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Madison Police Department
Remnant of Racial Discrimination Shows Its Evil Face

Many of the white-collar professionals in Madison pull their luxury cars out of their four car garages and drive to a tranquil downtown area. These same professionals dressed in clothing from Talbots and Brooks Brothers walk the clean sidewalks to the nice shops. They may even cross the street with the help of a friendly police officer. Madison is not the Utopia this façade implies.

Due to ignorance or apathy, we do not stand up for injustices that happen in our own backyards. Few people know about an ongoing legal struggle pertaining to the unequal application of law in a juvenile case stemming from an incident on November 24, 2006.

The Madison Police Department displayed bias, discrimination and injustice that night when there was an altercation between two adult Caucasian males and two African American minors. Words were exchanged between the two adults and the two minors. A fight broke out and the police were called to the scene. Although all involved were injured, the Madison Police arrested the two African American youth but took the two Caucasian adults to the hospital for treatment.

Mrs. Kim Harris, the mother of the two minors, immediately attempted to press charges against the two adults. But, Chief Juvenile Detective John Miscia impeded her efforts. Although it was Mrs. Harris' right to obtain the names of the adults that assaulted her children, Officer Miscia refused on numerous times to provide this information.

The failure of Detective Miscia and the Madison Police Department to adhere to proper procedure was exposed by Morris County Superior Court Judge John Dangler who later dismissed the cases against the two minors. Advocacy on the part of Reverend Charles H. Smith of First Baptist Church in Madison played a pivotal role in this case. Reverend Smith interviewed the Mayor and Police Chief of Madison, and wrote to Judge Dangler and the assistant prosecutor in charge of the juvenile cases.

Furthermore, review of public records of the Madison Municipal Court reveals that Madison Municipal Court Judge Gary Troxell found probable cause for the complaints recently filed by Mrs. Harris on behalf of her sons against John Putro, age 29, and Adam Putro, age 22.

In the complaints that were filed is a sworn statement that the two adults crossed the street and confronted the two minors before the fight broke out. The complaints also include testimony that Detective Miscia refused to file charges against John and Adam Putro and declined to release the names of the two adults in order for Mrs. Harris to press charges.

Detective Miscia declined to return two telephone calls seeking comment on the incident. It is important to note Detective Miscia has not yet been charged with or found guilty of improper conduct. But, Judge Troxell's finding of probable cause for the complaints filed by Mrs. Harris is the right step in the direction of equal justice.

Coincidental or not, actions like this by a Madison police officer has to make one question whether or not remnants of racial discrimination linger in society and in the minds of those having lawful authority. Ideally, informing the public via the printed word will provoke the people to speak out against such wrongdoing.

Frederick Douglas once said, "Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong that will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows or both." How much injustice will we submit to as citizens of Madison?