

DETROIT COMMON COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING IN AUDITORIUM

January 11, 1973

(Allegations of harassment of the black community by certain members of the Police Department in efforts to apprehend killers of recently slain Police Officers.)

Transcribed by- Martha VouVakis
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TAPE I - A

...this is a public hearing of the Detroit Common Council. On December 4, 1972, four officers of the Detroit Police Department; Officer Robert ..., Louis Price, E. P. Poor, Richard ..., were seriously wounded by gunshots... The suspects in that case, Hayward Brown, John Boyd, and Mark Bethune became the subjects of an intensive man hunt. On December 27, 1972, twenty-three days later, Detroit Police Officers, Robert Bradford, Robert Dooley, staked out a house while looking for the December 4 suspects. The officers apparently, later approached the subjects and both officers were shot. Officer Bradford died and Officer Dooley, although also shot, though strange, was still alive and may not continue. Since December 4 this Common Council and news media has received numerous complaints from citizens of this city who alledge that improper activities on the part of members of the Detroit Police Department has... and injured the persons or property of the citizens or wrongly deprived these citizens of their living. ... a public hearing based on these complaints and allegations is scheduled by the Common Council today. This public hearing, like all other public hearings, which is not a court procedure or a trial. It is an informal hearing of a legislative body. The chairmanship of the daily council session rotates alphabetically. The council members here today are: Councilman Rogell, Councilman Van Antwerp, Councilman Brown, Councilman Wrzbecki on my right and on my left: Councilwoman Henderson, Councilman Eberhart, Councilman Hood, Council President Mel Ravitz. The Common Council has set the following ground rules for today's meeting. The meeting will last two hours by previous agreement. The persons who claim to be witnesses or victims of alledged improper police conduct in specific instances since December 4, 1972, will be heard first. We will try, and I emphasize try, to put this together right here, we will try to hear from all witnesses on the same instance... witnesses claiming to be witnesses on other instances. Now this is a little change ... this morning but the police commissioner has requested that each response come after all the testimony of witnesses rather than after each witness... The Common Council will also try to call first the persons whose complaints have been forwarded by the Council to the Police Department. We will then hear from persons with complaints arising from specific instances since December 4 where Council had no prior notice of complaint. So first we will call on persons who we had notice of complaint before today and then on persons where we had no notice of complaint. If time permits we will then and only then, open the hearing for expressions of opinion. Cards will be called in the order given to me consistent with the efforts I just ascribed to make the proceeding work. I will recognize no cards unless it is clearly marked on the card whether the person is a witness or wishes to give an opinion. Speakers will be asked to stick to facts relating to specific allegations unless the time remains for an opinion. Speakers are asked to give us their name and address and date, place, time of incident of which they claim personal harm. Members of the Council may be recognized at any time. At the end of the hearing you will ask the police commissioner for a written report of all the allegations. This report to the Council will be a public record as are all reports of all city agencies filed with the City Clerk. Council will consider what additional actions to take, if any, after the police commissioner's report. Booing or hissing or cheering will take up valuable time and will also disrupt an effort to obtain the facts. Council has forwarded approximately twenty-three names of complaints to the police department. Of that list, the following approximately eight or nine names of persons we will try

to hear today... and you will first hear that list. I will now read the names of witnesses that we will hear from in this first group: Melba Boyd, Dorothy Clore, Seigel Clore, John Clore, Sandra Overstreet, Bret Worry, Reverend Cans, Sonovia Grantly, ... Grantly, and Mrs. Thompson. If any of you wish to fill out a form on a policeman, if you see one of the officers around the room, you may do so. I will caution you, however, that unless you are a witness or a victim of an alledged incident, it is very unlikely that you are going to be ... because I already have approximately twenty persons who filed requests to speak their opinion. I will now proceed to the first person who has a form before me, Melba Boyd and she (interruption-"hey, there's a question from the audience, please", "can you answer a question before we start?") What is it? ("I have a question ... sanctity of these people that have evidence against STRESS because we're giving up our names, our addresses, and our telephone numbers..." "... come and kill everybody else") In terms of police protection, (laughing) ... Councilman Hood has suggested that we ask the Commissioner to answer that in terms of what protection... All right, let's have some... we're not going to be able to hear anything in two hours. Commissioner Nichols could you tell us what protection will be afforded to witnesses? (loud interrution)

If they would care not to divulge their names and not to divulge their addresses, then I take that the issue could be handled very admirably by Common Council...

