

Todd-Phillips Children's Home Inc.

of the
WOLVERINE STATE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CONVENTION, Inc.
1561 Webb Street
Detroit, Michigan 48206
Phone 866-8787 - Phone 866-8077

REV. C. H. NICKS, Chairman
Board of Trustees

MR. CHARLES E. PENN
Executive Director

December 13, 1972

Commissioner John Nichols
Detroit Police Department
1300 Beaubien
Detroit, Michigan

Dear Commissioner Nichols:

I consider it of utmost importance at this time that I correspond directly with you in the interest of protection of the general public and specifically, the safety and welfare of the youngsters of this agency as it relates to your Police Department.

On Monday, December 10, 1972 at approximately 12:00 noon, four plain clothes Police Officers whom we believe to be attached to your STRESS Unit, without warning, reason or provocation invaded the property of this agency and accosted at gunpoint, one of our young residents. One of the officers threatened to shoot him on the spot if he made any kind of move. Additionally, racial indignities were used by the officers in addressing the boy. The incident occurred at the front entrance to our building and was witnessed by several other employees and residents of this agency.

As the officers were leading the boy to their car, I approached them and identified myself as Director of the agency and guardian of the boy. Initially, the officers totally refused to recognize me or answer my question as to the nature of the problem. Instead, they continued to make abusive remarks indicating their total disregard of the rights of black people. One of the officers in particular repeated several times that he would stop a black person at anytime he felt he wanted to because black people were shooting white police officers. Finally, after having taken this verbal harrassment for about 10 minutes, I was given an answer to my question by one officer who appeared to be in command of the group. He indicated that the boy had something protruding from his back pocket which prompted them to act. As it turned out, the item was an Afro comb, which incidentally is carried in the back pockets of about nine of every ten black boys who wear Afro hair styles.

In my view, the officers had no legal right to accost the boy in the first place as he was minding his own business and had done nothing wrong. They added insult to injury when they continued their harrassment after finding that the item in the boy's pocket was a comb and not a weapon as they may have thought. At no time did they offer apologies for their action but drove away still making abusive remarks. The officers were

iding in a red Plymouth Fury bearing license number C7J-867.

I have filed a complaint with the Citizen's Complaint Bureau and fully intend to file additional complaints with any and all other organizations concerned with Police conduct toward the public. I shudder to think of what these officers might have done to this boy in a situation where there would have been no other witnesses to their actions. He most likely would have been another death statistic for no other reason than that he is black.

Up to this point, I have been one who looked favorably upon STRESS but now, after witnessing a STRESS group in operation, I must join the ranks of many others in the black community who have insisted that it be abolished. Looking at the overall spectrum, I cannot conclude that the activities of the four officers involved in this incident is not representative of a significant number of officers comprising the overall STRESS operation.

I believe that this communication and the incident described therein warrant your personal attention and response. I shall expect to hear from you.

Very truly yours,

Charles E. Penn
Charles E. Penn, Director

CEP/mvp

cc:

Roman Gribbs, Mayor
City of Detroit

Mr. Mel Ravitz, President, Common Council

Mr. Nicholas Hood, Common Council

Mr. Ernest Brown, Common Council

Mrs. Erma Henderson, Common Council

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REV. C. H. NICKS, Chairman
Board of Trustees

MR. CHARLES E. PENN
Executive Director

March 5, 1973

Mr. John F. Nichols
Commissioner of Police
City of Detroit
1300 Beaubien
Detroit, Michigan

Dear Commissioner Nichols:

On December 12, 1972, Mr. Charles Penn, Director of the Todd-Phillips Children's Home, wrote you regarding an incident occurring on December 11, involving four officers of your STRESS Unit and a young resident of the Home. Mr. Penn's letter alleged that the officers had unjustly abused the young resident by drawing their guns on him, threatening to shoot him and subjected him to vicious verbal harrassment with racial connotations. The incident occurred at the front door entrance to the Home and was witnessed by several other youngsters and employees.

Mr. Penn further alleges that the officers failed to respond to his inquiry or recognize him when he appeared on the scene and identified himself as the Director of the Home. His questions were ignored for several minutes during which he, himself, was subjected to verbal abuse. Finally one officer indicated that the boy had been stopped because of an object protruding from his rear pocket which turned out to be an Afro comb. Even with this knowledge, the officers continued their harrassment and left the scene without apology for their actions.

Subsequent to Mr. Penn's letter and the complaint filed with the Citizen's Complaint Bureau, Sergeant William Wurm, Badge #34 of the Precinct Support Unit and another unidentified officer, visited the Todd-Phillips Home on December 21 and interviewed Mr. Penn, his wife, secretary of the Home and the resident involved. They later interviewed two other employees by telephone. A copy of their report was forwarded to us by Councilman Mel Ravitz. The report absolves the officers of any wrong-doing and is diametrically opposed to the views expressed by the complainants. Further, the report does not reflect any interrogation of the officers involved. The report only makes reference to the officer's activity log sheet as the source of information from which conclusions were drawn. The report is obviously biased and deliberately worded in such a manner as to discredit the complainants and absolve the officers.

