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Testimony, Mrs. Wilkins

It was approximately May 28th. It was about 5:00 in the evening and we had just come in from a fishing trip. Two officers had passed my house and they turned around and went back down the street. My son Lamond that's 13 years old was playing in the street with a group of other children, probably 10 children and at this time the officers were approaching the children in the street. They had stopped the car and they had gotten out. By this time Lamond was back upon the grass. What occurred down the street was that they had approached him and other children with their billy clubs drawn and said that they were blocking the traffic. They had attempted to talk to Lamond about blocking the traffic and possibly more or less under arrest and his two brothers came to his aid. At that time I had gotten into my car and went down the street. Lamond had got in the car. My husband came down the street behind me. He was walking. It was about 6 houses from my house. At this time with Lamond in the car, one of the officers, Officer Riverall, approached the car. He had opened the door on my side and said he wanted to talk to me about my son blocking traffic in the street. About that time my husband appeared. He closed the door and he told him he would talk to him about Lamond. He pushed the door and told me to go on home and I went down to the next corner and turned around and came back up the street. When I had passed the officers they proceeded to back up the street and more or less speed(which children and adults were in the street) at approximately about 15 miles per hour or more. It was kind of recklessly because they were backing and at this time they had stopped in my driveway, blocking across my driveway. My husband had ran back up the street and when he had gotten there, he (Riverall) wanted him to show some identification. He had proceeded to pull his license out to show who he was and at the same time he (Riverall) asked me who I was and I told him that I was Mrs. Jesse Wilkins at the same address.

He proceeded to tell my husband about Lamond blocking traffic and my husband told him to wait just a minute, how could he pick his son out of approximately 10 children to be blocking the traffic. Officer Riverall then told him to shut up, that he don't tell him what happened, he'll tell him(my husband) and at that time he proceeded to shake his finger in his (husband's) face. Then two other officers came up in the car and Officer Riverall told them that there was two 1016's in the yard and they arrested my son Jesse which is 15 and my other son Rolando which is 16. I feel like the whole incident was bad judgment. I think it was more or less a point to try to irritate my husband into getting angry so that they could arrest him instead of arresting my children. It was a provoking incident because my children were in the yard and my husband was the one that was doing all the talking at the time. They were behind him and when the other two officers came up they told them that there were two 1016's in the yard they came up and arrested them. Now this incident to me, if my husband hadn't been more or less more rational than you would say the police were because I think they didn't use good taste, good judgment or anything, that if it had been in other parts of the Southeast area there could have been an incident started because of the fact that there were plenty of people on the street that did not like what went on because it was no cause for it.

Question: How was your son blocking traffic, by automobile or his body or what?

Answer: They didn't say, the fact that they were in the street playing ball, this was what he said was blocking traffic. Then too,I know that you're only blocking traffic if you are asked to move and you don't remove yourself, but the children immediately, all of them, when this car was coming, they stepped aside. My husband is here and there are three witnesses--

Question: What happened on the way to the police station?

Answer: I can only relate what my son said. On the way to the police station they were taken to Big Bear. A sergeant came up to Big Bear and they were searched. At this time the two officers told my son about his father, you know, they were more or less talking and they were using, well any way, they were using names like calling his father "nigger father" and then my brother-in-law that works at the Sheriff's Department, they had mentioned their uncle and they said that he couldn't do anything about it and he wasn't anything but a "fat-head nigger". This kind of situation psychologically on the minds of my children is not good. I have small children at home and the incident was not good for their minds either. At the police station, when we arrived there to pick up my children, we had about a thirty minute wait. After he (husband) called the juvenile officer for the second time we did go upstairs to pick them up. They were very discourteous. When we came in his (the officer's) attitude was already built up to the fact that we were wrong. You could see that we couldn't talk to them (officers) at all. He told my husband that he wanted to tell him what happened. My husband told him how could he tell him what happened when he'd seen what happened. Then he(officer) got very upset and told him(husband) if he didn't want to listen to what he had to say it was all right with him. He didn't really give an answer to why they were arrested or what for and up to today they haven't been filed any charges whatsoever.

Question: What were the charges?

Answer: No charges.

