

Police relations take new turn in Atlanta

By Patrick Glynn

A year ago senior citizens in downtown Atlanta's Capitol Homes housing project lived in terror of a band of marauding teenage youths who snatched purses in broad daylight, scaled walls at night to invade bedrooms, and kept tenants--old and young, Black and white--cowering in their homes after dark.

Now the robberies and burglaries have ceased. Residents safely come and go pretty much at any time of the day or evening.

"Everything has changed," says Carrie Copeland, president of the Capitol Homes Tenant Association. "You can walk through here at night. Anybody can."

The key to the transformation -- a minor miracle in these days of rising crime -- lay in a new policy which enabled tenants and police to work together to end what amounted to an eight-year crime wave in the public housing project. The Atlanta Police Department is pioneering the new approach, and police argue it goes well beyond the old public relations effort undertaken in the name of "community relations" in the mid-1960s. Many have argued these efforts seldom translated liberal rhetoric into actual policy.

"There has to be a change in power relations," argues Lee Brown, the city's Commissioner of Public Safety. "We have to share power with the people we serve."

At a time when pessimism is the rule in most discussions of crime -- and political leaders talk increasingly of hiring more police and building more prisons as only plausible responses to an insoluble problem--Brown is arguing that radically improved community-police cooperation can lead to actual crime prevention.

But he claims that such cooperation becomes possible only after a fundamental transformation in police attitudes. According to Brown, it was the reduction in police shootings of citizens and the newly cooperative posture of Atlanta police toward the community--which sets the climate for the effort of tenants and police at Capitol Homes.

The Capitol Homes effort began last May at the initiation of tenant association leaders, who invited Brown to a meeting on the crime problem.

Soon, tenant association leaders began walking the grounds in groups twice nightly. Leaflets were

circulated by the tenants' group to residents, urging them to keep an eye out for neighbors and to look after their children with special care. And a bargain was struck with residents whereby police agreed to respond to citizen calls with special vigilance in exchange for information about crimes.

With the assurance of tenant support, meanwhile, police initiated foot patrols in the area. They spoke to families of the youth concerned. Some arrests were made. "The message went out," says Brown, "that crime would not be tolerated either by the community or by police." In two months, says Copeland, the situation was completely turned around. "The police department is wonderful," she says now.

Yet relations between citizens and police in Atlanta were not always so amicable. Copeland notes that when the crime problem first started in the housing project eight years ago, residents would never have contemplated turning to the police for help. At that time, police-community relations were tense, citizen complaints of police brutality were common, and officer-involved shootings were a frequent occurrence.

Police policies changed in 1974 with the mayoral election of Maynard Jackson, who ran on an anti-police brutality platform. Brown was appointed Commissioner in 1978. Under his leadership, the Atlanta department initiated a variety of programs designed to improve relations between citizens and police and to involve the community in crime prevention efforts. And it appears now to be paying off.

The Atlanta experience bucks a nationwide trend toward police-community antagonism. According to the U.S. Justice Department's Community Relations Service, citizen allegations of excessive use of force by police nearly doubled between FY 1979 and FY 1980, from 69 to 133. Complaints of racial incidents between police and citizens rose similarly from 108 to 206.

Between 1965 and 1975 millions of federal dollars poured into police departments, bringing extensive improvements in the technological "hardware" of policing.

"The improvements in hardware were useful," says Gerald Caplan, former head of the Justice Department's National Institute for Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. "But it shows that even the best run

bureaucracies don't make much of a difference in controlling crime."

Hiring more police, he claims, will not reduce crime. "That's just the politicians non-response," he says.

Brown stresses that in real life police do not actually "solve" crimes. Instead, he says, they depend entirely on citizens to report incidents, identify criminals, and ultimately testify in court.

Caplan, who has served as consultant on crime to Republican Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), notes that the issue of race is central in the conflict. But while he agrees that "Blacks have had damn good reasons for fearing the police," he faults Black leaders for not making crime more of an issue.

"There's probably still an inverse ratio between those who are affected by crime and those who are worrying about it," he says.

