



www.blackparentsworkshop.org
blackparentsworkshop@gmail.com
P.O. Box 762
Maplewood, NJ 07040
(201) 259-8375

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 24, 2017

Chief Cimino's Art of Deception

Releases 7/5/16 Video without OPRA Filing

(Maplewood, NJ) – We have learned that Maplewood Police Chief Robert J. Cimino has shown the videotape from the July 5, 2016 Independence Day fireworks incident to a community member who did not file an Open Public Records Act (OPRA) request for the recordings. Chief Cimino is obviously trying to cover his tracks and insulate himself from being held accountable for the actions of his rank-and-file officers, and himself. If the release of the videos did not require an OPRA filing, then the chief should have released the tapes when initially requested by the Village Green newspaper and Columbia High School teacher Thomas J. Whitaker.

We also learned that the chief attempted to corral clergy from Maplewood and South Orange to gain favor in light of the pending release of the audio and video recordings of July 5, 2016, per the unanimous decision of the Maplewood Township Council. This is a classic attempt to “divide and conquer” by Chief Cimino in the hope that he will defuse the anger in the Black community over the treatment of our children. **It will not.**

-more-

And that anger extends beyond the borders of Maplewood and South Orange and into the greater Essex County community and beyond, and rightly so given the incidents across the country where Black youth have been victims of mistreatment at the hands of police.

We find the chief's behavior to be consistent with the manner in which he has led the department, and why we have lost confidence in his leadership. Rather than operate in full transparency, Chief Cimino has instead opted to behave in a way that suggests he is well aware of the role he played in the debacle of July 5 2016 when Black children were demoralized and treated as criminals. The chief has used his authority to cover-up this incident and has demonstrated a lack of ethics in his role as the township's chief law enforcement officer.

Why hasn't Chief Cimino shared the video and audio tapes with the Village Green newspaper and Mr. Whitaker, the two parties that filed OPRA requests? **If he has no problem sharing the video, why didn't he release them to the Village Green and Mr. Whitaker months ago?** What did he actually share with the community member? He is now skulking and trying to identify residents who he believes will be sympathetic to his leadership or not fully understand the implications of the chain of events that resulted in the herding of Black children by the police, and officers marching our children to the outskirts of the town's border. **This is unacceptable.**

While the Essex County Prosecutor could not find evidence of criminal wrongdoing, that finding does not give the chief a pass or absolve him of wrongdoing. If the chief and the department were fully in the clear, why has the Township initiated an independent investigation through a third-party? Why have we heard that officers have already been disciplined as a result of their actions on the evening of July 5, 2016? Why is Chief Cimino now so suddenly willing to "share" documentation that has long been requested, and through the proper and formal channels, and to do so with those who never requested it?

It is this type of behavior on the part of Chief Cimino that causes us grave concerns for the welfare of Black children in Maplewood and South Orange during their interactions with the Maplewood Police Department. This is nothing short of misconduct and we question his fitness to lead our local police department.

###