

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION
1203 CITY HALL
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Staff Report on Vine City, October 22 - 23, 1967

[Reginald Carter]

It was reported by Atlanta's news media and by "Word of mouth" that on Sunday, October 22, 1967, several residents of the Vine City community had been arrested. One was "beaten" prior to his arrest.

I met and talked with residents of the community and interested persons, and learned from Mrs. Betty Holland [a resident of 675 Magnolia Street, SW., Ja5-2383] that the incident came as a result of some men gambling in the area of Magnolia and Sunset, were asked to move on by the police. The men responded to the police order, but they did not move out of the area when asked to "move on". Officer Phillips began to beat Mr. Partridge, and subsequently knocked him out. Later other officers [who were white] joined Officer Phillips in the beating. Mrs. Holland felt as though the beatings were unnecessary since Mr. Partridge was hand-cuffed. Several other men were arrested on this day, giving rise to tensions. There were no further incidences on this evening.

On October 23, I received word that a meeting was going to be held at the corner of Magnolia and Sunset that evening at 8:00 P.M. I visited the area that evening to find no formal meeting in process, but that what seemed like hundreds of people gathered in the street, not to riot but to protest for the blight and maltreatment by the police in their community. People burned trash in the street, broke in and looted several neighborhood grocery stores. They sneered at policemen and tried their patience. However the police, despite the acts of protest, basically had the situations under control. After the second store had been broken into and looted, Senator Leroy Johnson, Alderman Q.V. Williamson, attempted to "restore order".

The crowd had assembled on the corner of Magnolia and Maple at the request of the above mentioned persons. Order was being restored and an appeal was being made to disperse. It was at this time that Captain Little of the Atlanta Police Department came into the area with armed policemen carrying riot guns, etc., and ordered the people off the street. He threatened to arrest them if they did not obey. The people ran in all directions screaming from fear of what may have developed into a shooting melee. One man who was on crutches was moving too slowly for the policemen and was nearly arrested. Tempers were heightened, and screams and shouts were heard such as: "They are always coming in making people get off the street"....."We can't even hold a peaceful meeting"....and "Look, they always give the white policemen the shot guns to kill us".

The policemen forced people off the streets, out of their yards, off of their porches and into their homes by threatening to arrest them. They stayed and patrolled the area until early the next morning without further incidence.

I talked with Mr. Augustus McWhorter, [Butterball] and Mr. Elvester McGruder. Both these men were arrested on the first Sunday. Mr. McWhorter said he was washing clothes at the Laundromat shortly before he and the others were arrested on October 22nd. After hearing that trouble was nearby. He went to assess the situation and arrived in time to see police Officer Phillips beat Mr. Partridge while handcuffed. He said he went to the police department to swear out a complaint. He returned to the Vine City area to complete his washing. As he was about to leave the Laundromat to take his clothes home, he was ordered by a policeman to move on. Attempting to explain that he was on his way home, Mr. McWhorter said he was placed under arrest for "failure to move on". Mr. McGruder also said he was on his way home when he was stopped by some policemen who questioned his destination. After he explained he was on his way home the policemen sent him in an opposite direction. He was subsequently arrested by other policemen for "drunkenness" and "failure to move on". Mr. McGruder said he had not had anything at all to drink.

On 11-7-67 the trial for Messers Augustus McWhorter [Butterball], and Elvester McGruder, Mann Jordan, Henry Tucker, Milton Harold, and Mr. Partridge was held in Police Court. The arresting officers were: Rucker, Flagg, Phillips, Carlton and Weber. They charged that Mr. Partridge resisted arrest, used vile language, failed to move on, assaulted and officer and violated the noise ordinance.

Augustus McWhorter and Elvester McGruder have had their cases held over until November 21st. The other men were found guilty on all counts and are now in the process of appealing their cases.