Others, like American Enterprise Institute fellow Robert Woodson, dispute that conclusion. Woodson argues that crime has always been a paramount issue among Blacks, who suffer disproportionately from its effects. But he says that police abuses have left Blacks with few alternatives for addressing the issue.

"It's always been a dilemma for Blacks," he says. "They have to balance fear of crime with fear of the police."

In an August poll of its readership, *Black Enterprise* magazine found that Blacks were "seriously concerned about the effects of crime on society" and predicted Black Americans would "become substantially more conservative on the crime issue in the 1980s." But while 90.1 percent of the predominantly middle-class respondents saw crime as a "major problem," fully 85.8 percent agreed that police brutality was a major concern as well.

"You can't expect a community to be cooperating with a police department which is abusing them," observes Atlanta's Brown. Brown says that police shootings of citizens have decreased radically in Atlanta in recent years.

"Where there is ill-will between the police departments and citizens, the fault lies with the department in the long run," he claims. "You can eradicate that feeling -- if you control the police."

The police department in Atlanta makes extensive use of what Woodson terms "mediating structures" -- existing organizations in the community -- to aid in detecting and



DR. LEE P. BROWN

preventing crime. Ministers are trained to intervene with police in domestic disputes. Postal workers are trained to detect suspicious occurrences on their routes.

In the past year, despite the horrifying murders and disappearances of 17 Black children in the city, overall crime in Atlanta has remained relatively stable -- at a time when crime is increasing nationally at a rate of about 10 percent, according to FBI reports. Brown is reluctant to take credit for the stability, but he does contrast the "power-sharing" model in Atlanta with the simple "get tough" approach now favored by neo-conservative criminologists who have argued for more and longer prison terms as a means of isolating criminals from the community.

In a report prepared for the Justice Department in the wake of the riot in Miami's Liberty City last May, H. Jerome Miron of University Research Corp. argued that traditional police responses to rising tension -- such as flooding streets with patrols -- actually escalated the problem. The report also proposed "sharing power" as a means of easing tensions between the police and community.

"You'd be amazed at how much ingenuity and brilliance you have in the community," says Hubert Williams, the Black Police Director of Newark, New Jersey, where another power sharing policy -- combined with an emphasis on toughness -- also proved successful. "The educators and the experts are not the only ones with knowledge."

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U.S. leader in terrorist acts

By Senator Bill McCoy

Public acts of bigotry and terrorism, the threatened or actual use of force and violence to attain a political goal through fear, coercion, and intimidation are becoming more prevalent in the state of Oregon. Responsible public officials and community leaders must speak out against such acts. If we do not, then we lend a kind of tacit approval to such behavior. We must not only speak out against committed acts of bigotry and terrorism, but also against those who would stand up and publicly defame a person or group on ethnic, racial or religious grounds. We must correct guide our fellow citizens, whose personal

hatred boils over in public view against their fellow citizens, onto a path of brotherhood and cheerful acceptance of those who are "different."

Bryan Jenkins of the Rand Corporation in Santa Monica, California says that, "statistically, the United States is at or near the head of the list of nations most affected by terrorism. Our perceptions of the severity of terrorism in a country are determined not by statistics, but rather by spectacular acts and there have been few spectacular terrorists incidents in the United States. The objective of terrorism is not simply

campaign of violence designed to inspire fear which in turn causes people to exaggerate the strength and importance of the terrorist movement. It is a way of getting attention. Terrorism is violence for effect. The real targets of terrorist violence are not always the actual victims, but rather the intended audience. Terrorism is theatre."

You are no doubt familiar with the Ku Klux Klan and its terrorist motives. But are you familiar with such groups as the Christian Patriot Defense League which is headquartered in southern Illinois and is closely affiliated with the Christian Conservative Church. This par-

ticular group has tenants in common with both the Klan and the Nazi.

