

January 26, 1967

MEMORANDUM TO: Bush

FROM: McGowan

SUBJECT: Chronology of the Howard King Case Involving Officers  
Officers Parker and Johnson

Background

9/12/65

At approximately 5:20 p.m., Howard King, Henry Jackson, Harry Traylor and Lonnie Stewart were playing football in the street at Pine and Vermont. The boys refused to let traffic through the street; and when two police officers drove up and asked why they did not play on the playground which was adjacent to the street, one of the boys replied "that is a baseball diamond, we are playing football." The officers then called the boy to the car and asked him for some identification. The boy refused to give the officer the identification and asked why he wanted it. The officer then ordered the boy to get into the car; he refused, and the officer got out to put him in. They began fighting, and the other three boys joined in along with the second officer. One of the officers subsequently called for help, and the boys were subdued and placed under arrest.

In route to the 2nd Precinct, Howard King and Henry Jackson were reported beaten by the officers. When they arrived at the Precinct, Jackson was again beaten by the officers and kicked and stomped before they took him inside. All four boys were taken inside the Precinct and supposedly placed in the bull pen where they were again beaten, kicked and stomped by five or six police officers. All of the boys, except Howard King, were eventually taken out of the bull pen. Two other officers were brought into the pen where King was, and told when they saw him on the street they should shoot him.

Henry Jackson was bound over for trial in Judge Gillis' court room for interfering with and obstructing a police officer in the performance of his duty. All three boys were held for several hours without their parents being notified that they were in jail. Three of the boys are juveniles; and reportedly when the parents inquired at the precinct station, they were told the boys were not there when actually they were still there.

The officers' reports do not include any mention of subsequent beatings other than the original fight on the street, which they say was started by the boys, and that they used only what force was necessary to place them under arrest. All four boys filed complaints with the Citizen Complaint Bureau and the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.

Further Developments

9/13/65

The Prosecutor's office filed a warrant request for three of the boys involved and a waiver request to the Wayne County Juvenile Court for the fourth boy.

9/16/65

Howard King, Henry Jackson, Harry Traylor and Lonnie Stewart appeared at the offices of the Citizen Complaint Bureau and filed a formal complaint.

9/20/65

The four boys appeared at the offices of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and filed a formal complaint.

9/21/65

Tom Peloso, Chief of the Compliance Division of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, informed Police Commissioner Girardin that a complaint would be filed with the MCRC and that the conciliation process with the CCB would begin.

9/22/65

Commissioner Girardin sent the letter of referral from the MCRC to the CCB. The case was assigned to Detective Rhodes for investigation.

10/19/65

Patrolman Johnson made a statement at the precinct declaring that he had witnessed no injury of prisoners on the street or in the precinct.

10/21/65

Patrolman Johnson was interviewed at the CCB offices where he made a very evasive statement about the case and the injury to Howard King.

3/15/66

The CCB preliminary investigation was completed and a summarization done by the commanding officer of CCB which recommended that no disciplinary action be taken in the case against any officer, except Patrolman Parker. The case was then sent to Commissioner Girardin.

3/21/66

Commissioner Girardin returned the case to the CCB with the statement that he could not accept the testimony of Patrolman Johnson, that the statements made by Patrolman Johnson were too vague and no questions had really been answered. Commissioner Girardin requested that the CCB re-interview Patrolman Johnson, (at this point, Detective Rhodes had resigned from the CCB, and the case was assigned to Detective Jackson).

4/13/66

Patrolman Johnson was interviewed, and he admitted seeing Howard King injured on the street through unnecessary actions by Patrolman Parker and also injuries to King in the 2nd Precinct garage again through unnecessary actions of Patrolman Parker.

4/25/66

The MCRC held a hearing on the case and indicated that officers other than Parker would be involved in any disciplinary action taken by the department. They implicated 12 men--four scout car teams (a total of eight men), one Sergeant, one Lieutenant, and two Detectives.

5/27/66

A meeting was held between Commissioner Girardin, Administrative Assistant, Hubert Locke, Inspector Harge, Lorenzo Freeman of WCO, and representatives from the CCB to discuss the case.

6/8/66

The MCRC re-interviewed officers in the case.

7/7/66

Conciliation was held between the police department and the MCRC. The MCRC recommended firing Patrolman Parker but subsequently settled for six months suspension. The MCRC also recommended, at this time, that appropriate action be taken against the other 11 men involved in the case.

10/11/66

Trial Board proceedings began for Patrolman Parker and were held on the following days: October 12, 13, 14, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28.

10/31/66

Patrolman Parker was suspended from the police department for six months.

12/22/66

The CCR Subcommittee on Police Community Relations expressed concern at the monthly meeting of the CCR about the length of time it had taken the CCB to complete its investigation of the King case. The Subcommittee felt at that time that the delay between the incident and the CCB completed investigation contributed to community tension and distrust of the police department.

1/12/67

In action taken as a result of a Commissioner's hearing, Patrolman Johnson was ordered to lose 15 leave days for making false statements to superior officers; and another officer in the case, Patrolman Riggs, was ordered to forfeit five leave days for not protecting King.

1/13/67

The Subcommittee on Police Community Relations met with Commissioner Girardin. One of the agenda items was the Howard King case.

Commissioner Girardin informed the Subcommittee that in the King case, Officer Parker received six months suspension in addition to the time he had already lost while awaiting a trial board hearing. He said the department hoped that Parker does not return to the department because of the difficulty they will have in placing him. There is a shortage of non-public contact positions, and Parker cannot be placed in any other kind. The department had dealt with some of the other officers in the case; one officer lost five leave days, two officers lost ten leave days, and they have five more officers to deal with, (staff learned subsequent to the meeting that Officer Johnson, the Negro officer involved, lost 15 leave days for giving conflicting stories to the CCB).

Commissioner Girardin said that Officer Johnson posed a special problem in the disposition of the case because of the change in his testimony and the subsequent difficulty in assigning him in the department after the incident. He also said that the department hoped that the In-Service Training Program will reduce such incidents as the King case. This can be anticipated, he said, in view of the department of officers who took part in the previous program.

1/23/67

Marks initiated a CCR review of the Johnson case.

1/24/67

Marks' review of the case led him to question the action taken by the Commissioner regarding the disciplinary action taken against Patrolman Johnson. Commissioner Girardin indicated that there might be basis for a review and that the previous actions taken might not have been in the best interests of justice. The Commissioner also informed Mr. Marks that at the time the disciplinary action was taken against Patrolman Johnson, he was informed that he had ten days in which he could appeal the disciplinary action to a trial board.

1/24/67

Patrolman Johnson was convinced that it would be to his best interest to file an appeal for a trial board hearing.

1/24/67

The Michigan Chronicle published an article that included an interview from Nelson Jack Edwards, a CCR Commissioner, in which Mr. Edwards called for a complete investigation of the King case by the CCR and described the Commissioner's action against Patrolman Parker as being "harsh and ill-considered".

1/25/67

Commissioner Girardin issued a statement to the press that Patrolman Johnson had been granted a trial board hearing to appeal previous disciplinary action and that a date for this hearing would be set within the next ten days.