

Blacks Dispute Police In Hunters Pt. Slaying

By Charles Howe

5 OCT

Prominent members of the black community challenged yesterday the police version of how Clarence Johnson, a burglary suspect, died at Hunters Point.

Johnson, a 32-year-old black handyman, was killed by a police bullet through the head while assertedly resist-

ing arrest on Tuesday afternoon.

The San Francisco branch of the NAACP called for "a special federal grand jury" to investigate Johnson's death.

And Sylvester Brown, a

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community worker for the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, said he has interviewed more than a dozen witnesses who told him Johnson had both of his hands on the roof of a car, as an officer had ordered, when he was shot by him.

Deputy Police Chief William Keays, in a press conference at the Hall of Justice, said Johnson was one of four blacks stopped, while in a car, in connection with a burglary at 99 Reardon road.

While policeman Richard Lewis, 28, was searching Johnson, Keays said, "a little altercation ensued when apparently Johnson swung at the officer and the gun (in Lewis' hand) discharged."

PROBE

Keays also said his office was "actively pursuing the investigation" and urged all witnesses to the incident that occurred at 5:24 p.m. to contact investigators.

A preliminary investigation into the matter, police said, has revealed one witness. Officers declined to release the name — or the testimony — of this witness.

Three black men arrested with Johnson were released yesterday on bail of \$1250 each. They were identified as Frank Green, 20, and Larry Jones, 19 — both of the apartment complex at 99 Reardon road — and Robert (Bubba) Caldwell, 21, of 819 Girard street.

PROTEST

The NAACP here officially protested the shooting — the second police shooting of an unarmed suspect here in seven days — to United States Attorney General James L. Browning.

In a telegram to the Justice Department, NAACP officials said they requested a Federal investigation of the shooting because:

"The killing is a violation of Federal civil rights laws" and "We have no confidence that local police will deal with this matter."

At a press conference yesterday, Benjamin Criswell, president of the San Francisco NAACP, said: "As far as we're concerned (Johnson's death is just plain murder . . . we are going to let the city of San Francisco know that we aren't going to tolerate this any longer . . . we don't want this man (Lewis) on the force . . ."

Keays said that "there has been no action taken against the officer who did the shooting and he will remain on duty until the investigation is concluded."

EVIDENCE

Upon completion of the investigation, Keays said, all evidence will be submitted to District Attorney John Jay Ferdon for appropriate action.

Investigators said the tragedy—and several policemen called it that—began after Housing Authority police telephoned that a burglary was in progress.

Patrol cars responding stopped the car Johnson was in, based upon a tip supplied by an unknown witness to the affair.

No stolen items were found in the car, nor were any weapons on the four suspects.

A search of the area disclosed, however, a 23-inch



CLARENCE JOHNSON
The victim

color television set "at the top of the staircase" of the burglarized apartment house.

Items of women's clothing, some containing fresh bloodstains, were found near the television set, and bloodstains were found on the second floor of the apartment complex.

One of the three surviving suspects — his name was not disclosed by officers — had a fresh cut on his hand at the time he was apprehended, police said.

BULLET

Johnson, the father of two children, was killed by a powerful bullet from a .41 caliber magnum pistol which struck him on the right side of the head above the ear.

Johnson had a record of minor arrests dating back to December, 1959.

In July, 1962, he was arrested here as a burglary suspect, but released. In April of that year he was convicted of disturbing the peace and given a 90-day suspended sentence with three years probation.

All of those arrests were under the name Clarence Ellis. Only one arrest was recorded with the name Johnson—on September 11 of this year, for alleged assault with a deadly weapon on his wife. A hearing was pending in Municipal Court when he was

killed.

Community Worker Brown, who officers expected would turn the results of his investigation over to them, sharply disputed the official version of Johnson's death.

Brown said persons he talked with said, in substance:

When the car was stopped by officers, one man attempted to get out and was told by police to get back inside; then two men, one at a time, were let out of the suspect car, searched, and taken to a second police car.

"The third man out was Johnson," Brown said. "He had his hands on top of the car," as he was being searched for a weapon.

TURN

Johnson turned his head to say something to the officer (Lewis) who was searching him.

"The officer said: 'What did you say?' Then the officer backed off and then he fired his pistol."

Police felt the gun Lewis was carrying went off as "a defensive reflex" when Johnson assertedly elbowed him.

But Brown said that all of the 13 witnesses to the incident he has interviewed were adamant that Johnson was "spread-eagled" over the car, his back to Lewis and with both hands on the roof of the vehicle.

At a meeting last night of 350 Hunters Point residents in the Burnett school, a series of angry speakers denounced the shooting.

On September 28 another suspect thought to be "casing" a market in the Mission District was shot by an officer.

Maya Faletago, a 21-year-old Samoan, was killed by a bullet through the head after he attempted to evade a police car chasing his vehicle and assertedly swung his arm at the gun of Juvenile Officer George Matelli.

Faletago was unarmed. His death is still under investigation.