

The whole series of events which have emerged since Lester Long was shot and killed by Police Officer Henry Martinez on June 12, has provoked serious community tensions and is producing serious divisions and conflicts between the white and the non-white community in the city. Newark is a city which has struggled as hard as it can to create a harmonious atmosphere in which all men of all races, creeds and colors, are treated with equality, dignity and respect. This current tension and division is a tragedy. The Newark Human Rights Commission feels impelled to warn all elements in the community that we dare not permit any such situation to light fires which will be very hard to extinguish and which can debilitate our community for a long time to come.

Our purpose is not to make judgments with respect to legal responsibilities and functions of the police department in the performance of their duties. Our function is designed to point out directions to the Mayor which will help ease the community tensions which confront us over this incident and the explosive atmosphere in which we now find our city. There are other agencies of government whose function it is to make legal determinations. The entire matter is now in the hands of the County Prosecutor and the Grand Jury. It is their function to make a legal determination.

As directed by the Mayor, the Newark Human Rights Commission tried to get as many of the pertinent facts as it possibly could.

within a short period of time. It invited police officers and as many civil rights leaders as it could possibly contact on short notice. A list of those invited is attached herewith. The Commission spent hours receiving information and gathering as many facts as it possibly could under the circumstances. All participants at the hearing were invited to present any questions and comments they might wish to make. It now wishes to offer the following observations to Mayor Addonizio for his guidance and consideration:

1. There is no evidence that the Commission has been able to gather which indicates that Mr. Long's shooting was occasioned by the fact that he was a Negro.

2. There is no evidence that the Commission has been able to gather which indicates that Patrolman [redacted] action was other than in the line of duty.

3. The fact that an incorrect description of the entire episode appears to have been given to the press by some police officers is a disturbing one. Nine days after the event the Commission was unable to elicit the identity of the individuals who were responsible for this distorted description.

4. The Human Rights Commission feels that the action of the Mayor in removing the police officer in question from active duty was prudent and justified, because:

(a) In a community half of whose population is non-white, such an event could easily be used to provoke disturbances which have hitherto been prevented in the city of Newark, in sharp contrast with such communities as New York City, Jersey City, Elizabeth, Paterson and Rochester;

(b) That the Mayor was confronted with inconsistent reports with respect to the incident which had directly provoked community tensions.

5. The Human Rights Commission wishes to underline that the action of the Mayor was taken without any prejudice toward the officer and his service record; moreover, he was not denied salary.

6. The Human Rights Commission emphasizes that the morale and effectiveness of the police department is of vital concern to all citizens in this community, regardless of race. The police department must be given full support in the proper performance of its duties by all citizens.

7. The Human Rights Commission has been informed that within the next 24 hours the Grand Jury will hear witnesses and receive all materials pertinent to the case. We believe that it is the County Prosecutor and the Grand Jury which is charged with determining any culpability of individuals involved in this situation.

The Newark Human Rights Commission sincerely appeals to all groups involved to rely on due process of law.

The members of the Newark Human Rights Commission feels impelled to make the following additional recommendations:

1. That as a matter of future Newark Police Department policy, whenever a police officer is involved in the shooting of any individual, that officer be immediately relieved from patrol duty without prejudice and without loss of salary, and reassigned pending an immediate and thorough investigation.

2. We recommend that a thorough investigation be made and made public as to the reasons why inaccurate information with respect to this incident reached the press. We further recommend that prompt departmental action be taken against those responsible.

3. We finally recommend that affirmative steps be taken to prevent the recurrence of the dissemination of inaccurate information in the future.

TELEGRAMS & CALLS

Newark Human Rights Commission Special Meeting - June 21, 1

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Sidney Kellner
Sam Brown
Arnold Harris
James Pawley
Stanley Winters
George S. Pfaus
Dean Willard Heckel
Rev. Thomas Carey ✓
Rev. Erasmo Reina
Rev. John R. Green
Rev. Boyd Cottrell - NAACP ✓
Rev. Homer Tucker
Rev. H. Hunt
Rev. Frank Rogers
Rev. B.F. Johnson
Rev. Wendell Mapson ✓
Rev. J. Randall ✓
Rev. Charles Banks
Fred Means
Raymond Proctor - CORE
Rev. Kim Jefferson
Rev. E. Huff ✓
Tony Perez
Father Mario ✓
Norman Nieves ✓
Joe Rosario
Amadeo Bernades
Father Massiello
Eugene Garcia
Jose A Colon
A. Rodriguez
Leonildo Perez
Mr. P. Miranda

Mineral Spring ✓