

Statement of Mayor Eric J. Brewer

On Wednesday, September 23, 2009, WKYC-TV3 broadcast a news story crafted by "investigator" Tom Meyer.

Meyer's story was based on unsubstantiated allegations that I was featured in photographs wearing women's articles of clothing and said my opponent in the September 29, 2009 Democratic mayoral primary, had no doubt the photographs were of me.

Meyer further alleged that "sources" told him the photographs were taken from my personal computer when I sent it to someone I knew for repairs.

I am demanding that WKYC-TV3 identify any and all sources who can confirm that the pictures broadcast in its newscast were actually of me, where they were taken, who took the pictures, when they were taken and the identity of the "alleged" person they claim I knew who copied them from my personal computer.

While I have been away from the office this week and with my family as we prepared for the death of my father, I do not recall receiving any telephone calls, email messages, letters or faxes from Tom Meyer seeking confirmation from me about the news story he crafted that WKYC chose to broadcast. Other journalists have called me, but not Tom Meyer. My father, Harold Pride Brewer, died yesterday at approximately 3.40 p.m. I have not spoken to any member of the media about the pictures. I had not seen any of the pictures until WKYC's broadcast yesterday evening. The only statement I have issued to the media is that my father either was ill or had died, and that me and my family wanted to be left alone. I thank those journalists who respected our wishes.

My opponent and his supporters, along with members of the East Cleveland police department, have circulated pictures they have claimed to be of me throughout the city, and have caused them to be placed in numerous resident homes. I was informed late last year that my opponent obtained the pictures before he was demoted and transferred out of Commissioner Peter Lawson Jones' office in February 2009, and was forced to resign on June 25. My source informed me that Commissioner Jones, one of his now deceased executive assistants and my opponent viewed the pictures when they were allegedly delivered to him by a former member of the East Cleveland Police Department.

Some of the photographs – I have heard but not seen – showed a male sex organ and fall within the legal definition of obscenity. Instead of enforcing state laws that prohibit the dissemination of obscene materials, I have been informed that members of the East Cleveland Police Department, along with the Chief of Police, were actively engaged in their dissemination.

The involvement of the East Cleveland Police Department is disturbing, especially in light of their endorsement of my opponent near the time I chastised the Chief of Police for statements he made during a police accountability town hall meeting I had scheduled with the NAACP and other civil rights leaders on September 9.

At that meeting the Chief of Police told the audience that members of the East Cleveland Police Department were "racists, bullies and cowards." It was the first time I had heard the statements as he has brought forth no disciplinary actions to me indicating that any police officer was a racist or a bully.

The September 9 meeting was attended by NAACP Executive Director Stanley Miller, Cleveland's Office of Professional Standards Executive Director Cassandra Bledsoe, Cleveland State University professor Ronnie Dunn, Public Defender Ron Tobik, Assistant Public Defender Anthony Kellon and East Cleveland Prosecuting Attorney Willa Hemmons.

I discussed the Chief of Police's statement with Mr. Miller and made immediate contact with the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Attorney's office. I was preparing to formally ask the U.S. Attorney's office to launch an investigation of the East Cleveland Police Department to ascertain whether or not the rights of suspects and citizens were being violated when my father's terminal illness became the focus of mine and my family's attention. Mr. Miller had verbally committed the NAACP's assistance in helping my administration coordinate activities with Professor Dunn, who is a noted expert on racial profiling, to help us evaluate the arrests of police officers.

I took the allegations seriously because of complaints I have been receiving from East Cleveland residents and others who had been arrested by police officers. They have complained that Black, White and Hispanic members of the East Cleveland Police Department have assaulted them while handcuffed, that they were being charged with crimes they have not committed, that they were being called niggers by white police officers, that they were being cursed at by Black, White and Hispanic police officers, that their property was being stolen and that their internal affairs complaints were not being investigated. There have been allegations that police officers have intentionally destroyed internal affairs complaints. We were proposing to introduce a Civilian Review Board to investigate police misconduct complaints during my next four years as mayor.

As I have learned of police misconduct allegations I have made several changes in police disciplinary policies. Notable among them is that I have stripped the Chief of Police and the police department's supervisory staff of the authority to investigate complaints against police officers, and no longer allow police officers to clear each other when they are wrong. All police and fire department disciplinary actions are now handled through the Human Resources and Law Departments.

Two weeks ago I ordered a notice to be posted at the entrance of all city buildings. That notice reminded all employees, but police officers specifically, that they could be terminated for cursing at residents. Within days of my decision, members of the Fraternal Order of Police met to endorse my opponent in an effort to return to the status quo. Unfortunately, he is so power thirsty that he's willing to sacrifice the civil rights of our city's residents for their endorsement.

Today I am also ordering that the supervisor of the Street Crimes Unit, Randy Hicks, be reassigned. I have received numerous complaints from residents and suspects about his arrests and conduct. Their concerns have been supported by the city's Municipal Court Judge. There will be a thorough evaluation of his arrests and the charges he has led to be filed against suspects.

In the nearly four years that I have been Mayor, I have fired a police chief for failing to investigate a detective whose husband was a convicted drug dealer, and who had used law enforcement computers to help him avoid being arrested in an undercover federal investigation. I fired the detective. I fired a police officer for wrecking a brand new \$30,000 police vehicle. I fired a police officer for pepper spraying three passengers of a car who had nothing to do with a driver who decided to flee. We prosecuted a police officer who resigned before I fired him for having sexual contact with a female prisoner, and I have removed a police officer from the SWAT unit for getting into an altercation with a man he once jailed while they were both drinking at a local bar. I fired a police officer who allowed her cousin to escape from jail, and who then filed a phony police complaint, workers compensation claim and grievance. It is understandable that East Cleveland's Fraternal Order of Police have endorsed my opponent. Many are rogue cops who know he is far too weak to hold them accountable.

I apologize to the residents of East Cleveland for the embarrassment my opponent's campaign tactics have caused our city. We have gone through so much over the years, and I have prided myself on keeping us out of the news.

While I am not and will not authenticate any of the pictures, since it appears as if they and the email my opponent has caused to be distributed are personal in nature, the fact is they are embarrassing to our city.

My opponent has shown the same lack of character in disseminating what appear to be private but obscene personal photographs as he has demonstrated by his lack of leadership or accomplishments on city council over the past four years.

This concludes the news conference. At the advice of legal counsel, I cannot accept any questions. I also have meetings scheduled for the remainder of the day with a funeral home director and ministers to discuss my father's burial arrangements.

A copy of this statement is available to the media.