

POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS TASK FORCE

Annual Report

1972-73

The Task Force has continued its concern about the Detroit Police Department's STRESS operation. CCHR voted in April, 1972 that STRESS should be abolished because of its entrapment methods of operation and its record number of killings of Black citizens.

Following a massive man-hunt conducted by the Police Department in the Black community for the alleged assailants of STRESS officers, CCHR participated in a January 4, 1973 press conference demanding public hearings into illegal police activity. Common Council conducted these public hearings on January 11, 1973 at which time the Task Force Chairperson made a statement. Following the hearings, CCHR submitted its written recommendations, at the request of Common Council, for improved police-community relations. Our recommendations (which were attached to the February, 1973 Task Force report) stress the need for changes in the Police Department which would begin to restore community confidence in the police.

The Task Force Chairman and/or the Executive Board Chairwoman participated in various meetings of the Forest Park Citizens District Council and the United Black Coalition. These meetings centered around the need to abolish STRESS due to their harassment of Black citizens. The United Black Coalition also voted to urge that Police Commissioner John Nichols be removed.

The Task Force and Executive Board Chairpersons participated in a Town Meeting television show on the subject of STRESS, which was shown on Channel 7 on February 3, 1973.

The Task Force has continued to keep informed of crime statistics. According to the FBI, for nine months of 1972, the following crimes were reported in Detroit: Murder and negligent homicides decreased from 441 to 432; forcible rapes decreased from 634 to 570; robberies decreased from 15,217 to 12,842; breaking and entering decreased from 38,232 to 32,815; larcenies decreased from 19,166 to 15,004; auto thefts decreased from 17,074 to 15,346; and aggravated assaults increased from 4,173 to 4,624.

From press reports, you get the idea that crime is only committed in the inner-city and is mainly perpetrated by Black people. However, this is not true. In the last three years, Troy's crime rate has increased 260%, Warren's has increased 340%, and Oak Park's has increased 75%.

During the month of May, 1973, members of the Executive Board and the Task Force met and, following much discussion, recommend working toward these goals in the coming year:

1. The lack of response to the public and the lack of courtesy for the civilian population, especially when being apprehended for a traffic violation, demonstrates the need for a Code of Ethics for the entire Police Department. This Code must be enforced by the ones in authority, even at the least provocation.

2. There should be an investigation into the qualifications of instructors at the Police Academy and a review of the subject matter taught, other than the military aspect. This would entail a committee sitting in and observing the teaching.
3. We strongly suggest a Civilian Review Board. It is inconceivable that the Police Department can investigate itself.
4. The percentage of the Black population in the City of Detroit calls for continued efforts to recruit more Black police officers, as well as improvements in the relationships between white and Black police officers, as well as improvements in the relationships between white and Black law enforcement men.
5. There are two cities in the United States which have Police Boards in lieu of a Police Commissioner. We believe this to be an idea worth trying, as it would take all the pressure off one individual, as well as remove politics from the Police Department. This Police Board should not be appointed by the Mayor alone. One member should be appointed by the Governor and one by the Common Council President. All members should have administrative backgrounds and should be civilians for the past ten years.

In a report of last year, I mentioned the terrible word of HATE. The degree of hate that exists in the police department is at an all time high, as is the hate in the community for the police. People have not come to hate the police for no reason. I can remember when police would speak to civilians whether they knew you or not. Not lately. Why? I can remember when police were looked upon with pride; as your friend, your protector, your advisor. Not lately. Why? Hate, prejudice, apathy. Certainly, not all police are in this category, but enough that it looks bad and is bad, just as the proverbial rotten apple which made the barrel smell.

John Reynolds, Chairman