Question: What brought the police to the scene? They were there when you arrived?

Answer: I don't know. We had just returned home from a fishing trip and had been there about 15 minutes. We were cleaning out a camper. This is not an unusual procedure for certain officers on the police department. My house has been more or less driven by and some do hesitate there or else my children are playing in the yard--they more or less look there and then my little ones run in the house "oh, it's a police officer out here" then they go up to the corner which is a dead end street, make a circle and come back down in front of my house. This is not a procedure that's what I consider doesn't go on at least two times a week.

Question: When they first put your son in the car or before they pur him in the car did they tell you or him why they were arresting him?

Answer: No, and after they were in the car, my husband asked Officer Cox, which was in the same car with Officer Riverall, if they were under arrest and he said yes, they were under arrest with no reason given to why.

Question: Was this the first encounter with any officers the children have had?

Answer: These two?

Question: Yes?

Answer: No, one that was arrested. I was arrested last year, approximately one year ago. I was pulled out of my car. This is another incident, and I was slung to the ground and kicked. My 16 year old, Rolando Wilkins, came to my aid and was hit over the head with a billy club and taken in also. No charges were brought against either one of us.

Testimony Jesse and Rolando Wilkins

Question: What happened from the time the officers first approached you? Where were you taken?

Answer: We were in the driveway. Officer Riverall was talking to my father. My father was trying to get something over to him. Then two more police cars came up so Riverall got smart with my father. Then he told the officers that it was 16 something in the driveway. We were standing in the driveway minding our own business--they came up and grabbed us. We tried to shake loose but my father said let them take you so I let them take me on down.

Question: From your home where did you go?

Answer: Big Bear.

Q: Then what happened?

A: We were in the car and Riverall told us to get out - so I got out. He told him (brother) to get out on the other side. Then they took him around on the other side and stood there and they were all over there laughing and giggling and talking about people.

Q: With handcuffs on?

A: Yes. One took off my wallet and threw it on the desk and took all the stuff out and said "we should keep this". Then he asked the Sgt. should he keep this and he (Sgt.) said "sure, keep it" and I said , you can't keep that, it ain't yours, and then he said "Sgt., should we let him have it back?" and(the Sgt.) said "yes", so he gave it back to me. Then after that they started calling my uncle a whole bunch of names and stuff and said that my father was -- he was so black and stuff. They just finally took us from there--Big Bear-- took us over to this little phone booth--over there by 49th--then called up and reported it. Then they took us down. Soon as we got out they didn't give us no rights or nothing, they just told us to get out. We do have a right not to say nothing, just our name and address, that's all I told them.

Officer Riverall was rough--Officer Cox was saying most of the bad words, Riverall was just roughing us up. Like when we were sitting in the car and we got in the car he searched to see if anything was in back of the seat and he threw the seat out so we couldn't sit back, so when we sat down we had to sit back like this (illustration) so the handcuffs tightened up on us. I asked him would he move the seat back up and five police officers got around the car and acted like I was going to jump--so they got around the car and I asked them if they would fix the seat and they said "no, just leave it like that," so I just sat there.

The boys stated that they were verbally harassed at the station but only told the officers their names. They were never told why they were arrested.

Testimony Mr. Arthur Bowman - Witness

It all started with the ball game being played by a couple of younger boys among them, the younger brother of the two arrested. The neighborhood allows this. The officers made a trip up the street to the dead end and turned around and came back down. They started questioning two younger boys. The Wilkins boys came out to see what was happening and when they found out it was their brother they came and told us. A conversation ensued between Mr. and Mrs. Wilkins and the police. She put the boys in her car and drove up the street. They (police) broke up and I heard one of the officers say to the non driver, Officer Cox, "I want those two guys, I'm gonna get those two guys", and he immediately got in his car and got on the radio. He backed his car down the street extremely fast. We had to run out of the street because two more police cars came around the corner doing at least 50 miles an hour. I have never seen two officers work so hard to start a riot or any other kind of disturbance.

Mr. Poindexter, another witness added that "When the officers drove off, he turned around and looked at Mr. Wilkins and just laughed at him, which I think was very distasteful. "