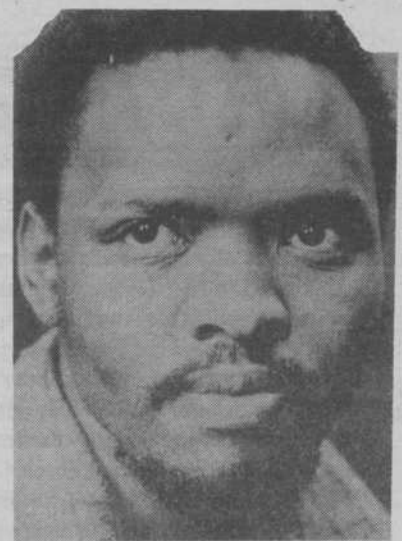


Biko's death accidental former S. Africa cop says



STEVE BIKO

Special to Sentinel-Voice
CAPE TOWN, South Africa — A former police officer testified Monday that anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko's death in police custody after he was beaten by five officers was an accident.

Gideon Nieuwoudt's testimony before South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission matched that of four other policemen who are also applying for amnesty in the 1977 death of the 30-year-old anti-apartheid leader.

The commission is probing apartheid-era human rights abuses by all sides and has the power to grant amnesty to those who tell the truth and prove a political motive for their crimes.

Nieuwoudt is to testify for three days in the last scheduled hearings on Biko's death. The other four former officers testified late last year.

Biko's violent end inspired a new generation of anti-apartheid activists in South Africa and abroad and hastened the end of the racist system

the police had been trying to protect.

Nieuwoudt said that Biko, despite being outnumbered and exhausted after weeks of incarceration, tried to attack one of his interrogators by pushing a chair towards him and flailing at him with his fists.

The officers say they tackled Biko, accidentally slamming his head against a wall.

Although Biko was dazed and slurring his words, the officers chained him to a gate in a standing position, virtually crucifying him against the

bars.

He was then taken in a police van, naked and bleeding, the 750 miles from the coastal city of Port Elizabeth to a prison in Pretoria, the capital.

Biko was not examined by a doctor until a day after being injured and died of massive brain injuries on Sept. 12, 1977, soon after arriving at the prison.

The policemen's story of an accidental death has angered Biko's family, who say the men are lying and oppose the amnesty application.

Police brutality incidents dividing Chicago racially

Special to Sentinel-Voice
CHICAGO — The case of black 18-year-old Jeremiah Mearday, just six-months-old, is already growing into a nightmare for City Hall.

After the teen-ager claimed white police officers beat him, breaking his jaw, two officers were fired. That generated backlash among police of both races.

Then Mearday was arrested on new drug charges, a move his supporters branded as police retaliation.

Now there is a police

department internal affairs investigation, and the federal government is monitoring the case.

Some people are concerned that anger in the black community could spill over into Mayor Richard M. Daley's re-election campaign next year.

The story started Sept. 26 when Mearday was arrested in a West Side area that is a haven for the drug-selling Vice Lords gang.

Police say he is a member, and he was on probation for selling crack.

Mearday was walking with friends when officers James Comito Jr. and Matthew Thiel ordered the group to stop, believing one of them was wanted on an arrest warrant.

Comito and Thiel told the Chicago Police Board that Mearday walked away, and then pushed and slugged them.

They said his jaw was broken when they wrestled him to the ground. Mearday accused the officers of breaking his jaw by beating him with flashlights.

His cause was immediately

taken up by demonstrators led by the Rev. Paul Jakes, pastor of Old St. Paul's Baptist Church, who says white police have a habit of mistreating blacks.

At a Police Board hearing, white officers stood in unison in support of Comito and Thiel. Then black activists stood up with clenched fists. Bailiffs had to calm both sides.

The board fired the two officers March 12, saying "they badly overreacted."

Within hours, Fraternal Order of Police President

William Nolan said the decision was unfair and called Mearday "a thug."

Sgt. Ronald Gaines, a black special operations officer and 25-year veteran of the force, acknowledges that many police are wary about enforcing the law these days for fear of a lawsuit or worse.

Seven days after the board's decision, Mearday was arrested again. Officers said he had crack in his shoe.

He now faces charges of resisting arrest from the September incident as well as

three new counts of aggravated battery and a drug charge.