Very good, if you wish not to give your name and your address you can give it to Common Council proper. (interruption-"I got a question, I want to tell you something, I have fought for your country, I have got shot, me and my lady can't stay home in peace without some of your police officers kicking in my door. ... you know, I got a complaint too, this man almost killed us) Will you ... (interruption ...) I called the names of all persons that I have who have filed complaints with the Common Council (interruption ...) forwarded to the Detroit Commissioner. We will first hear from Melba Boyd to be followed by Dorothy Clore and Seigel Clore. (interruption...applause) Let me repeat again, we will call on all persons who claim to be a witness or a victim in a specific instance. The names that I will call are only those that we have previously forwarded to the Police Department. After those names, I will then call on all persons who have given me slips, who say that they are a witness or a victim to a specific incident and I'll call off that list as soon as we're done with the first list. Now, Melba Boyd will you please tell us your name, if you wish and give us your story.

My name is Melba Boyd, I live at ... and Webb. I state my name because my name has been used in the press illegally several times but... (applause) Police broke into my mother's apartment the other evening without a search warrant, broke the door down, put guns on me, my baby brother who is two years old. They had my brother lay down on the floor, handcuffed him behind his back. They removed me and my brother from the home and took us to 1300 Beaubien and at that time ... what my rights were... spoken to and told if I did not cooperate... And furthermore, in terms of policemen ... of my rights I don't think policemen bothered with my brother's rights, telling lies on him, my brother does not have a criminal record. And also, I was told be a Lt. Mark Campbell, when I was taken down here that my brother was not ... was black and blue. (applause) And not only should you investigate the violation in terms of police coming ... also investigate the corruption in this police department. (applause) And since December 4, I have been harassed, followed, my friends have been harassed and followed. I would now like to know did you or did you not send patrolman Charles Durrell from Special Investigation, there were three other ones plus four purported members of CBS News Team from Chicago who had not ... to come to the rally that night and spy on people.

Dorothy Clore followed by Seigle Clore ...

