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on issues affecting African Americans
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**Okay Chief Seabrooks, Now it's
Inglewood's Turn to Have a
Federal Watch Dog
of its Police Dept
Between The Lines**

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Sometimes it takes an event (or two) to make plain a reality that nobody wants to talk about. Pervasive police abuse and police misconduct are usually activities nobody wants to acknowledge and nobody wants to admit to. Police have a way of trying to convince you that everything they do is legal, even when it clearly isn't. Some confuse "collar of authority" with "tyranny of the majority" as if being in the majority of our society gives them license to abuse whomever they don't like.

Majority "cues" can be directed at anything and everything, but no more frequently are they directed at black people and young people. Tyrants in our society take on many forms. It is unfortunate that many times they come in the form of our law enforcement agencies. Most people know and understand - and if they don't, I'm here to say - that most police are law-abiding and try to uphold the law equally. Most people don't perceive the police as hostile and overwhelming want (and expect) them to come to their aid in a time of distress. However, and this is a big HOWEVER, at the same time our communities love the police - they fear the police, and when the police violate the community, that fear turns to enmity and subsequently, our communities come to despise the police.

No more does this progression of antipathy occur than when a law-abiding citizen, who is an advocate for the police, is violated by the police. Now you have a cause for a movement. That's what happened in Inglewood, CA this week.

The Inglewood police arrested an upstanding citizen for observing a police encounter with another citizen. The observing citizen is a businessmen and pastor to boot. He's promised to leave the city and take his business saying he's tired of the Gestapo tactics of the Inglewood. The community is tired as well.

Now, Inglewood, known as "the wood" in hood and Hollywood circles, is a community of rich tradition. It was literally the first majority black suburb of Los Angeles (actually before Compton and Carson), a city where the "American dream" of home ownership became real a lot faster than anywhere else in the city (over 60% of Inglewood residents own their home). So, we're really not talking about a war zone here, or some "hard side of tracks" community where para-military police force tactics are really necessary. Yet, Inglewood, in the past three years has had more questionable officer-involved shootings than any city of its size (roughly 100,000 residents) in the state of California.

In one stretch, the police shot four unarmed people in four months (three died). Inglewood police have developed a reputation for being "trigger happy." Inglewood's police abuse issues were pushing its neighboring big brother, LAPD, off the front pages (and that takes some doing). The mayor, the city council, the clergy and the community have all sought to address this issue in various ways, from protests to prayer vigils, from community hearing to police chief firings.

A little less than two years ago, Inglewood tried something different to resolve their police issues. They hired the first African American woman Chief of Police, Jacqueline Seabrooks. Just know that didn't go over real well in the ranks. She came in cracking the whip, and she's a whip herself. A few months ago, I keynoted an African American police officers' association recognition banquet (which shows how much we all grow - I NEVER would have done this 20 years ago - as there are a few law officers I've come to highly respect).

In my opening remarks, I joked about the LAPD's misreadings of the recent ACLU racial profiling report and how one might want to stay out of Inglewood until it got safer. Who runs up to me after the speech, nostrils flared - wig twisted (or maybe just her hair-doo took a hit), but Chief Seabrooks, talking about my comments not being appropriate for this crowd. I told her the abuse in her department is no different than that happening in Los Angeles and if I can call theirs out, I can (and will) call her department's abuses out. I thought I was going to have to "bob and weave" there for a minute, but she straightened up and said "Feel welcome to come to Inglewood anytime. You'll be safe" and walked off. Yeah, right. How am I to feel safe if the residents don't? I think she needs to ride through her community a little more often and see what the real deal is. Or wake up to the reality that she has a soiled dept.

Well, it's time to put Inglewood on the federal watch list for reform. Get a constant decree and inspector general out there before someone else gets beaten or killed. Ain't nobody playin' with Inglewood police, while they play with the lives of its residents. LIKE I SAID, Chief Seabrooks, Inglewood has problems and people need to stay out of Inglewood until y'all figure it out - or have the feds help you figure it out. Inglewood police need a watch dog. Ms. Seabrooks can't change the culture by herself (nor should she be expected to). Somebody just needs to convince her of that.

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