Jakes says he feels sure the drugs were planted in retaliation for the firing of Comito and Thiel.

Police Superintendent Terry Hillard, a veteran black officer, told reporters that "proper police procedures" were used in charging Mearday. But he still ordered an internal investigation.

"No good can come of a rush to judgment, based on the emotions of the moment," Hillard said.

Fragile health could halt former S. African president's trial

Special to Sentinel-Voice
CAPE TOWN, South Africa — Declining health may render former President P.W. Botha incapable of standing trial for defying a commission probing apartheid-era human rights abuses, two medical experts said Monday.

Derek Philcox and Jacques de Villiers, both retired brain specialists, presented affidavits to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission expressing doubts about Botha's health in the wake of his January 1989

stroke.

Botha, who has undergone a hip replacement and walks with a cane, says he provided more than 1,700 pages of written answers and claims the commission wants to humiliate him by forcing him to appear in person.

The Truth Commission wants to question Botha on his role as head of the State Security Council, which coordinated a crackdown on black liberation groups.

His trial is set to begin April

14 on charges of contempt after he defied subpoenas to appear before the Truth Commission, a group created to shed light on atrocities committed by all sides in the struggle over apartheid.

Botha has pleaded innocent. He faces up to two years in prison and unspecified fines if convicted — although a fine is considered more likely due to his frail health.

Alex Boraine, deputy chairman of the Truth Commission, said the body was

preparing for the trial despite the affidavits, but acknowledged the testimony presented Monday could bring it to a halt.

"If (the statements) are confirmed... it would be totally wrong to continue," he said at a news conference.

In South Africa, many blacks want to see the white man who governed without their votes for so long stand trial before a black judge. Conservative whites see the planned trial as confirmation

the Truth Commission is conducting a witch hunt against them.

Commission chairman and Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu said the panel passed the medical experts' affidavits on to the prosecutor, Western Cape Attorney General Frank Kahn.

"We are not in a position to make an informed judgment on the contents of the affidavits," Tutu said "This thing is not in our hands. It is in the hands of the attorney

general."

Tutu declined to reveal whether the professors had concerns over Botha's mental or physical health.

Botha, 82, was white-run South Africa's leader for eleven years through some of the worst violence of the apartheid struggle.

Former president Botha was ousted in 1989, after his stroke, by F.W. de Klerk, who began a process of reform that ended in 1994's historic all-race elections.

Emancipation Proclamation displaying at Library of Congress

For the first time in 15 years, the Library of Congress is displaying Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in the "American Treasures of the Library of Congress" exhibition through May 1998.

Previously, the document was briefly displayed to the public in 1975 and 1983, and for a longer period in 1962-1963. On Sept. 22, 1862, Lincoln gave his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation as a direct order to the Army.

In the final Emancipation Proclamation, Jan. 1, 1863, Lincoln named districts "wherein the people ... are this day in rebellion" and ordered "that all persons held as slaves...[in those areas] are, and henceforward shall be, free." The final version differs from the preliminary edition in the greater emphasis placed on the preservation of the Union as a motivating force for the Proclamation.

The Jan. 1, 1863 Proclamation was lost in the Chicago fire of 1871. Surviving photographs of the document show it primarily in Lincoln's own hand.

The title and ending are in the hand of a clerk, and printed insertions are from the Sept. 22, 1862, preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. The official, or engrossed, version of the final Emancipation Proclamation is in the National Archives.

Besides having the only surviving copy of the Proclamation in the hand of Lincoln, the exhibition includes: a letter from Lincoln to Albert Hodges, editor of the Frankfort, Kentucky, Commonwealth, April 4, 1864, in which Lincoln explained his view of slavery; and a first printing of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, Sept. 22, 1862.

As you go through life, you meet maybe a handful of people who are memorable. People who have a gift, who develop that gift, and who use it for the good of others. Meet one of them now.

Meet Dr. Owen W. Justice, Jr.

Serving Las Vegas for over 19 years

Cheyenne-Decatur Dental

The personal touch in leading-edge care

(702) 648-6800

3226 N. Decatur • Las Vegas, NV 89130

**IT ALWAYS PAYS TO ADVERTISE
 CALL TODAY 380-8100**