

COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Field Division
Case Reports
June 7, 1967

SHOOTING OF DANIEL THOMAS AT ROUGE PARK

At 3:40 a.m. on June 24, 1967 Daniel Thomas was shot and killed at River Rouge Park. The incident occurred when Mr. Thomas, a Negro, was protecting his wife from assault at the hands of 15 white men. Earlier in the evening, the Thomas' had been at a party at the park, it was interracial and was attended by seven or eight couples. At about midnight, the Thomas' took another couple home. When they returned to the park, the nature of the party had changed; Mrs. Thomas was the only woman there. One man, who was later to become the defendant, agitated within the group for assault on Mrs. Thomas. When the Thomas' sensed the hostility, they made an effort to leave. At this point, they discovered that their car had been tampered with and that they were not able to start it. At this point, two or three bottles were thrown at the car, and they tried to move toward the recreation building. The building was closed, the only person present was the caretaker, who did not open the building for them but called the police and reported a gang fight at the building. Mr. Thomas then moved around behind the building to try to escape the attack and was shot.

On Saturday morning at 9:30 the Field Division began investigation of the incident. They went to 1300 Beaubien to get the complete police version. They were told that the case was in "flux" and that they hoped to have a defendant by 4 p.m. Staff contacted United Press International and the Associated Press to discuss their coverage of the shooting. The Field Division had several conversations with the police and the Prosecutor's office and with the family of the deceased to discuss the family's concerns that the police were not handling this case with the utmost priority.

June 26, 1967

Staff contacted Homicide and the Prosecutor's office and was told that the investigation established grounds for the warrant against the defendant and led to the possibility that others involved may be charged with felonious assault or conspiracy to rape. We contacted the family and assured them that the investigation was not complete and the department was making every effort to establish evidence that other men were involved in the incident. The family had expressed the concern that not enough effort was being made to apprehend the other suspects and expressed concern that Mrs. Daniel Thomas has no means of support. Staff called the Department of Social Services to arrange for immediate contact for support.

Staff received numerous rumors during the week that members of the family were going to assemble at Rouge Park for revenge. Except for a visit to the scene of the incident by the brother, there were no reports of crowds gathering at the park.

HERMAN GARDENS

As reported at the last Commission meeting, two students are working with the Commission staff in cooperation with the Institute for Tutorial Development to strengthen their understanding of urban problems. They are working under our direction in the Herman Gardens area in cooperation with a newly formed group, Herman Gardens Parents for Action, an integrated organization. This group of parents are concerned about the lack of job opportunities for their young people, the lack of recreation facilities and the lack of organization and communication among the tenants.

Some of the sons of these parents were picked up on May 29 when the police department was trying to apprehend suspects of an interracial gang fight and were subsequently released by the police.

Some of the parents were upset because only the Negro youths involved were picked up by the police, and in some instances the police did not notify the parents, as required by law. This aspect of the incident is being investigated by the police department's Citizen Complaint Bureau. The CCR staff is concerning itself with the conditions that produce these intergroup hostilities and is working with the parents.

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