

Mayor in spotlight of riot arrests

YORK, Pa. (AP) — In 1969, Charlie Robertson was a police officer charged with crowd control during a week of race riots that killed two people. Now, 32 years later, he is the mayor, and he is facing questions over whether he helped stir the unrest.

The 67-year-old Robertson, who is white, previously admitted he yelled, "White power!" at a rally the night before a young black woman was killed. Now he is back in the spotlight because of the arrest of two white men last month in the long-ago slaying.

Affidavits in the arrests of Arthur and Robert Messersmith mention an "unnamed police officer" who helped foment unrest at the rally the night before 27-year-old Lillie Belle Allen was killed. The arrests marked the first time charges were filed in the slaying.

The papers also allege the officer provided ammunition to young men on the street where the shooting happened on July 21, 1969 - and at least one of the men used the ammunition to fire upon the car she was riding in.

Robertson's attorney, Robert Oare, said Friday that his client was not involved in the shooting and denied providing the bullets. Asked if he was the "unnamed officer" mentioned in court papers, Robertson said, "I don't think it's me."

More than 60 people were injured, whole city blocks were burned and there were more than 100 arrests during the riots in this city 85 miles west of Philadelphia.

Robertson, who is seeking a third term, said he is worried he will be charged. He faces City Councilman Ray Crenshaw, who is black, in the May 15 Democratic primary. About 40 percent of York's 41,000 people are minorities.

In the years since the riots, Robertson has said his attitude toward minorities has changed.

In an interview with the York Daily Record in June, Robertson acknowledged making racist statements "early in those days," saying he and his colleagues routinely referred to blacks as "niggers." After the riots, the officers were ordered to take sensitivity training classes.

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information from Mr. Miller," Deputy District Attorney Cheryl Kosewicz said on Tuesday. "Now I need to talk with Mr. Bell to see what we can do, if anything."

Meanwhile, Miller has had promising talks with some corporate advocates and reports progress on what he expects will be the program's most popular element.

Our Choice seeks "to provide equal opportunity to today's working environment by providing supplemental programs and instruction." It will help some individuals pursue educational goals, prepare others for employment interviews, and, in some cases, train clients in skills organizers believe will be quite marketable.

Last week the agency became a subsidiary of the "Engaging Young Minds Academy" (EYMA), a non-profit organization that claims the mission of "empowering our youth to excel to their highest level." Dr. Dawn Outen, an experienced educator, is the EYMA executive director.

Miller is gratified by early response among potential employers. He says several major properties on the Las Vegas Strip have been receptive to his overtures on behalf of Our Choice, including the Venetian, MGM Grand and New York, New York resorts. This week he took a group of about 25 to submit applications for work at the MGM.

"We'll actually be going into more employment offices to present the program," Miller said, "and we're sending candidates out this week for interviews." He says the types of jobs available are limited only by candidates' qualifications.

His prospective clients cover a range of education levels and occupational skills, from those who haven't completed high school to college graduates, but he hopes to help all of them find jobs. "It's a second chance to get back to a high level of productivity," Miller explained.

"The hotels are making extreme efforts to accommodate people from our community," he said. "We want to em-

phasize how important it is for the community to continue to participate while these hard efforts are being made."

A spokesman for the Target Corporation indicated the department store chain will help Our Choice candidates become accustomed to a working environment and will interview some for actual jobs. May 25 is a special "target" date.

"We've got our first group of potential employees of the Target Corporation going in," Miller said. Our Choice has arranged for a tour of the store, including presentation of a training video, and will purchase clothes to be worn for interviews. Some Target employees have even agreed to work as mentors for Our Choice candidates.

Since starting his organization, Miller has been recruiter, job developer, employment counselor and more. He created a weekly radio program that debuted last week on KCEP-FM, which he co-hosts with Sherman Rutledge, the station's general manager.

The hour-long talk show- which is entitled, "Gang Talk," and airs on Wednesdays at 7p.m.- uses a listener call-in format and invites participation not only from gang members, but from anyone in the community.

"It went well," Miller said of the program's debut. It's an open forum," he explained, saying gang members "get to understand the community's point of view and the community gets to understand theirs." The subject matter, he said, is dictated by the callers.

Miller is also trying to create a technical training program in music and video production that he thinks could eventually become the crown jewel of his program. Initial plans call for a 6-week course, for those between the ages of 13 and 18, to be offered this summer in cooperation with Nevada Business Services (NBS).

"The music program will be a high priority among teens," Miller said, "and we expect it to be the most popular element and to get the most immediate response."

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