

CITY OF ATLANTA

8 August 1969

Memorandum Regarding Discrimination Against Black Firemen Of Atlanta

To: Mayor Ivan Allen, Chairman Board of Firemasters, Alderman Wm. T. Knight and Atlanta Fire Chief Paul O. Williams

From: Black Firemen of Atlanta

The Black firefighters of Atlanta are dedicated municipal employees, concerned with the safety and welfare of our city and all of its citizens. During the years of our tenure as firemen we have been subjected to discrimination and abuses as outlined below. We request that immediate action be taken to correct these practices, and that on or before Monday, August 18, 1969 that we receive a formal report on your actions in correcting the actions cited herein:

I. HIRING PRACTICES

The ratio of Black Firemen to White Firemen does not correspond to the population of Black citizens in Atlanta. There are about 90 to 100 Black Firemen in a department of more than 900 men. Black Firemen that are drafted into the armed services are replaced by white firemen.

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II. SEGREGATED SLEEPING & LOCKER ARRANGEMENTS

Lockers and beds of Black Firemen are placed in the back or away from the white firemen.

III. RECREATION CLUB

The membership was closed the year Black Firemen were hired in 1963. Land was given to the club by the government on Lake Allatoona. (13 acres)

IV. PROMOTIONAL DISCRIMINATION

Black Firemen should be included in every department. White firemen with less time and experience are promoted to driver positions. Black Firemen with 5 and 6 years should be promoted to Lieutenants, because the entire officer cabinet is made up of all white officers. Most of these officers have been known to force their prejudices on Black Firemen. We are aware of the test for Lieutenants, but in a time of an emergency men have been promoted wholesale from private to captains within a year, thus setting proper precedent. We consider this an emergency because of the overall discrimination in the department. White drivers are giving up their positions because they know future Lieutenants are going to be appointed by Chiefs. This is true because in the last captain's test the aides of all the chiefs dominated the list. Some of these Lieutenants didn't place in the top 40 on the Lieutenants list. Now they are captains.

(City not fire dept has no authority or control over Atlanta Firemen's Recreation Club)

V. EXPERIENCE AND LENGTH OF TIME ON THE DEPARTMENT

Acting officers, we feel that every Black Firemen with the time and experience, equal to any white firemen, should be given the opportunity to be an acting officer. This applies to extra drivers. House duties should be picked according to seniority.

(Aug 15 memo from chief)

VI. STANDARD SET OF RULES FOR ALL CAPTAINS

Each shift is operated different, captain authority has no limit. He forces personal prejudices on Black Firemen. Transfer of men to other stations.

(Chief rewrites the rule book to apply to all)

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