

u n i t e d c o m m u n i t y

UNICOM

8815 puritan avenue

863-5353 - 4

- detroit, michigan 48238

November 22, 1971

Mel Ravitz
City County Bldg. 13th Floor
2 Woodward
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Dear Councilman,

I am writing to you regards to a near-tragic incident that occurred at UNICOM (United Community), Friday November 12, 1971, in which four youths, belonging to UNICOM's Drill Team, and a UNICOM Staff member were held at gunpoint while police officers rummaged through the office kicking doors open and searching desk drawers.

Enclosed in this letter you will find statements from the youths concerning the incident.

At the time of the incident the youths were the only persons in the office, while a fund-raising dance was in process across the street.

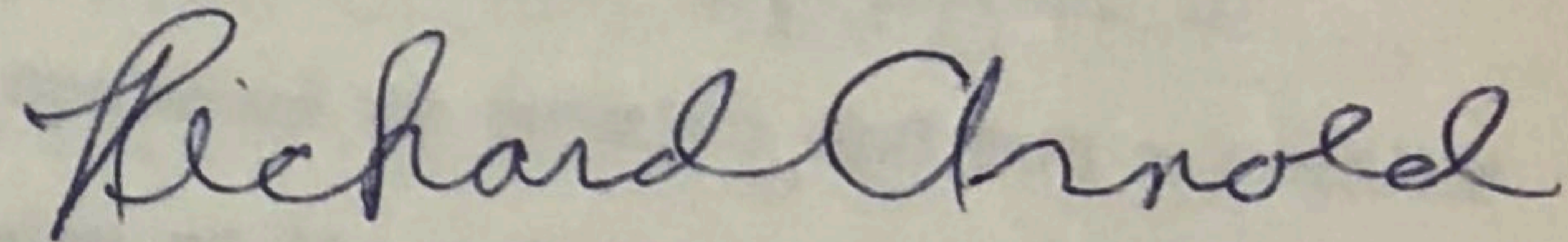
When they were being held at gunpoint, they were trying to explain to the police officers that they, (1) were members of UNICOM (2) had I.D. to prove it (3) showed them the key to the door. They were told that one of the youths had a gun, and that they were committing a B & E.

We at UNICOM, the parents of the youths, and the Black community vehemently protest this blatant act of repression by the Detroit Police Dept. Which is typical of the treatment that Blacks have suffered for centuries at the hand of "Racist Oppressors".

We call upon, as a "Servant of the People" to investigate this incident thoroughly and to find out why (1) above and beyond the necessary amount of force and guns was displayed (2) Blacks youths working in the best interest of the community have to be harrassed (3) the youths were told that they were being investigated for B & E and COW and the police report says investigation of B & E (4) Why a UNICOM Staff member, whom identified himself as such, was held at gunpoint when he identified the youth in question (5) Why didn't Inspector Brown know anything about the incident (he claims) until I informed him Friday, November 19, 7 days later?

We feel that you must look into these things to prevent such blatant invasions of democracy in the future.

Sincerely yours,



Richard Arnold
Youth Director, UNICOM

Report of Incident Between Police and Unicom Personnel

At 8:55 p.m. on Friday, November 12, 1971, approximately 20 policemen in uniforms and plain clothes, armed with machine guns, sawed-off shotguns and rifles, converged on the offices of UNICOM, a community organization located at 8815 Puritan.

Black youths on the premises, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years of age, were manhandled and held at gunpoint while the premises were searched and the entire area surrounded. Following are reports from persons directly involved in the confrontation:

Eldon Brown: I heard a knock at the door at about 8:55. I thought it was Tree, so I went to the door and yelled out, "we can't have any company" since I thought maybe Tree was coming around to check our security measures. After repeating this a couple of times, I opened the door. A policeman in plain clothes flashed a light in my face, snatched me outside and put a machine gun on me. He threw me up against the window of the building. He asked me who was inside and I told him the rest of the drill team. Then he yelled, "OK, Joe" and another cop with a rifle came up. They were getting ready to enter the building when Leonard Liggins drove up, got out of his car and asked what was going on. The cop said, "what's it to you?" and Leonard told him, "I work here." So they snatched him and threw him up against the building too. Then the police went inside, there were lots of them by this time. I think about 20 cops in all.

Marshall Brown: Marshall was standing next to the sewing machine in the back, next to the doorway when a policeman with a pulled gun ordered him to halt.

Roderick Talton: When I heard the knock at the door, I thought it was Tree so I followed Eldon to the door. By this time, he opened the door but I

couldn't see anybody. When I got to the door I saw the end of a gun sticking out and, still thinking it was Tree trying to trick us, I went into a karate stand and prepared to deal with the weapon. The moment I turned to my left the cop put the gun right in my stomach. I froze.

Jerry Hunter: I was ~~in~~ the back putting on my uniform and the next thing I knew Marshall was standing in the doorway with his hands in the air, whispering something to me out of the side of his mouth; but I couldn't understand what he was saying. Then I was this policeman with a machine gun held on Marshall. So I went up to him and told him that this was our center and that I had the keys. He didn't pay any attention, so I kept repeating this to each policeman. But they were busy rushing through the offices, kicking in doors, going out the back, etc. Finally, I heard one of them say, "I guess we got the wrong place". After a few more minutes they all pulled up and left.

The reason for the police activity was given by one officer as being the fact they had received a radio call to the effect that someone had reported person or persons were armed. Follow-up investigation by Unicom personnel has disclosed that there was indeed such a call transmitted through the police department, but nothing is known about the caller.