

Civil Rights Commission

MEMORANDUM

DATE March 13, 1973

TO: Don Bauder, Acting Director
Community Services

FROM: Melvin E. Byrd, Director
Police-Community Relations

SUBJECT: UNITED BLACK COALITION MEETING

On Saturday, March 3, I attended a meeting of the United Black Coalition held at the Gabriel Richard Building in Detroit. Present were approximately 50 black citizens representing various community organizations. The meeting was chaired by UBC co-chairmen Elliott Hall Esq. (President of NAACP) and Samuel Simpson, Esq. (President of Wolverine Bar Association).

The purpose of this meeting was to hear comments pertaining to STRESS, the one-man grand jury and police-community relations in general from the black state legislators of Detroit. The black state legislators present were Senator Arthur Cartwright and Representatives James Bradley, Daisy Elliott, David Holmes, Alma Stallworth and Jackie Vaughn III. None of the legislators mentioned STRESS. The discussion opened on the subject of a one man grand jury vs. the seventeen man grand jury. Rep. Vaughn states that he supports the concept of a one man grand jury as suggested by Judges George Crockett and John Murphy of Records Court. Senator Cartwright voiced his opposition to the one man grand jury because of the extensive power bestowed on the jurist. He cited the Homer Ferguson case (1933-34-35) as flagrant abuse of power by a one man jury.

Rep. Vaughn discussed stronger accountability of black state and city (Common Councilmen) legislators. He cautioned black legislators about attending dinner or cocktail parties sponsored by anti-black organizations such as the DPOA. He alleged that some legislators are making statements and then denying or altering the statement in another meeting. There was agreement among the black legislators that they should be able to make an honest statement and support it. Ron Scott, the only paid staff person of UBC stated that Councilman Brown attended a previous UBC meeting and stated that STRESS should be abolished. Scott further alleged that Councilman Brown, at a subsequent Common Council meeting, voted in favor of STRESS. This brought surprise and comments about accountability but nothing else. Rep. Stallworth reviewed some problems her constituents are having with the police in the 12th precinct. She related the shooting death of a mentally retarded girl three weeks ago and her inability to see Mayor Gribbs regarding the police handling of this incident. She reported that the police were indifferent to her and the Mayor refused to see her, delegating Walter Greene to speak to her.

She also touched on the matter of newspapers giving incorrect information.

The meeting diverted from one issue to another and there were no minutes of previous meetings. The meeting did not get to any substantive data until some of the legislators were focused and Patrolman Ira Samuels of the Detroit Police Department and President of the Guardians, reported some difficulty which the black officers of the Highland Park Police Department were encountering. He introduced Highland Park patrolman Titus McClary who was spokesman for the nine black Highland Park police officers. Patrolman McClary stated that the city administration of Highland Park was perpetuating a white police force by discriminating against the black officers. Several specific charges were made including: allowing white officers to live outside of the City of Highland Park, in violation of the City Charter; making no effort to recruit blacks, including women for the force and with using employment exams "designed to eliminate blacks".

There were questions and comments about how such a situation as this could exist in a mostly black city, with a black mayor (Robert Blackwell) and a majority of blacks on the City Council (3 out of 5). The officers reported that the Mayor and Police Chief Donald Ashcroft have ignored their problems and refuse to meet with them. The officers state they will hold a press conference on this matter, Monday, March 5 at 1:00 p.m. at the Caucus Club in Highland Park and request the support and presence of everyone.

There was empathy for the officers and expressions of support from everyone. Senator Cartwright asked if they had contacted the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and Pat. McClary said no, after which Senator Cartwright stated that "you should contact them, they're always around when they want money but they aren't around when you need them." I interjected that I, a Commission representative, was present and would be present at the press conference. I further stated that Commission staff participate in many community issues which the Senator may not be aware of. Senator Cartwright acknowledged my presence and backed off in his attack on the Commission.

Patrolman John Mattox stated that they didn't want to file any complaints with anyone yet until they assess the results of their press conference. He reported that they just wanted a large audience to support them at the conference.

Prior to adjournment, Stu House, Administrative Assistant to Congressman Conyers, commented on the funeral of Mark Bethune, which is being held today, and stated that he has a chronology of STRESS events from December 4, 1972 through February 27, 1973. He distributed copies to UBC members (copy attached).

lmr

cc: E. Chastang
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