



From the Opinion Desk of the APA Executive Director

When Politics Interferes..... (Part 2)

The criminal and administrative investigations surrounding the Michael Johnson and Officer Authement incident are now complete. The investigations and the evidence obtained by local and federal authorities have been made visible for all to see. Statements made by victims, witnesses and potential suspects are available for public review and scrutiny. And in the end what did we discover? Phoenix Police Officer Brian Authement did not act outside of his authority when confronting and handcuffing Phoenix City Councilman Michael Johnson. Officer Brian Authement is not a racist nor does he portray the attributes of such a person. He did not act as a racist cop when he took appropriate action on the day in question. In the final act of this incident it was determined that neither party should be subjected to major discipline or punitive criminal action. Justice has finally prevailed or has it?

Following the incident involving Councilman Michael Johnson and Officer Brian Authement, the City of Phoenix faced accusations of tainted police internal investigations especially those investigations involving reports of racial discrimination, racial profiling and abuse of authority by Phoenix police officers. The Mayor of the City of Phoenix was quick to announce a public hearing (described as a public lynching in my previous article) which ultimately denounced police business practices and officer training within the Phoenix P.D. The Phoenix Police Chief was chastised by members of the public and Officer Authement was held up as the example of police racial practices and policies.

During this entire exercise the Mayor of the City of Phoenix orchestrated what can only be described as a theatrical show for the entire nation. Using his position as mayor he used the bully pulpit to argue that actions such as those taken by Officer Authement were not going to be tolerated and that he personally was going to insure that racial discriminatory practices were going to be weeded out of the Phoenix P.D. Mayor Gordon proclaimed his goals to any and all media outlets and discovered his political career was on an upswing because of his stance on this issue. After all by regaining political favor with the electorate (the residents of Phoenix), Phil could see his political life rekindled and the possibility of a profitable future enhanced. Phil vowed to correct the problems within the Phoenix P.D. and insure that discipline was swift in the matter. He agreed with many of the commentators at this meeting that Officer Authement should be terminated immediately. After all a pound of flesh was needed to resurrect a political career and calm the waters stirred by this illustrious event.

Mayor Gordon was on top of the mountain again. National spokespersons were meeting with him. Media coverage was constant. National civil rights leaders were congratulating him on his stance. All this was occurring while the city held its head in humiliation. The fact that the city and his police department were hurting didn't matter to the mayor after all the most important thing here was his own personal resurrection. At no time did the mayor take the bully pulpit to defend or support the city as he swore to do when he took his oath of office. The mayor forgot one thing during his zealous act, he forgot the rule that states, "One should not condemn anyone or any practice without knowing all the facts contained in the subsequent criminal and/or administrative investigation". He overlooked the fact that everyone facing allegations, such as those facing Officer Authement, had a right to a "fair and balanced" investigation. But such things are immaterial and did not occur to Mayor Gordon because the opportunity to resurrect a political career was at hand.

Now that the final investigative reports have been finalized one has to wonder when Mayor Gordon is going to address the residents of the City of Phoenix and apologize for giving this great city a national public black eye. When is Mayor Gordon going to apologize to Officer Authement for dragging his good name through the mud? When is Mayor Gordon going to apologize to the Phoenix City Council for the humiliation and anguish they endured on behalf of the city? When is Mayor Gordon going to apologize to this state's police officers for the discredit he tried to bring to their profession? Better yet, when is Mayor Gordon going to send his hangman packing?

A true civic leader addresses findings like these immediately. A true civic leader acknowledges that mistakes and poor assumptions were made by many people including himself. A true civic leader takes charge and asserts that the City of Phoenix should once again be deemed the greatest city in the world because we do not, will not and have not tolerated racial discrimination. But Mayor Gordon would rather travel to a far away state or country and hide from his constituents and employees. He would rather go to a meeting and convince other city mayors that Arizona is a racist state. After all, if you can't redeem yourself by condemning your city why not redeem yourself by condemning your state?

By

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