# Activists press sheriff for reforms

WED 3-13 L.A. Times

[**Baca,** from AA1]
never take away the hurt and pain that these people have experienced," said V. Jessie Smith, president of the Antelope Valley chapter of the National Assn. for the Advancement of Colored People.

The leaders described a climate in which African Americans and Latinos lived in constant fear of being arrested or having their cars confiscated because of their ethnicity. They asked the Sheriff's Department to form a citizen's review board and to remove the "rogue individuals" who mistreated blacks and Latinos.

"Our beloved Antelope Valley needs surgery to remove this cancer," said Pharaoh Mitchell, president of the Community Action League, a local advocacy group that helped with the federal investigation.

But many of those in attendance at the news conference tempered their criticism of local leaders by saying that progress has been made. One example cited was the city of Lancaster renaming and reorienting a commission that had once exclusively targeted residents who were receiving government subsidized housing. And when a shooting involving a black or Latino victim occurs, Smith says, sheriff's officials make efforts to keep him informed.

> 'Money can never take away the hurt and pain that these people have experienced.'
>
> — V. JESSIE SMITH, Antelope Valley NAACP

"That communication is happening now and that didn't before," Smith said.

Sheriff Lee Baca has declined requests for an interview but released a statement Tuesday saying that his department "does not condone racial profiling" and asking federal authorities to release the data that support their findings of racial profiling.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, whose district includes the Antelope Valley, also took aim at the federal findings Tuesday.

He said in a statement that the enforcement program was intended to make sure that those who received Section 8 subsidies followed the rules.

Awarding monetary compensation to the alleged victims of civil rights abuses, he said, would reward some who had violated program rules.

"The DOJ had a predetermined conclusion when it started its investigation," Antonovich said.

Black and Latino activists emphasized that they wanted to solve the problem and not cast blame. Lancaster Mayor R. Rex Parris was called a "good faith" partner by one leader. Parris, who is an attorney, is representing the NAACP in a suit against the city of Palmdale alleging that the city's election process disenfranchises black and Latino voters. Parris has also criticized the Justice Department's findings as unfair.

Bishop Henry Hearns, a pastor and the first African American mayor of Lancaster, said the Justice Department's report had "great truth" in it, recalling a death threat he received when he ran for Lancaster City Council in the 1990s. But Hearns stopped short of calling the findings a victory. Many deputies are his neighbors and attend his church, and he said they were good people.

"It's not a victory until this community is healed," Hearns said.

But Antelope Valley NAACP Vice President Cynthia Beverly, whose nonprofit One Way Up works with disadvantaged students throughout the area, said she refused to "sugarcoat it."

"The discrimination and racism in this community is still here," Beverly said.

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Times staff writers Robert Faturechi and Abby Sewell contributed to this report.

# Another black eye for Baca

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THE LATEST INSIGHT into the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is as dispiriting as it is familiar. For years — decades, even, for those who remember the Kolts Commission in the early 1990s — one outside group after another has concluded that lax discipline, poor supervision and inattentive management have allowed problems within the department to fester, sometimes erupting in violations of civil rights. And here we are again.

After a two-year investigation, the U.S. Department of Justice has concluded that deputies assigned to the Antelope Valley Sheriff's Station repeatedly violated the civil rights of African Americans and Latinos, especially those in federally subsidized housing. The report describes how deputies subjected residents to unconstitutional stops and seizures, relied on racial profiling and resorted to excessive force. In one instance cited, a deputy "punched another handcuffed woman in the jaw while three other deputies held her down."

Sheriff Lee Baca's responses to this and previous critiques have been revealing and disturbing. In 2011, he criticized the FBI for failing to notify his office about a cellphone "sting" in the Men's Central Jail, and instead of helping federal agents investigate wrongdoing, he suggested that they had committed a crime. Later that year, when confronted with reports of violence in the jails, gang-like deputy cliques and inmate abuse, he blamed his underlings for failing to inform him of the problems. Now, as he insists that his deputies do not discriminate or engage in excessive force in the Antelope Valley, it's hard to believe him.

Baca knows better than to resist calls for change. In the jails, for instance, he has implemented three dozen of the 60 recommendations made last year by the Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence, including hiring an expert to run those perennially troubled facilities. And he has agreed to reorganize the department, created a separate custody career track for deputies who want to work in the jails, and installed cameras as a way to track and deter excessive use of force by deputies. What remains troubling, however, is his ongoing failure to address serious problems before they are publicly pointed out to him. The department was repeatedly warned by Special Counsel Merrick Bobb that something was very wrong in Antelope Valley, yet Baca did nothing.

The problems identified by the Justice Department, like those in the jails, are fixable. They require better supervision, as well as a willingness to discipline, fire and prosecute deputies who violate rules and laws. And they demand a response from Baca.

Letter Tues 7-2-13 Daily Breeze

## Foster kids need more help from people in Torrance

Re "City's lack of foster families prompts action" (May 26) and "Residents answer plea for local foster parents" (June 13):

I read the article regarding foster care and the lack of available foster homes in Torrance. I also attended the informational meeting at the Torrance library last month. The information given to us was astounding.

In May, there were 55 cases of children taken out of homes in Torrance with not one open foster home available. These children wait in an office all day to hear if they will have housing for the night and at the end of the day are taken to a shelter in downtown L.A. to stay. This happens day after day, night after night.

I was struck by the fact that these are kids in our own neighborhoods, who attend school with our own children.

It was also disappointing to see that only 10 to 15 people attended the meeting. I understand the many obstacles preventing people from taking in a foster child, yet there are many other ways to help.

I implore people to consider opening their homes to these children, if even for emergency, temporary shelter.

Please visit http://dcfs.co.la.ca.us/shareyourheartla/other-ways/ for other ways to help these children who need us badly.

— *Jaimie Bowman, Torrance*