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Condemning Sheriff Joe Arpaio Pardon: Joint Statement from Leading Civil Rights and Racial Justice Organizations

For 24 years, Sheriff Joe Arpaio ruled Maricopa County with an iron fist. His desire to embody a “tough” image and quest for fame led Arpaio to become one of the most famous and nefarious Sheriffs in America. Entrusted with the safety and well-being of the over four million residents of Maricopa County, Arpaio instead turned the county into a breeding ground of humiliation, intimidation and racial profiling. And, his jails became inhumane facilities operating under a culture of cruelty. Communities were terrified by his illegal and mismanaged immigration enforcement, inmates died in his jails, and he used his leverage as a “law and order” proponent to become a heavy hitter in federal politics and raise vast sums for his reelection campaigns. A Presidential pardon of Joe Arpaio is a grave miscarriage of justice.

Arpaio’s policing tactics were so brazen, that he was found guilty of racial profiling in 2013. Under the guise of immigration enforcement, not the primary mission for the Sheriff’s Department, Arpaio targeted and terrorized Latinx communities, wrongfully detaining many lawful citizens and demonizing undocumented individuals. Despite the injunction barring his illegitimate and racist activities, Arpaio continued with business as usual. In 2017, he was found in contempt of court for taking the “law” into his own hands and defying the court’s judgments. A Presidential pardon is a tacit endorsement of racist policing.

A Presidential pardon means that families living in jurisdictions with similar policing practices will be threatened and torn apart, simply because of their skin color. A Presidential pardon reinforces the administration’s agenda of criminalizing black and brown bodies, encouraging violence and mishandling of suspected offenders and paves the way for police and sheriff’s departments to impart their version of justice imbued with institutionalized racism. A Presidential pardon continues to convince the American public that President Trump upholds and validates white supremacy. A Presidential pardon clearly states that President Trump is not interested in healing the nation after a deadly white nationalist march, but instead desires to fan the flames of divisiveness.

Advancement Project, Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, Demos, Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Congress of American Indians, National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, National Urban League, PICO Network, Poverty & Race Research Action Council, Race Forward, and UnidosUS are a collaborative of 12 leading national racial equity anchor organizations (the Anchors) supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Together we work to promote racial equity, advance racial healing and ensure that all children, families and communities have opportunities to reach their full potential.

Below the Anchors aptly describe the impacts of a Presidential pardon of Joe Arpaio on communities of color, and the greater American populace.

Advancement Project:

"In pardoning Joe Arpaio, Trump further clarifies his twisted view of what America should look like," said Judith Browne Dianis, Executive Director of Advancement Project's national office. "He envisions a country where white nationalists get a nod from the White House and rogue cops are encouraged to abuse their power and profile people of color. This move signals to police that even if the courts find them guilty of racial profiling, they will have the backing of the president of the United States. This is yet another drastic moral and leadership failure from Trump."

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum:

"A pardon for Sheriff Joe Arpaio would perpetuate the systemic oppression and racial injustices faced by all communities of color. It would also give credence to those who do not believe that all men and women are created equal, and their beliefs that racial and ethnic minorities do not deserve equal respect and treatment. His unjust practices of racial profiling and detention should not be excused."

-- Kathy Ko Chin, President and CEO of the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum

Demos:

"While the wounds left by Charlottesville are still fresh in our minds, for President Trump to pardon yet another white supremacist – Sheriff Joe Arpaio – once again shows the world whose side he's on. And after a weekend filled with peaceful protests of Americans seeking to take the next step toward racial healing, it is clear that such an action is far from the will of the people. There is a recognition that we can be united as a nation and we can be better, but to do so we must stop excusing the actions of individuals like Arpaio, who seek to divide us and make us worse."

--Heather McGhee, President of Demos

Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society

"If President Trump pardons Joe Arpaio, not only will he continue to give comfort and cover to white nationalists, as he has done in recent days, but he will undermine our justice system as well while emboldening white-ethno nationalists. Sheriff Arpaio's practices and policies have not only been found to be a violation of fundamental constitutional and legal principles, but inconsistent with equality under law."

