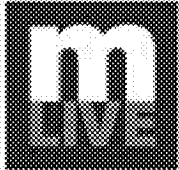

From: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Sent: Tuesday, March 03, 2015 3:20 PM
To: Agen, Jarrod (GOV); Murray, David (GOV); Hollins, Harvey (GOV); Muchmore, Dennis (GOV)
Cc: Wurfel, Sara (GOV)
Subject: FLINT JOURNAL : posted at 1 p.m. today.



Flint water almost like 'gas chambers for Jews,' says Sharpton group activist

Ron Fonger | rfonger1@mlive.com By **Ron Fonger** | rfonger1@mlive.com The Flint Journal

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The Rev. Charles Williams II speaks during a press conference for the National Action Network's coordinated response to the Trayvon Martin verdict in this 2013 Flint Journal file photo. Flint Journal file photo

FLINT -- The president of the Michigan chapter of Al Sharpton's National Action Network says Flint water is "almost as bad as gas chambers for Jews."

The Rev. Charles Williams II, speaking at a news conference and water giveaway in Flint on Monday, March 3, made the comment, which **appeared on television station WEYI-TV.**

The city of Flint issued a statement saying officials are "extremely disappointed" by the pastor's remarks, including his comparison of consumption of Flint's water to "genocide."

"We are extremely disappointed in Rev. Charles Williams' comments but certainly understand -- and share -- his frustration," the city statement says. "With that said, we find Rev. Williams' accusations are a gross misrepresentation of the Flint water condition and a wholly inappropriate comparison."

When contacted by The Flint Journal-MLive for comment today, Williams referred a reporter to his Twitter page.

Steven C. Low, executive director of the Flint Jewish Federation, called Williams' comments "an inappropriate invocation of the Holocaust" that "diminishes what survivors went through."

"Drawing such a comparison doesn't shed any light on the water problems," said Low, who called on Williams to apologize for his remarks.

The news conference Williams spoke at is one of several that have been held since Flint **notified customers in January** that the city is in violation of the Safe Drinking Water Act because of the level of total trihalomethanes (TTHM) in water tested during the last 10 months.

Outspoken **residents have since protested** the price, color, odor and overall quality of the water.

City officials have said Flint **water is safe for the vast majority** of the people to drink but warned in January notices that TTHM can pose increased health risks for those with a compromised immune system, the elderly, pregnant women and infants.

Testing during the **last two months has shown the city is meeting** all health and safety standards for water, and a consultant is expected to deliver a report this week, detailing recommendations for improving the quality of drinking water here.

Flint's water problems, including **multiple boil water advisories** last summer, bloomed after the city began using the Flint River as its drinking water source in April.

Prior to that switch, the city had used Lake Huron water, pre-treated and purchased from the city of Detroit.

The Flint statement says "some people may still have issues with discoloration, or do not like the taste of the (higher) mineral content river water (but) these do not amount to a safety issue."

Williams responded to a request for comment with a text message to The Journal, saying "quote my **Twitter feed**."

In a Twitter message, the pastor wrote, "I (hear) #flint city officials upset at my comparisons yesterday. They should use their anger 2 make sure resident aren't drinking death water."

In another message, Williams wrote, "Isn't it extreme to knowingly sell residents contaminated water people in #flint forced to buy liver disease water? What is that? #Genocide."

In addition to his work as president of NAN-Michigan, Williams is the pastor of King Solomon Baptist Church of Detroit.

This week was not Williams' first appearance in the spotlight in Flint.

In 2013, he demanded Hurley Medical Center officials answer charges that they granted a father's request that only white nurses care for his infant child.

The hospital eventually agreed to pay nearly \$200,000 in total to three black nurses who sued the hospital after claiming they were discriminated against when they weren't allowed to treat that white baby.

NAN describes itself as one of the leading civil rights organizations in the nation with chapters throughout the United States. The organization was founded in 1991 by Sharpton.

*Ron Fonger is a reporter for The Flint Journal. Contact him atrfonger1@mlive.com or 810-247-9963. Follow him on **Twitter**, **Facebook** or **Google+**.*

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