

# DAILY NEWS

## **Attorney General Sessions faces accusations of racism after honoring ‘Anglo-American heritage’ of policing**

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Attorney General Jeff Sessions made a racially-charged slip of the tongue Monday, telling a room full of police officials that sheriff's offices are "a critical part of the Anglo-American heritage of law enforcement."

The 71-year-old attorney general made the off-color remark while addressing the National Sheriffs Association winter meeting in Washington, D.C.

"Since our founding, the independently elected sheriff has been the people's protector, who keeps law enforcement close to and accountable to people through the elected process," Sessions told the assembled sheriffs. "The office of sheriff is a critical part of the Anglo-American heritage of law enforcement."

"We must never erode this historic office," Sessions added.

The "Anglo-American heritage" reference raised some eyebrows, especially considering previous accusations of racism that Sessions has faced.

"Under any other administration, I'd call this an innocuous historical footnote; in the current context, my 'benefit of the doubt' reserves are pretty well depleted," tweeted Julian Sanchez, a senior fellow at the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute.

Sessions' comment appears to have been made off-the-cuff, as a written version of his remarks reveals that he was supposed to say, "The sheriff is a critical part of our legal heritage."

Ian Prior, a spokesman for the Justice Department, pushed back against suggestions that Sessions' remark carried racial undertones.

"As most law students learn in the first week of their first year, Anglo-American law — also known as the common law — is a shared legal heritage between England and America," Prior told the Daily News in a statement. "Before reporters sloppily imply nefarious meaning behind the term, we would suggest that they read any number of the Supreme Court opinions that use the term."

Prior pointed to a number of cases in which the phrase "Anglo-American law" has been used by legal scholars. But in most of those cases, the phrase was typically used in a legal context, not in a law enforcement context.

Sessions faced an avalanche of scrutiny before he was approved as attorney general by the Senate over racist remarks he allegedly made decades ago.

Sessions was once denied a federal judgeship in his native Alabama over allegations that he had referred to a black co-worker as "boy." He was also once accused of joking that he had no problem with the KKK until he learned that some of its members smoked marijuana.