

National Black Church Initiative

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NATIONAL BLACK CHURCH INITIATIVE APPLAUDS RAPPER T.I.'S SENTENCE

HE GOT WHAT HE RIGHTFULLY DESERVED

Washington DC – The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of 34,000 African American churches across the nation, applauds the court's decision to sentence rapper T.I. for 11 months for violating his probation. The Atlanta native, who previously served time for federal weapons charges, was arrested on drug possession when police officers found Ecstasy in his car during a traffic stop. NBCI, a strong advocate of the Black family and known opponents of criminal behavior, says that T.I.'s recent sentence brings attention to the rapper's previous weapon charges and the drastic statistics that exist on black youth, homicide, and incarceration due to gun violence.

NBCI president, Rev. Anthony Evans, demands for T.I. to be held accountable for his actions. "Let's not forget that he had an assault rifle to begin with," said Evans. "Young African American males are either dead or in jail because they use guns. Gun violence is rampant in our community. Our young people seem to understand that the only way to resolve their conflicts is through guns or violence. The Black church condemns this type of random violence visited upon their adversaries, their friends, and family members. We take no joy in knowing that another young, talented, African American male is going to jail, but the Black church has no choice if it is to rebuild the Black family by putting an end to this type of behavior. I hope that this sentence sends a very loud and clear message to our young people – no matter how popular you are or how famous you are or how much money you have – eventually the law will catch up with you. The Black church is prepared to offer counseling to T.I. and to any other young people around the country concerning the correct way to resolve your conflicts. Let us be clear: we will not be tolerant of anyone using a gun to do so."

A 2008 study by criminologists at Northeastern University concluded that the number of young black men and teenagers who either killed or were killed in shootings increased, even as overall murder rates have been stable nationwide. FBI data from the previous year showed that nearly 1,000 black males between the ages of 14 and 17 committed fatal shootings, and 426 in the same group were killed in gun crimes. That same year, out of 10,067 arrests in murder and non-negligent manslaughter cases, 5,078 of those arrested were black. Almost 10 percent of black people arrested were under 18. According to a 2005 report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, homicide victimization rates for blacks

were 6 times higher than whites, with gun homicide ranking as one of the most frequent crimes among blacks, right under drug homicide.

Rev. Evans also expressed outrage regarding the demoralizing influence that T.I. has portrayed to young people across the nation. “He is talented but this is the wrong way for him to use his God-given talent,” said Evans. “It is imperative for those whom God has entrusted with a talent to view it as a blessing and not an opportunity to exploit young people. I want to infuriate the rap community because the damage they are doing is destroying God’s young people.”

T.I admitted to an Atlanta radio station that he made a mistake. “I’m not without flaw. One thing from my flaws that I have always done, I have accepted responsibility,” he said.

Rev. Evans says that he is not convinced of T.I.’s remorse. “If he took responsibility to begin with, he would have understood that holding an assault rifle was against the law and could only bring about harm and destruction. He was not willing to take full responsibility because he asked the court for leniency after Judge Pannell put him on parole and gave him a chance to correct his behavior. Ran than to man up and accept the harshest punishment for his previous crime, he pleaded to the court for another chance.”

NBCI leaders also disapprove of U.S. District Judge Charles A. Pannell, Jr.’s decision to give such a lenient sentence to the rapper. Members believe that Pannell should have originally given the rapper at least 3 years in prison. “This soft pedaling of young black males will not get us where we need to be in our communities,” said Evans. “What type of message does this send to our youth? He is being reinforced, not trained. The Church has to be clear on where we stand and tough in these matters because we deeply love T.I. and want to see him live. If we are not tough, he may cause his own death or others.”

Rev. Evans says that NBCI is prepared to assist the rapper. “We need T.I to change his life around. He has an extensive criminal history and the Church is the only institution that can provide the adequate support he needs. We are prepared to work with him and his family to give them the right standards and wisdom to make a lasting change.”

NBCI is currently working on an initiative to recruit 250,000 mentors to assist young people from dropping out of high school and college.

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 34,000 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI’s mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. The National Black Church Initiative’s methodology is utilizing faith and sound health science. The National 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. NBCI offers faith-based, out-of-the-box and cutting edge solutions to stubborn economic and social issues. NBCI’s programs are governed by credible statistical analysis, science based strategies and techniques, and methods that work. Visit our website at www.naltblackchurch.com.

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