

5F) Trouble in Amityville

LI Rally Ends in Riot, *Newsday*, August, 1969

North Amityville-- Minutes after the end of a peaceful rally aimed at improving police community relations, bands of young Negroes chanting "black power" began hurling rocks and bottles at police last night and continued sporadic acts of violence for several hours. The youths broke the plate glass window of a supermarket, hurled Molotov cocktails, tossed bottles in the direction of Suffolk Police Commissioner John L. Barry, overturned a car, and damaged others, with rocks and chains. Several policemen were struck by rocks, but one was injured seriously. Police arrested eight persons, one on assault charges, five on disorderly conduct charges and two others on charges of public intoxication.

The violence began less than 15 minutes after a rally at which the Suffolk County Executive and Babylon Town Supervisor Gilbert C. Hanse and Barry had addressed a crowd of about 350 Negroes and then listened to their grievances. The three officials left before the disturbances began, but Barry later returned to direct about 150 police rushed to the scene to restore order.

Before the trouble started, Barry had told the crowd at the rally: "Yes, there have been some misunderstandings (with the police department.) But sincere people interested in solving any problem can do so by sitting down. The word 'police' at times has been terrifying, but we're interested in community relations." The rally was held at the same spot where between 400 and 500 angry Negroes gathered earlier this month during a police investigation of a disturbance in one of the stores in the shopping center.

When the officials finished speaking, about 15 Negroes approached the microphone on a wooden speaker's platform, one after another, and expressed their grievances. Most talked about lack of jobs, poor housing, lack of recreation, and police brutality. "We can't go out in the street and have a conversation, because they just move us along," Hardy said. Merryweather Aiken of Amityville, said: "A Negro has to be a superman to get an ordinary job." As the rally ended, the platform was torn down and the violence began.

A 'Harlem' Hidden in North Amityville, *Newsday*

North Amityville-- On the surface, this 90 percent Negro community looks like many other low price developments on Long Island, yet among the tight packed lines of bungalows civil rights workers say they have found living conditions as bad as those in Harlem or East New York.

It is one of several inconsistencies which mark this community, which has more Negroes than any other in Suffolk. Another is the lack of sharp boundaries marking it off. The heart of the community is North Amityville itself where trouble flared last night, an area bounded roughly by Southern State Parkway on the north, Sunrise Highway on the South, Route 110 on the west and Lindenhurst on the east. But the Negro community extends into neighboring Copiague and East Farmingdale. The general area has about 11,000 persons and only about 10 percent are white.

It is a sprawling neighborhood of 10 to 15 year old development homes, small, asbestos-shingled bungalows, Capes and flat-topped ranches. It is spotted with factories and abandoned warehouses. There are no parks, few theaters. Grocery stores sell ham hocks, grits and blackeyed peas. At night, North Amityville is a poorly-lit place; it is rare to see more than one street light in any one block.

In some of the homes there is no lighting and residents use kerosene lamps. In others there is no plumbing and residents go to neighbors to secure water for drinking or washing. An official of the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity said he has found up to 25 persons living in some homes. "I've seen some bad areas in Harlem and Brooklyn," he said. "But conditions inside these homes were as frightful as anything I ran across in New York."

As early as 1947, before the housing boom, it was called a "shanty town" by the town super-visor. Negro leaders don't feel there has been any real progress since. "If you want to portray this place," said one, "Think of a lack: a lack of facilities, a lack of jobs, a lack of something to do."

Black Students Disrupt School, *Newsday* October 9, 1969

Amityville-- A group of 20 black youths disrupted Amityville High School yesterday in a demonstration against a white teacher whose dismissal the group has demanded. Three village police cars were called to the school. But by the time police arrived, the incident had subsided and no immediate arrests were made. Ten of the youths, all high school students, were suspended. The other 10 had been previously suspended, a school official said. School sources said that the charge of trespass and harassment would probably be filed against the youths. The disruption reportedly consisted of an attempt by students to confront the teacher and a commotion in the halls.

About the time the disturbance was taking place, the automobile of school Principal Edward Cap was vandalized in the school parking lot. Windows were broken, tires were slashed and the antenna was broken off. No damage was done to the school, and classes went on as scheduled. One school official said that most of the high school was unaware that a disturbance had taken place.

Judge Bars 26 From Protesting, *Newsday*, October 10, 1969

Amityville-- A State Supreme Court justice issued an injunction yesterday barring Suffolk CORE leader Irwin Quintyne, 20 suspended Amityville High School students and five parents from going on school property to "demonstrate, picket or interfere with the administration of the school." Quintyne, chairman of the Congress of Racial Equality, and the parents, all black were not at the school at the time of the disturbance, but Conlon said that they had instigated it. "These people are disrupting the educational process in the district and this cannot be tolerated," Conlon said.

Criminal summonses were also issued yesterday to 10 suspended black students who reportedly participated in the disturbance. They were charged with trespassing, loitering and disorderly conduct. Ten other black students were suspended after the incident. No trouble was reported at the school yesterday.

Mrs. Jean Dember, one of the parents named in the court order, said that she was served with the papers last night. "This is a dirty tactic. I've never intimidated anyone. I've never done anything illegal. The power structure is just telling us we have no recourse."

Mrs. Dember, who is on the governing board of the local anti-poverty center, and other parents have led picketing outside the high school to press for the dismissal of social studies teacher Kerry Doran, who was involved in a scuffle with a student on Sept. 11. Doran is white and the student, Ronald Welden, is black.

Questions:

- 1- According to the first article, what happened at the rally to improve police-community relations in North Amityville?
- 2- Based on these articles, why is there racial tension in Amityville and North Amityville?
- 3- Why did Black youths protest at Amityville High School?
- 4- Do you agree or disagree with the judges decision to bar further protests? Why?