

National Black Church Initiative

P.O. Box 65177
Washington, DC 20035
(202) 202-744-0184

dcbci2002@yahoo.com
<http://www.naltblackchurch.com/>

For immediate release
PRESS RELEASE

Contact Person
Rev. Anthony Evans
(202) 744-0184

National Black Church Initiative Admonishes Authorities For Their Lack of Care in Serial Rapist/Murderer Case

*The Black community continues to be a target of
horrendous crimes because of law enforcement's
negligence*

Washington, DC – The National Black Church Initiative, a coalition of 34,000 churches across the United States, was saddened to hear of the discovery of 13 decaying bodies in the house of Cleveland man Anthony Sowell. As the church looked on in horror and the body count grew thanks to buried bodies and a skull found in the basement, this became one of the most shocking serial killings ever. While only a few of the bodies have been identified, NBCI wants to send its hopes and prayers to the families of all who may have lost someone to this very disturbed individual. We also hope that the full extent of the law is brought down on this man, as the acts he committed are unforgivable by any other than God.

The question that NBCI wants to raise concerning this issue is how Sowell was allowed to live for nearly five years in an apartment with decaying bodies and no one ever investigated, despite the fact that Sowell had already spent time in jail for rape and that the police had been called to his house before. It is also disturbing to the church that Sowell was a registered sex offender, but most of his neighbors were not informed of this fact, despite it being a federal law. This gross negligence once again shows the lack of attention that law enforcement across the country gives to Black community. The Cleveland police have acted not only irresponsibly, but without any clear sense of investigative imagination when it came to this case. How could they have not have seen him as a possible suspect among others if they were actively pursuing this case with the proper amount of vigor. What we are witnessing here is a Black community being neglected by law enforcement (You can cry, but the police will not hear you if you're Black and poor)

The church will not stand for this kind of blatant racism and intentional avoidance. We have instructed our churches in the Cleveland area to not only pray for the families of the deceased, but also to attempt to open up discussions about how African American communities can develop better relationships with the police so that tragedies like this will never occur again. The relationship between the Black community and police must be stronger so that the deaths of innocent people can be avoided, and in order to do that law enforcement must step up to the plate and protect the African American community just as vigilantly as they would protect whites in the downtown area. NBCI hopes that in the future tragedies like this can be avoided by law enforcement working closely with the Black Church to become a more integral part of the Black community.

This tragedy calls for Governor Ted Strickland to step up and show leadership by appointing an independent commission with subpoena power to look at the performance of the Cleveland police department and see if they violated any of the state's procedures and regulations. If this happened in the white community far more would be done about this, and we will hold the Governor responsible. It is imperative that someone be held accountable for this.

Rev. Anthony Evans, President of NBCI, said, "These killings represent a sad history between the Black community and law enforcement. This would have never happened in a white community. This is a classic case of police neglect, and a horrendous failure of applying good police practices fairly. This tragedy also demonstrates that community policing does not work in the African American community because of the historic antagonism that has always existed between the police and the community. This antagonism has two root causes: the fear of law enforcement and the mistrust. The Black community has always viewed law enforcement as a negative, and a way to harm them, and they have never viewed it as a way to serve and protect. To stop this case from further deepening the fear and the distrust between the African American community and law enforcement, the Black Church will reach out to law enforcement and attempt to build a bridge as it has always done. However, the church will not let law enforcement off the hook here. They have failed the African American community of Cleveland. This is the type of racist practice by law enforcement that the church will not stay silent on."

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of 16,000 African-American and Latino member churches works to eradicate racial disparities in health care. In addition to our member churches, we have 18,000 sister churches. NBCI is a faith-based health organization dedicated to providing critical wellness information and preventive health screening to all of its members. The African-American community ranks first in eleven different health risk categories. NBCI's purpose is to partner with national health officials to provide health education, reduce racial health disparities, and increase access to quality health care.