First of all I would like to say I do not appreciate the ... from the television stations and all of the photographers (applause) because when this thing happened to me I didn't see anything... you figure that it was a big issue as far as the rest of the community is concerned... I think this is totally unfair, very unfair. Now, first of all my name is Dorothy Clore. I live at 18846 Cherry St. Avenue. I am the mother of John Boyd and ... One other thing, I am not ashamed of my son, he is not a criminal. (applause) On the evening about 6:10, December 4, I came downstairs, I went through the living room and to the dining room. I heard a loud noise, boom, my front door was burst open. A policeman, a uniformed policeman, stepped in with a rifle and he hollared, freeze. It scared the plain hell out of me, I am not kidding. At that time, I ducked behind the dining room table and I ... to the family room and down into the hall. When I got to the hall, my son John Clore, was stretched out on the floor, face down, and the policeman proceeded to put the handcuffs on him, had him straddled on the floor. I went into the living room and I continued to ask, why did you break into my home and who is in charge and I said this about five or six times... said I don't know. I said, well, someone should be in charge. ... my daughter Melba, came downstairs with the the policeman behind her. She was holding my baby... I was told to remain right there in the living room where I was standing. The policeman stood right there with a rifle pointing directly at me. By that time, I guess about fifteen policemen were in the house. They proceeded to go upstairs, in the basement, all over the place. After that, they decided to search the house, illegally. They removed some things from our home, illegally. After going through the place and they continued to ask questions, who was in charge while they were doing this. The policemen that was ... told me we have orders from downtown to do this. Then one of the policemen, a uniformed policeman, said to me, we came here to arrest your son John Boyd. I said, for what? He said pertaining to the shooting incident of the STRESS policeman. I said, you're kidding. And then one policeman said to me, did I know something about the Highland Park incident. I told him no. I said what happened? Was a policeman shot in Highland Park? And he didn't answer me. Then after all of this searching procedure they went through they came downstairs. One of the policemen said they're going upstairs to search the bedrooms and they practically took, as a matter of fact, they took all the dressers and went through all the drawers and took the drawers and the chest of drawers, away from the wall and they left them there. Messed up the basement, left them in the same state. And when they proceeded downstairs to ask me, is there a draft in that fireplace. I said no. Then he goes over, pulls the screen away and the stand we have the wood on. And he took the rifle of his butt and he knocked the wood that we have all over the ... and all the insulation in the house fell down all over the carpet and everyplace. Then he proceeded to pull all the pillows off the couch and throw them on the floor and some were picked up and they never did straighten them back up... the plain clothesman asked me to use my telephone, where it was. In the meantime, we were told that everyone in the house would have to go down to 1300 Beaubien. I insisted there was no reason for me to go down to 1300 Beaubien. I had not committed a crime, I was not a criminal. And he went back to use the phone. And I told him I didn't want to leave my house, it was open, could be broken into and that I did not want to take my baby down. Then he came back and said where's the lady of the house. You won't have to go, the baby can remain here. They took my son, John Clore down. He told two policemen to go outside and they wanted to call

a tow truck so they could carry his car ... the precinct. Then they took him down... escort down to 1300 Beaubien. After they had left, the same plain clothesman asked me if I would answer some questions. I said yes to the best of my ability. Then he wanted to know how many other children I had. I told him. He wanted to know if I had another son named John Boyd. I said yes. And he wanted to know what kind of car did he drive. I told him. He wanted to know about the cars in the garage, who they were registered to. And these sorts of things. I told him. I was never told that my son John Boyd was a suspect in the shooting. It was not until my daughter Melba had returned from the police station, she told me, she informed me that when she got down there she was told that my son, John Boyd, was a suspect in the shooting. Now, later that week, we had three STRESS officers visit our house, that Thursday. They came in. They conducted themselves the way that I would expect all policemen to do. Asked us if they could come in and talk to us. I said yes, my husband said yes. We proceeded to the living room. We sat there and talked, I guess, for about an hour. And they asked me things about my son John Boyd. Did I know anything about his activities as far as drugs were concerned. I told him no. They tried to make me to believe that Mark Bethune was a criminal, that his whole family was nothing but a family of dope addicts. I don't know the young man, I don't even think I ever met him. If he walked on the stage today, I could not identify him. They tried to run some things down on my nephew, Hayward Brown. I told him I've known him since birth. He's been with my family an awful lot. He spent a lot of time with me. They tried to run a lot of things down on him. Yes, he's had some conflict with the law. But all of this, I think, was to a point... He's only 18 years old. Now, getting down to business, what I came here for. After the harassment from the police department, continued harassment, phone and ... safety of my family, my husband and I decided that we should get some legal guidance. We engaged a lawyer, Ernest Goodman, I guess all of you know by now. I also went to the Citizen's Complaint Bureau and I filed a complaint. I did because I was the one at the house, my husband was not home at the time. I went to the Michigan Civil Rights Department. I also filed a complaint there. One reason I did this, and a lot of you have sons, and I understnad Commissioner Nichols has one. I think some of this was done, not because of the shooting incident, but because I am black. (applause) I don't think that if Commissioner Nichol's son was a suspect in this case, the policemen would not have broken the door down to their house (applause) ... I think my home has been invaded illegally and I think I have had a lot of disrespect as a woman and as a citizen from the Detroit Police Department. Now, on December 26, I was called by Sgt. Pierson from the Citizen's Complaint Bureau. First he said, Mrs. Clore, we can talk on the phone, I can come out there, or you can come down here. I said I would like to talk in person, this is too serious to talk about on the phone. I proceeded, I told him I will be there in an hour. That was about 10:00 in the morning. So I got down there around 11:00. Sitting there talking to Sgt. Pierson, he told me he had been... the case and he proceeded to tell me that they felt the actions of the policemen December 4, when they broke into my home, was justified. I should get my home repaired, he told me where to take the bill to be reimbursed and he also told me where to tell my husband to go to pick up the articles that were taken from our house... And I expressed to him that under no circumstance was all of these up to date techniques, all of these tools that the Police Department use, why couldn't they have knocked on my door, asked me to let them in before breaking the door down? And I do not feel under no circumstance that they were justified in this action.

