

✓ F Police Dept

November 16, 1981

Mrs. Elizabeth Burnett
93 E. Savannah
Detroit, Michigan 48203

Dear Mrs. Burnett:

I am enclosing a copy of the response we received from Police Deputy Chief James Bannon regarding the situation you brought to our attention.

If there is any way that I can assist you at any time in the future, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Maryann Mahaffey, ACSW

MM:fm

Enc.

cc - w/enc.: Linda Dortch
Interim House
2230 Witherell 48201



Department of Police
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Coleman A. Young, Mayor
City of Detroit

September 15, 1981

Maryann Mahaffey
Council President Pro Tem
The City Council
City-County Building
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Councilperson Mahaffey:

I directed Commander John Henry, of the Eleventh Precinct, to conduct an investigation into the allegations of improper police treatment of Mrs. Elizabeth Burnett, of 93 E. Savannah.


This investigation disclosed that the officers involved in this domestic disturbance elected not to arrest the complainant's husband under the provisions of the spouse abuse statute. The officers felt that they did not have reasonable cause to believe that an assault and battery or aggravated assault had taken place because there were no visible signs that an assault was apparent.

The investigation further disclosed that the complainant did not feel threatened by or seek the arrest of her spouse. She merely requested the police officers to remove her husband from the house.

The allegation of verbal abuse could not be substantiated. All involved officers were questioned and deny making any inappropriate remarks to Mrs. Burnett.

It is my recommendation, due to the lack of disinterested witnesses to validate Mrs. Burnett's charges, that this matter be closed. However, be assured that I will continue to monitor all incidents involving domestic violence and take the appropriate action whenever I detect any improprieties on the part of police officers in handling this sensitive area.

Sincerely,


JAMES BANNON
Executive Deputy Chief

PRESIDENT PRO-TEM

SEP 21 1981

JB/s

MARYANN MAHAFFEY



Department of Police
Detroit, Michigan 48226

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PRESIDENT PRO-TEM

SEP 21 1981

JAMES BANNON
Executive Deputy Chief

JB/s

MARYANN MAHAFFEY

City of Detroit

CITY COUNCIL

MARYANN MAHAFFEY
PRESIDENT PRO TEM

July 30, 1981

Mr. James Bannon
Executive Deputy Chief
Detroit Police Department
1300 Beaubien Street
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Dear Chief Bannon:

I am writing to you because I am very disturbed by a report I received last week on the manner in which a victim of domestic violence was treated by officers from the Eleventh (11th) Precinct. Unfortunately, the woman did not obtain the names or badge numbers of the several officers with whom she had contact, but I will describe the incidents with the dates and approximate time.

On July 22, at 6:30 P.M., Ms. Elizabeth Burnett of 93 E. Savannah called the police for assistance as her husband had beaten her after she refused to give him her money. She was asked to come to the police station and file a report. She went to the police station at 7:30 P.M. and was told that because they are married, her money is his money, her house is his house, and he has every right to her possessions. She was told to go home and if he came back and started trouble, to call again. When she protested the statement, "what's hers is his", she was told to shut up or she'd be behind bars.

When she returned home, she found her husband there with her four children. He would not let her in to get the children. She called 911 several times and finally went back to the precinct at 4:30 A.M. on July 23. She was told that they knew she'd been calling 911. The lieutenant on duty told her if he had any money, she wouldn't be there (at the police station) and she should go home and butter-up her husband so he'll be nice. The other officers laughed at her, told her she made her bed and has to lay in it, that she knew he was Black (she's white) and should have known better, and she should have divorced him a long time ago or never married. They also repeated what was told to her earlier--what's hers is his. Incidentally, she informed the officers that the police had a warrant out for her husband's arrest for traffic violations. When she continued to press the issue of whether something could be done, they told her she could talk to a detective at 8:30 in the morning, but that she could not wait there at the station for him.

Ms. Burnett spoke to a detective at about 9:30 A.M. on July 23rd and was told basically the same thing about her husband's rights to her possessions, but that he did not have the right to keep her out of the house. However, she was also told that the police would not assist her in gaining entrance into the house. The detective told her had she been beaten to the point of being visibly injured, they could do something. (She was shoved and thrown

around by her husband but there were no marks.) She was told that she should have gotten a divorce a long time ago so she wouldn't be in this situation.

Ms. Burnett was successful in getting her children, with the help of in-laws, and went to a domestic violence shelter. She is now back home, has initiated divorce proceedings, and has a restraining order on her husband. I understand that police officers can make an arrest when they have reason to believe an assault has occurred and perhaps it was the judgment of the officers who made the initial investigation that they did not have sufficient evidence. However, I am deeply disturbed that this woman, who was, at minimum, emotionally traumatized by the assault and the inability to get her children, was laughed at, told to go home and butter him up, she should have known better than to marry a Black man, etc.

Please investigate this incident and inform me of your findings.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Maryann Mahaffey, ACSW
MM:lb