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Two Sections



Tuesday, at a joint press conference/community forum, an overflow crowd of community members vocalized their outrage over the death of Lloyd Stevenson. With what can only be looked on as "responsible leadership," Ron Herndon and Rev. John

Jackson, co-chairs of the Black United Front, and Herb Cawthorne, executive director of Portland's Urban League, assured the community that everything possible will be done to get to the bottom of this tragedy. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Witnesses, participants dispute 7-11 death facts

by Lanita Duke

GRASSROOT NEWS, N.W. — Tony Stevenson left home Saturday night to play video games and buy icecream for his family. But he never returned because he volunteered his skills to detain a shoplifter at 7-11.

Either the police misunderstood or couldn't see beyond their stereotypes and administered a sleeper hold on Stevenson, which resulted in his death.

From eyewitness accounts and collaboration from the police, various members of the community have disputed the police version of what occurred.

"At 11:00 I went into the 7-11 and I saw a Black guy hemmed up by two clerks," said one of our witnesses. "It was a citizen's arrest and I was tripping because the clerk at the door was letting people enter the store one at a time. When I was getting ready to leave the shoplifter ran out."

Another witness confirmed what the first witness saw. Both added that a large Black man, whom they believed was Stevenson, was in the store playing video games. "The shoplifter (Joseph Nelson) came out when we did. The store clerk followed and another one came out with a billy club." Our witness said the clerk had the shoplifter up against the wall. Stevenson, who was now outside, told them to leave. "He said he had everything under control because he had dealt with situations like this before. I got the feeling that the store clerks knew him."

On Sunday the 7-11 manager said a citizen's arrest was underway, but denied that a billy club was inside the store. "7-11 might have what happened inside the store on film, because the shoplifter questioned their authority to hold him without evidence. The clerk told him that they had everything on film."

Once outside the store, events became less clear.

The shoplifter had been subdued when the police said they noticed an altercation in the parking lot and said they observed Stevenson hitting the gas station attendant. The police said they told Stevenson to calm down and this is when the police version promoted by Harrington and the mass media becomes illogical. The police said officer Pantley positioned himself between Stevenson and the gas attendant.

"The attendant told us that Stevenson was preventing him from intervening in the shoplifting arrest," explained Jay Decker, the police bureau's public information officer.

But that explanation makes no sense. The shoplifter was already under arrest. The police said at this point Stevenson hit Officer Pantley. "I don't believe that," cautioned Billy Maxey, one of Stevenson's co-workers. "L.D. was a law and order man from the word go. He worked with the Portland Police all the time. He would not hit a police officer."

Interestingly enough, Chief Harrington has been conspicuously silent on the physical condition of the officer Stevenson supposedly hit. "If L.D. wanted to take someone out, he could and you would feel it," Maxey added. One witness said during the confrontation with the police, Stevenson repeatedly stated, "You don't have to do this!" The Black United Front said they have reports where bystanders told the police that

they had the wrong man. "They saw a Black man and a white man in an altercation. Without finding out what happened, the police jumped the Black man. Stevenson was a trained security officer. The police subdued him because he wanted to be subdued," Maxey added.

The sleeper hold, defended by Chief Harrington, takes six seconds to become effective. Why did the police use it for 15 seconds? According to Dr. Ronald T. Reay, chief medical examiner in Seattle, Washington, "Neckholds must be considered potentially lethal under any circumstances. . . it's totally unpredictable. It must be viewed as a potentially fatal tactic and reserved to situations which merit its risk."

Did the Stevenson confrontation deserve this hold? Why did the officers keep it on for 15 seconds when only six were needed. Were the officers so involved in tackling Stevenson

that they refused to listen to him plea for balance?

These questions are not being asked by the police. However, in a public inquest they will be addressed. Ronnie Herndon and family members appeal to the community for information. If you have any information, call 221-1792.

"His reputation for cool-headedness in stressful situations is impeccable. Those who worked with him never knew him to mistreat people, not even individuals who struck him while he arrested them. In contrast, we have received various allegations from various sources that officers Pantley and Barbour have reputations for using excessive force," Herndon said.

Stevenson's father said, "My son has been murdered by the police and the people who did it are free."

Decker said since March, 1984, the sleeper hold had been used 56 times, 36 on whites and 25 on Blacks.



Penny Harrington, Portland's Chief of Police, describes at a press conference Monday the police version of the incident in which Lloyd Stevenson was killed. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

'Peace, Justice,' chant 4,000

by Robert Lothian

An estimated 4,000 people marched through the sunlit streets of downtown Seattle Saturday, waving banners and chanting slogans in protest of the Reagan Administration's policies on South Africa, Central America and the economy.

"Peace, Jobs and Justice," "Smash the Racist Apartheid Regime," "Sandino Vive — No Aid to the Contras," and "On Strike Against Alaska Airlines," read some of the banners.

Led by a blue banner with a white dove, and with 15' high puppets bobbing above the crowd, the march stretched for about 10 blocks as it moved from the Seattle Federal Building to the Federal Courthouse.

