



J WILLIE DAVID, III
President

FLORIDA CIVIL RIGHTS ASSOCIATION

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

P.O. Box 593248, Orlando, Florida 32859
(407) 272-9254 • info@fcranews.com • www.fcranews.com

PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACTS:

J Willie David, III, President *of* FCRA
Clint Johnson, Attorney *for* FCRA
407.272.9254 / info@fcranews.com

Florida Civil Rights Association announces the filing of a Federal Civil Rights Complaint with US Attorney General Eric Holder against the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation and the Orange County Sheriff's Office for Racial Profiling Minority Owned Barbershops

ORLANDO, Fla. – The Florida Civil Rights Association has asked US Attorney General Eric Holder to direct the US Department of Justice to launch an immediate federal civil rights investigation against the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) and the Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) for targeting African American and Hispanic owned barbershops in a series of warrantless drug raids conducted under the pretext (police ruse) of administrative licensing inspections.

The tactics used by the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) and the Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) has casted a dark cloud over how administrative licensing inspections are being used illegally to conduct criminal investigations without obtaining a warrant. "This cannot be ignored," said Florida Civil Rights Association President, J Willie David, III.

The four paged complaint alleges that a DBPR regulatory supervisor and three DBPR regulatory investigators, along with an OCSO sergeant, corporal, 4 narcotics agents, 2 plainclothes deputies, a K-9 and 6 uniformed deputies violated the United States Constitution and federal law on or about August 21, 2010, September 17, 2010, and October 8, 2010 by (1) racially profiling barbers, their businesses and customers, because they were African Americans and Hispanics; (2) entered the businesses under a pretext (police ruse) of administrative inspections; (3) conducted intrusive, unjustifiable and extended searches unrelated to unlicensed activities; (4) searched barbers and customers pockets, removed drivers licenses and other items, conducted background

checks; (5) handcuffed, detained, searched and arrested barbers and their customers; (6) carried guns, rushing through the barbershops, using a battering ram to break down doors to search for criminal activity of drugs; (7) unplugged business surveillance cameras during the warrantless raid; (8) used a K-9 to search outside and inside barbers and customers vehicles; (9) towed barbers and customer vehicles; (10) narcotics agents or plainclothes deputies kept the barbers under surveillance by posing as customers on different days before the warrantless raid; (11) deputies answered the business phones, telling customers that the barbers were busy and being arrested; (12) they used insulting remarks to humiliate the barbers; and (13) uniformed deputies returned a week later to conduct a “follow-up” walk through of the barbershops searching in back rooms just to intimidate and cause fear.

The complaint also alleged that DBPR investigators and OCSO deputies demonstrated a racially discriminatory pattern or practice in its inspections, detentions, searches, seizures, and arrests involving African Americans and Hispanics barbers, barbershops businesses and customers in Orange County, Florida.

The Florida Civil Rights Association is also requesting the Justice Department to withhold federal funds given to the OCSO and the DBPR until these discriminatory practices are and addressed and corrected, stated David.

The Florida Civil Rights Association intends to pursue justice to the fullest extent for the barbers, including demanding DBPR adopt new policies prohibiting the use of licensing inspections with other government entities as a pretext for conducting warrantless inspections or collecting criminal evidence, David said.

The Florida Civil Rights Association has provided Governor Charlie Crist and Governor-Elect Rick Scott with copies of the federal complaint filed with US Attorney General Holder. David stated, It is time to close this illegal loophole used by law enforcement to get around obtaining a warrant.

DBPR and OCSO warrantless raids on minority owned barbershops have certainly outraged the African American and Hispanic communities. The Florida Civil Rights Association will also look for ways to help rebuild trust between the community and law enforcement where divorce between the two is not an option, David said.

Please call (407) 272-9254 or email info@fcranews.com to request a telephone or an on-camera interview with FCRA Attorney Clint Johnson, FCRA President J Willie David, III, or with our clients a barber or barbershop owner.

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