As a result of the recent Presidential election, there seems to be a sense in the minds of some that evoking the word "christian" justified any and all kinds of behavior. This is dangerous. Any church which supports directly or indirectly, overt or covert acts of bigotry or terrorism is a threat to the State of Oregon and its people. I ask you to join with me in persuading our neighbors to be vigilant in the fight against bigotry and terrorism in our neighborhoods and in our state.

Mercedes Deiz goes to Court

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would have to run for it within 4 months of the appointment. Again, I said, that didn't concern me because it was my responsibility to get out and campaign.

A man did run against me for that first District Court job and I was elected overwhelmingly by the people during the primary; literally overwhelming...about 89 percent.

I was District Court Judge for two years, then a new position opened in Circuit Court which is the position I now hold. When my two years was up, I wasn't particularly interested in running again, but Judges and attorneys urged me to, so I ran for the position, and seven men ran against me! I didn't prevail in the primaries, but I had the top number of votes, except that I didn't get 51 percent, so there was a runoff. Again the people elected me.

When I had to run again in 1978 which was for a six year term, I had no opposition, so I was elected to a six year term which will terminate in January 1985.

One of my philosophies here is, I don't feel that there should be a District Court and a Circuit Court. I think this state should have a one level court because a Judge is a Judge, no matter what level she or he is sitting. We have to have the same knowledge, the same training and the same legal background.

The important thing is not what I've done to get where I am at... (smile)...I couldn't have done anything without my husband and my children. I'm very happy to be a Judge. I like it, but I can't imagine what it would be like not to be my husband's wife, and not to have my two fine sons and my daughter. I wish I had grandchildren. (smile)...I'm slowing down somewhat now, but why not? I'm 63 years old!

In terms of prejudice and discrimination, the whole state can talk books about that. A terrible thing is happening in our country, and those trials and tribulations which affect every minority person, obviously affect me too.

I've learned as the years go by,

how to cope and how to say to any stupid Oniger (stupid donkey) who has the nerve to even suggest that a person should be discriminated against...I know how to deal with it. I'm a strong woman, but everyone doesn't know how to handle that.

I can't believe that what we fought for in the 30s and 40s are all right back here again in the 80s and that's disgusting and discouraging! I pray that all who cares, will not give up their fight to make things better. We have to make people understand we are fighting discrimination and race hatred because we are just as good as anybody else.

I was talking with a young man named Ron Baugh, whom I had never met until I was in Cambridge last week. He was telling me about the State of Boston where he's been for the last 3 years pursuing a Law Degree.

Here's a town held up as the symbol of liberty, having a tradition of doing the right things for all minorities, particular for Blacks, yet young Black students are afraid to

walk the streets of Boston. When Black kids get off a bus, from the South to walk the historic steps of Bunker Hill and the beginnings of this Republic, they are attacked and assaulted, then driven back to the bus that brought them up there.

Just to hear things like that, in 1981, to me is incredible! Everyone was happy that the hostages were released from Iran; everybody was talking about the terrible indency these men and women were subjected to, and the torture, but yet, we, right here in our own country, continue to do some awful things to people just because they don't happen to have white skin.

The State of Oregon, I hope, is not becoming like Boston, however, it's coming more out with it. I read of the incidents. The racist reactionaries have come out of the closet...they are making all the noise, saying all the racist sort of things that have stopped the great movement of the 60s.

Next Week: Judge Deiz answers her critics.

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Citizen of the Week

SISARETTA YVETTE TALTON

Sisaretta is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Kirby Talton and is a 1980 graduate of John Adams High School. Currently a Freshman attending Pacific University, she is majoring in Physical Education and health.

She is an active member of Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church. While at Adams High School, Sisaretta sang in the choir and was very active in sports. She earned an award in sports each year which included: Freshman year, "Rookie of the Year"; Sophomore, "Best Hitter in Softball"; Junior, "Most Valuable Player in Softball and Volleyball."

Upon graduation from high school, Sisaretta was presented with the Alpha Kappa Alpha "Better Womanhood Award," and was also the recipient of a scholarship from the Western Golf Association.

Sisaretta is a member of the Isisettes, Daughters of Isis.

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