

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

Because of the recent disturbance in the Perry Homes Area and because the account of these incidents was inaccurately reported in the Sunday ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION, a Citizens Committee, composed of a number of representative Negro citizens was formed. This Committee has taken sworn statements from witnesses and all of the facts point to a regrettable situation that could have serious consequences.

Briefly, the facts in the case are apparently simple. The police had been called because of a disturbance by a youth by the name of Clarence Ellison, in the Perry Homes Community. Ellison was arrested but broke away and was captured by the police and placed under arrest. According to witnesses, even after he was placed in the police car, the police continued to beat him. Two or three women, in front of whose home the capture took place, came out to request the police to stop beating the boy since the boy was already under arrest and in the car. At no point did anyone interfere with the police, according to witnesses, nor under any circumstances do these and other witnesses indicate there was an attempt made to take the prisoner.

One of the women protesting the beating, a beautician, was also roughly handled, beaten, and placed under arrest, according to the witnesses. At this point, the Housing Manager, who saw the incident from his office, came out to see what the disturbance was and to see if he could be of assistance. He was immediately seized and roughly handled also and received at least one blow. After he was seized, Mr. Joseph F. Jeter, the deceased and employee of the housing project, who was across the street, came over for the purpose of telling the police that this was the Housing Manager and according to witnesses, before he even got to the scene, he was shot and almost instantly killed. These are the facts as stated by witnesses who have been interrogated and sworn statements taken. At no time was any attempt made to interfere with the police or even

put their hands on the police. Several apparently had congregated, as will happen in a situation such as this.

The police's version that a crowd of 500 attempted to liberate a prisoner on the surface is patently wrong and does not at all bear out the facts, according to reliable witnesses.

The Citizens Committee was formed because of intense excitement in that community and in other communities, because a similar incident had happened the preceding Saturday on Northside Drive when another prisoner, according to witnesses, was also beaten severely and here again, two women protested and were also severely beaten, one of whom is still in the hospital under medical treatment.

The Citizens Committee is interested primarily in maintaining law and order in the City of Atlanta. The Committee believes that policemen who use unnecessary and uncalled for force, and who manhandle women should be punished. The Committee also believes that these policemen represent a minority of the Atlanta Police Department and in no way does the Committee want to indict or censure the entire Police Department of the City of Atlanta. The Committee is strongly of the opinion that unless this type of incident is stopped, it could lead to very serious consequences because of the actions of intemperate people of both groups and for that reason, this Committee is dedicated to see that justice is done in this case and in every case where there is proven police brutality or unnecessary force.

The Committee commends Chief Jenkins for his statement that the Police Department will get facts in this case and every case which is reported to him and will take whatever appropriate action is necessary to see that justice and justice alone, is done.

In the case of Mr. Jeter, who was killed in the Perry Homes Incident, it should also be stated that he was chief custodian of the project and an employee of the City of Atlanta, and is a member of a family of integrity in the City of Atlanta, and the father of several children. He lies dead today only because

as a good citizen and as a good employee of the Project on which the incident took place, he had the civic consciousness of coming to a scene to render whatever assistance he could. It is because of this incident particularly, that the Citizens of the community are thoroughly and completely aroused.

In every incident such as this, the Committee understands that there are irresponsible people who take advantage of such situations and who want to cause disturbances. The Committee has already urged the police to deal with these people as law breakers and will stand back of the police in any proper and lawful action they may take to maintain law and order.

The Committee further believes that there is no place in the City of Atlanta for "trigger happy" policemen or for members of the police force who feel that defenseless prisoners must be unmercifully beaten. Unless these incidents are stopped, the Committee feels that they may lead to serious consequences and it is for this reason that the Committee will do all in its power to cooperate with the City Administration and the Police Department in seeing that these incidents are thoroughly investigated and appropriate action taken so that all people involved and guilty shall be punished to the full extent of the Law.

Some of the citizens forming the above named Committee are as follows:

Bishop J. W. E. Bowen

E. M. Martin

Rev. M. L. King, Sr.

R. L. Chennault

C. A. Scott

T. M. Alexander

Herman Russell

Dr. C. A. Bacote

C. R. Yates

Dr. B. E. Mays

Jesse Hill, Jr.

Warren E. Cochrane