Now, to say that, my son John Boyd has not lived at 18846 in almost 3 years. I am his mother and I am not ashamed of him. But that does not, under no circumstance, give anyone, anyone, the right to break in my house in my house and pull a gun on me and do the things that they did. (applause) At this time I felt that it would be imperative for me to get away from the situation so I decided to go out of town to be away from it. I was not in town. I was not in town when the second incident happened. I did not know about it until the following morning. My husband informed me that he did not think it would be a good idea for me and my 2 small children to return back to Detroit at that time. I had went to some of my relatives and under the strain and harassment from the Detroit Police Department, we decided for the safety of our 2 samll children we had to leave them out of town. They're not home now. And the first thing I would like to say to all of you and especially to Commissioner Nichols if my son John Boyd would try and contact me and say that he would like to bring himself in, to come before the court, who in the world could I trust with him? (applause) For the safety of his mother, who had nothing at all to do with the shooting incident, because I was at home in bed, I had nothing at all to do with it. When my rights had been infringed on, and I feel that the rest of my family is not safe in this city. Now, how could I tell him, as a mother, to give himself up, believe in our system of justice and believe in safety in our police department, that you will be dealt with justly. And furthermore, I am a teacher in the public schools of Detroit. How can I as a teacher with what I have experienced can tell the young people that I work with to cooperate with the law enforcement officers. (applause) How can I ... tell these young people that these people are protectors of liberty? And I think that something drastic, very very drastic as a mother, as a citizen and as a woman, and a black woman, at that ... I hope the Common Council will not... I'm speaking to you. Election year I vote election year. The citizens of this city ... and we have elected you because everytime, everytime. We have elected you. You are the one that is supposed to do the job. You're our leaders, you're representatives. Now the citizens of this state, they,... I'm a ... and there are many more ... more people ... I'm begging you, you've got to do something about it. (applause)

The next witness will be John Clore, then Sandra Overstreet.

Ladies and gentlemen, on December 4, I was out shopping and I returned home about 3:50, 4:00 and as I was coming in the door a man downstairs told me that the police came up in ten police cars looking for me. I went up to my apartment and I found my house in shambles. My kitchen, my bedroom, I couldn't even see my rug because all my things were thrown all over the floor. So immediately I called my mother and told her that the police had been to my house... My sister, Melba, came over to me about a half hour, forty-five minutes later. I was watching the news about the shooting of the four STRESS officers. I was watching the news and about ten after six ... the front door was knocked off ... it was knocked off, the whole frame was knocked off. I was in the den, that's in the back of the house, so I ... police so ... to the front so they could see who I am ... like all these other ones they shot and murdered. The officer asked me to get down on the floor, he handcuffed me on the floor and there was about maybe five officers around me. I found out later that I was charged with resisting arrest. The police came in and searched the house. They took three rifles out of my closet, one of my father's hunting rifles. These rifles had never been fired before and they were all registered.