

CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

MEMORANDUM

DATE September 24, 1971

TO: Wilma H. Bledsoe, Director of Community Services

FROM: Edward J. Chastang, Jr., ^{EJC} Detroit Regional Manager

SUBJECT: Summary of Events Related to the Protest Rally and the President's Visit

OBSERVATION OF PROTEST MARCH BEGINNING AT CASS PARK

At noon, September 23, 1971, there were approximately 700 people at Cass Park preparing for the march in protest to the Attica Massacre, the killing of blacks by the Detroit Police Department's STRESS Unit and the discriminatory treatment of blacks in general. As you know, our staff members were assigned to cover the various activities of the day. The march was sponsored by the State of Emergency Committee (flyer attached). The crowd of approximately 700 at noon was predominately black. Also present were approximately 20 whites, two white priests and three black nuns. The age range of the majority of the group was from 17 to 25 years (80% to 90% of the total). There were three white and one black scooter patrolmen at the Park and this number increased as the march proceeded.

At the Park, members of the Black Panther Party were selling papers and distributing flags. There were about thirty small blue flags with a black panther on it and "power to the people," printed on it when the march began. This number increased as the size increased. When the march started, about 12:25 p.m., the size of the group had increased to about one thousand. Three standard bearers joined the march at Cass and Temple. Two had the large Red, Black and Green Flags, one had the Malcolm X Community College Flag - Black with Red-Black and Green in the upper left corner with gold braid trim and MXCC across the middle.

Some of the signs being carried read:

Keep Racist Police Out of the Community
Ford Local 600 - listing discrimination, harassment, etc.
End Genocide
End STRESS
Stop the State
End the State
Buck and Craig - Who's next
Support Inmates
Basta Ya!
Organize Struggle

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There were two signs about Motown policies.

At the Park and along the march, the Progressive Labor Party members were selling their papers and handing out flyers about a demonstration at 6:00 p.m. to start at the City-County Building and march to Cobo Hall.

The march was quiet (as much as possible for the size) and orderly. The Marshals did an exemplary job.

There were no policemen controlling traffic from Cass and Temple (1) until Elizabeth and Woodward. The scooter patrolmen stayed with the march but from Elizabeth there were policemen holding traffic for the marchers.

By the time the march arrived at the county jail, the Sheriff's office estimated the number of marchers at five thousand which appeared to be a high estimate. The marchers went around the jail three times and shouted "Stop STRESS." From there, the march continued down Gratiot to Woodward Avenue and ended at Kennedy Square.

An observation of those on the sidewalk watching the marchers showed disbelief, fear, bewilderment, ~~disgust and little~~ support from them. The sidewalk watchers were 95% white.

OBSERVATION OF THE PROTEST RALLY AT KENNEDY SQUARE ON 9-23-71

The protest rally of black students and workers at Kennedy Square was called to protest the Attica Prison Massacre, killings of blacks by the "STRESS" unit of the Detroit Police Department and general injustices to all blacks, both past and present.

A. Police Activity and Reaction:

There were few police in evidence at the rally. At least five plainclothes men gathered at the fringes of the crowd. No noticeable instances of either harassment or arrests. Members of the black police officers association, the Guardians, were very obvious. They, along with others, wore yellow armbands and assisted in crowd control.

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- B. The participating groups obviously included the Panthers, S.C.L.C., Guardians, Communist Party, Michigan Chronicle (Jim Ingram) and the Black Ministers Association. No opposing groups appeared to be present.
- C. The age of the crowd appeared to be mostly teenagers and young or middle twenties. Few older people were present other than participants in the speeches. The size of the crowd was smaller than anticipated. Estimate of the size of the crowd ranged as high as 2,000.
- D. Tension level appeared to be minimal.

Substance of Speeches:

Among the speakers were Jim Ingram of the Michigan Chronicle and Dr. Carl Young of S.C.L.C.; Mrs. Buck and Mrs. Mitchell, mothers of two boys killed in the STRESS incident; Mrs. Adrian Davis, concerning the Wayne County Jail problem, a minister from St. Paul A.M.E. Zion Church concerning involved black clergy; Bill Audry of N.A.A.C.P.; one of the directors of the Republic of New Africa; Tom Moses of the "Guardians." Attorney Kenneth Cockrel acted as Master of Ceremonies.

The essence of the speeches concerned ill treatment to all black persons at both Attica Prison and Wayne County Jail as well as indignities suffered by blacks in general. The mothers of the black youths killed by the STRESS officer basically expressed thanks for the concerns toward their sons. Mrs. Davis discussed in detail, the problems at the County Jail and the "black" sheriff's lack of concern. The representation from R.N.A., N.A.A.C.P. and the Black Clergy did little more than show that they were there. Tom Moses of the Guardians expressed concerns about the "STRESS" unit and its basically white composition.

The rally was orderly, few of the speeches gained any overt degree of spontaneous reaction other than a few "right on" and comments of "black power." It appears that some of the desired impact was lost in the speeches because of a poor sound system.

The crowd appeared somewhat disappointed when the last speaker had finished, a few milled around, others left the Square. No one appeared too enthusiastic.