Marches in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Seattle, and other cities drew thousands for the largest protest of Reagan's administration policies in Reagan's second term. Jesse Jackson gave the keynote speech in Washington.

"I haven't seen a demonstration this big in Seattle in years and years," said a shopowner along Saturday's parade route. Nearby, a man in a gold-colored Mercedes waiting for the

march to pass apparently became irate and got into an altercation with march security people.

At the Courthouse, those who may have become tired were picked up on their feet again by the Total Experience Gospel Choir's soulful renditions of "Ain't Gonna Study War No More," and "We Shall Overcome." Children in aprons moved through the crowd selling "Free South Africa" buttons. A Nicaraguan singer, Oscar de la Rocha, also entertained.

Noticeable among the speakers and protest leaders were people of color, women and labor activists. They emphasized the connections between problems in South Africa, Central America, the Middle East and domestic budget cuts.

"I come to you as a Black woman on behalf of my sisters and brothers of color," said Linda Taylor, acting director of the Seattle Office of Women's Rights. Taylor decried Reagan's social welfare policies which she said have "13 million women locked in poverty," which have caused reduced wages and Medicaid benefits, cuts in aid to dependent children,

and cuts in low income housing funds.

Fayez Mohammed, representing the Palestine Solidarity Committee of Portland, said U.S. support of Israel includes underwriting 31 percent of Israel's military budget. That made possible the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, he said, and continues to make possible the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands. "It is also making possible the apartheid regime in South Africa," he said.

Gerald Lenoir of the Seattle Coalition Against Apartheid spoke of "the new era of resistance unparalleled in South African history." The United Democratic Front has drawn together 3 million people and many South African Black organizations in the resistance, said Lenoir, who spoke in front of a green, yellow and red banner that said, "Divest Now!, Free South Africa."

Referring to violence in which hundreds have died, Lenoir said that "Events in South Africa have uncovered for all the world to see that all the talk of reform is just that. . . talk." As long as representation in government is denied Blacks, the resistance and violence will continue, said Lenoir.

"Tell me, what is so constructive about constructive engagement?," he said.

Lenoir informed the crowd of efforts to remove Seattle's honorary South African consul, Joseph Swing. Over 200 people have been arrested since weekly protests began in December, he said. "We'll be out there 'til he's gone," said Lenoir.

A woman from the Machinists Union in Seattle described her union's strike against Alaska Airlines. "We are mad as hell, and we are here to tell you that we're going to fight back" against what she described as a union-busting drive led by multi-national corporations.

Nita Burgerman, a leader of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers in Portland, called for conversion from military spending (including an estimated \$1 trillion for Star Wars) to create jobs. "We want more of what we have a right to for ourselves and our children. We want jobs, not war," she said.



Marchers gathered Saturday at Seattle's Courthouse 4,000 strong to protest Reagan Administration policies on foreign affairs and the economy. Here they are singing, "We Shall Overcome."

(Photo: Bill Collins)

Blacks ask bi-racial inquest

by Lanita Duke

GRASSROOT NEWS, N.W. — Portland's Afro-American community has called for a bi-racial inquest, the suspension of officers involved in the death of Tony Stevenson and a permanent ban on the use of the carotid sleeper hold.

"Tony Stevenson did not endanger the lives of those involved in apprehending the shoplifter or the lives of any police officer. He had no weapon. There was absolutely no justification for using a potentially deadly hold on him," said Ronnie Herndon, co-chair of the Black United Front.

A poorly briefed Police Chief Penny Harrington fended off questions at a Monday afternoon press conference with a parade of "I don't know's" as she stated that Officers Gary Barbour and Bruce Pantley acted within bureau guidelines. However, when pressed for details, Harrington admitted that the police had not interviewed all the witnesses.

"I'm sorry she made conclusive statements when all the evidence was not in," added Herb Cawthorne, newly designated chief executive director of Portland's Urban League. In his first public statement as Urban League director, Cawthorne added his voice to a choir of concerned citi-

zens demanding the elimination of the sleeper hold and a bi-racial inquest.

"It's a horrible mistake to base a decision upon incomplete information," Herndon said criticizing Harrington's defense of the officers.

"This is a test case for Chief Harrington and Mayor Clark. I don't see this administration doing anything more than any other administration," noted Rev. John Jackson, co-chair of the Black United Front.

Cawthorne said he, Jackson and Herndon, met with Mayor Clark in the summer of 1984 when a series of concerns were presented. "On the top of the list was the police use of the dum dum bullet and excessive force." Cawthorne said now the issue before the city is "the use of excessive force which resulted in the death of a human being."

On Tuesday morning, in a joint press conference and community forum, Herndon, Cawthorne, Jackson and John Harvey, Stevenson's father, arrested community outrage, bitterness and confusion over Stevenson's death. As we went to press, a demonstration was being held downtown at the Justice Center to protest Stevenson's death and to demand an inquest. Harrington has issued a temporary ban on the use of the sleeper hold.