-- John A. Powell, Director of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at UC Berkeley

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People:

"Providing a presidential pardon should be reserved, solely for individuals who have shown remorse for their crimes. Joe Arpaio has neither exhibited remorse nor repentance for the cruel treatment and racial profiling of Latinos. When connected with President Trump's refusal to condemn neo-Nazis and White Supremacists, while embracing policies that remove civil rights protections against police brutality; pardoning Arpaio would unfortunately send a familiar yet dangerous message to communities of color."--

Derrick Johnson, NAACP interim President and CEO

National Congress of American Indians:

"The President pardoning Joe Arpaio would be an affront to this country's rule of law and equal protection under the law. The U.S. judicial system reached the conclusion that Mr. Arpaio violated the civil, human, and constitutional rights of people of color through racial profiling and detention without legal authority, and that he should pay the consequences. Its determination should stand. Mr. Arpaio should be made to answer for his crimes, not be absolved of them in an effort to further divide our country."

-- Jacqueline Pata, Executive Director, National Congress of American Indians

National Council of Asian Pacific Americans:

"Joe Arpaio represents the senseless demonization and terrorizing of immigrants and communities of color by hateful individuals who act outside the bounds of law, common sense, and public safety. Trump's announcement of a Presidential pardon once again demonstrates his alarming lack of moral leadership

and respect for constitutional law, at the expense of further dividing our country and sending a message of fear and intolerance. As an organization representing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, we oppose this pardon and double-down in the fight for a fair and just America for all."

-- Quyen Dinh, Chair of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)

National Urban League:

"We have for many years now referred to Joe Arpaio as a modern-day Bull Connor," National Urban League President and CEO Marc H. Morial said. "He's a throwback to the days when powerful and arrogant police officials openly blocked racial progress and defied federal law. He is the very personification of racial hostility and abuse of authority. A pardon from the President would be a slap in the face to the rule of law, and an irrefutable signal from the White House that racial justice simply isn't a concern."

--Marc Morial, President & CEO of the National Urban League

PICO National Network:

"After failing to condemn white supremacists, the KKK or neo-Nazis, President Trump now wants to pardon Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who was convicted of what federal officials described as [the worst racial profiling investigators had ever personally witnessed](#)," said PICO National Network Executive Director Scott Reed. "President Trump's willingness to grant immunity to those who terrorize community members based on the color of their skin is the latest piece of evidence suggesting he is unfit to serve as commander in chief. No one who favors love and justice can condone this President's actions."

Poverty & Race Research Action Council:

Our country is need of strong leadership and a vision of justice and unity for all Americans. A pardon for Sheriff Arpaio would flout the rule of law and affirm the hate filled rhetoric that is poisoning our country.

--Phil Tegeler, Executive Director of the Poverty & Race Research Action Council

Race Forward:

"As the rise of white nationalism grows more threatening with each day, we need our government — local, regional, state, and federal — to commit to dismantling structural racism wherever it exists. Joe Arpaio represents the worst of our criminal justice system, and has spent decades abusing his power and shattering families. To pardon Joe Arpaio would be to officially sanction xenophobia, violence, and white supremacy."

-- Glenn Harris, President of Race Forward and Publisher of Colorlines

UnidosUS

"Pardoning Joe Arpaio means endorsing bigotry and subverting justice. Arpaio made it his mission to harass, detain, and dehumanize Hispanics and immigrants just for the sake of it, for sport. Abuse of power on that scale flies in the face of our trust in American institutions. Charlottesville is the most recent, visible and tragic reminder of how Donald Trump's hateful rhetoric has emboldened white supremacists; by pardoning Arpaio Trump would inflict yet another wound on the fabric of our country."

-- Janet Murguía, President and CEO, UnidosUS (formerly NCLR)