in responding to both the needs of the African American community and the critical issues facing our youth. NBCI has committed the past twenty years to addressing the racial disparities and has tackled controversial issues facing African Americans nationwide. The Baby Fund is a response to the rising tide of abuse and neglect facing our children and an organization dedicated accountability for those entrusted with the care of our future. The commitment of these two organizations remains strong; several press releases have illustrated that dedication. Specifically, NBCI has decried the Catholic Church’s continued abuse of children and has protested the injustice of the Casey Anthony acquittal through critical press releases, available online <http://www.naltblackchurch.com/pdf/catholic-childvictim.pdf> and <http://www.naltblackchurch.com/pdf/caseyanthony-release.pdf>.

Given DCBCI’s three-fold commitment to justice and children, we feel a pressing commitment to shedding light on this unacceptable behavior. What will be left of our country if we take every advantage away from the disadvantaged – without consequence? How can a man we entrust with creating laws to protect our fellow citizens be free to break them? In this case, the church is calling for Councilman Thomas to go to jail. Typically, the Church doesn’t advocate for incarceration, however, the Church also believes that civil law is just and we are compelled to respect and follow it. When you break civil law, especially with crimes as appalling as Thomas’, jail is a fitting punishment. DCBCI will send a letter, signed by 100 African American ministers, to the US District Attorney’s Office to ensure that Councilman Thomas receives the punishment that he deserves. We are taking this unprecedented step to exert our moral influence to reinstate sanity.

About DCBCI

The DC Black Church Initiative (DCBCI) is a coalition of 800 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. DCBCI's mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. The DC Black Church Initiative's methodology is utilizing faith and sound health science. The DC Black Church Initiative's purpose is to partner with major organizations and officials whose main mission is to reduce racial disparities in the variety of areas cited above. DCBCI offers faith-based, out-of-the-box and cutting edge solutions to stubborn economic and social issues. DCBCI's programs are governed by credible statistical analysis, science based strategies and techniques, and methods that work. DCBCI is a subsidiary of the National Black Church Initiative – visit our website at www.naltblackchurch.com.