On January 26, 1973 Mr. Penn wrote to Councilman Ravitz; copy to you and several other Councilmen expressing our continuing concerns and dissatisfaction with the handling of this case by you and your Department. We requested a meeting with you, members of Council and members of the Board of Trustees of the Todd-Phillips Home. Councilman Ravitz's reply, dated February 6, indicates that members of Council are willing to accept. A copy of his letter to you, dated February 6, inquiring as to your willing-

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...ss, was attached. As of this date, however, no further response has been received and we can only conclude that you have no interest in a cooperative effort toward resolving our concerns.

We believe that every good effort has been made by this organization to deal with this problem without public fanfare. We desire to promote good police-community relations however, we also have a responsibility to protect the interests of the children entrusted to our care. For this, and other reasons, we cannot allow this matter to go unresolved. This incident directly affects not only the individuals directly involved, but also involves over 160 Baptist ministers and over a half million people in their congregations who have a direct relationship with the Todd-Phillips Home as founders and continuing sponsors.

We are making this final effort toward resolving this problem within an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation and urge you to give more than just passing interest to our concerns.

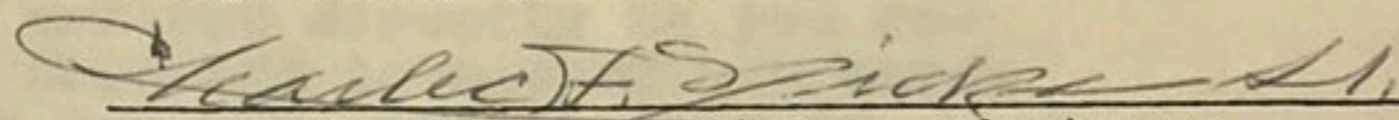
We respectfully request your compliance with our request for a meeting as communicated to you by Councilman Ravitz in his February 6 letter and shall expect a reply from you to this communication within the next several days.

Very truly yours,

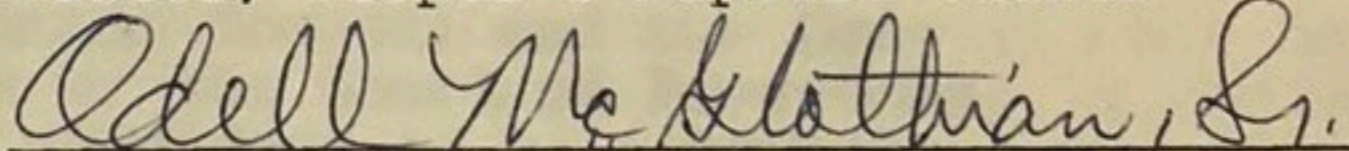
cc:

Roman Gribbs, Mayor
City of Detroit

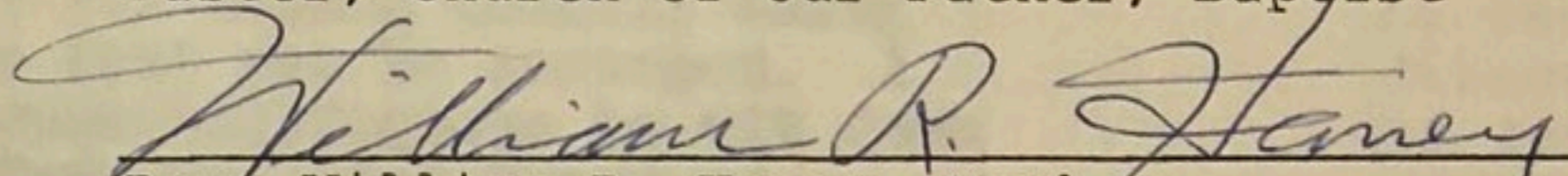
Councilman Mel Ravitz
Councilman Ernest Brown
Councilman Nicholas Hood
Councilwoman Erma Henderson



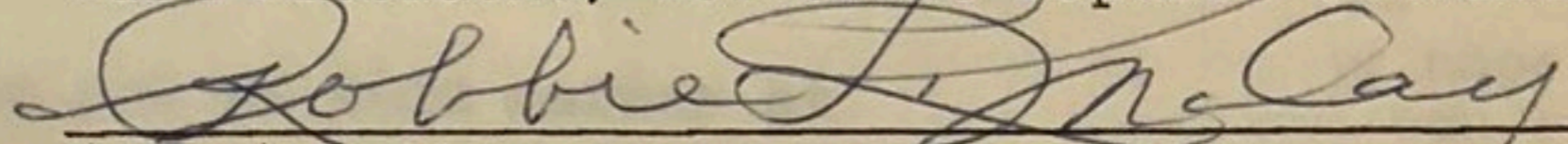
Rev. Charles H. Nicks, Chairman
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Wolverine Convention
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Staff Writer, Michigan Chronicle