

L.A. police brutality case remains in U.S. spotlight

By Betty Pleasant
Special to Sentinel-Voice

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) — A marathon of meetings with community leaders continue to be held almost daily as LAPD and city officials move to assure residents that last month's televised police beating of Stanley Miller will be "thoroughly, openly and fairly investigated."

Yet, despite these gatherings — and in some cases, because of them — some residents are unimpressed with the heavy dose of sensitivity bestowed upon South Central Los Angeles during the past week.

The Rev. Perry Crouch, a well-known community activist who has worked among hard-core gang-bangers for years, believes the beating of Miller, a 36-year-old African American following a police chase early June 23, has set his work of ending gang violence in South L.A. back immeasurably.

"We're back at square one now," Crouch said, as he waited for the start of a meeting with LAPD Chief William Bratton at the Police Academy.

"We were taking a proactive approach with the youth in an attempt to save their lives, and we were making

headway," Crouch said. "Many of us had planned a series of positive events to avoid a long, hot, violent summer, and now this happened."

"Now the community is right back to square one: 'F—the police,'" Crouch added. "That's their attitude: 'F—the police.' Their main thing is the police can do all these things and get off the hook."

Crouch said that while the elected officials and community leaders are meeting with each other about the investigation into Miller's beating, he and other neighborhood workers are trying to keep a damper on a potential powder keg.

"We're dealing with the ones that are sitting on the sidelines just holding that punch," Crouch said. "Now they can shoot that punch, and you don't have a defense for it. You have the looky-loos that lay in the corner with their arms folded and wait for something to happen, and now they're saying, 'You see? I told you so.'"

"Now all of these (people) are coming out of the woodwork. The ones who ain't been out here trying to stop the violence. The ones that always had a negative opinion of what we've been doing. The ones who have been

holding on to that opinion, waiting for something to happen, knowing it will happen."

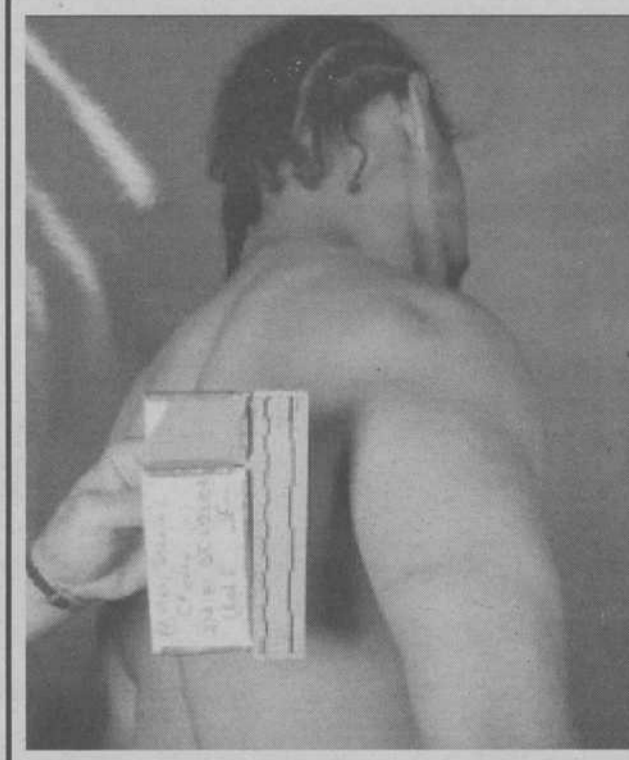
"And that's the thing; you have to listen to people say: 'I told you so. I told you so. I told you so.' Then you have to look them in the face and tell them what? It (the police beating) didn't happen?"

Crouch said Tuesday that in the neighborhoods "younger brothers are getting jacked up and things and they're not trying to hear that police thing that's going down in those meetings with the Urban League and the NAACP and them."

"But we're telling them don't be stupid," he continued. "Don't react. Don't get caught up in that stuff because they're looking to us to start something, and if we do, they'll take it out on us."

The gang worker was angry about the criticism of City Councilmen Dennis Zine and Jack Weiss that prompted activist Najee Ali to resign from the Community Monitoring Committee Mayor Jim Hahn formed to keep an eye on the investigation into Miller's beating.

The committee, chaired by Urban League President John Mack, was composed of nine religious and civil rights leaders and attorneys and two



PICTURE OF PAIN

A photo of Stanley Miller showing a discolored area on his right arm is shown in these photos taken by the Los Angeles Police Department shortly after his arrest on June 23.

Videotape of the Miller arrest has stirred racial tension in Los Angeles. An LAPD officer is filmed striking Miller 11 times with a flashlight as he laid on the ground, hands behind his back.

South L.A. activists — Ali and Ronald Antwine, a former gang member involved in maintaining peace in the community.

Ali, executive director of Project Islamic Hope, resigned from the committee after Zine and Weiss questioned his ability to fairly monitor the investigation because he has been an outspoken critic of police actions over the past several years, and because he has a criminal case pending against him resulting from an alleged Feb. 22 hit-and-run auto accident. He is also awaiting trial on charges of identity theft.

Zine, a former police sergeant, also criticized the appointment of Antwine to the commission because of his former gang ties.

"It's a way to discredit the community," scoffed Crouch, who works closely with both

Ali and Antwine. "They're the only ones on that commission that network in the neighborhood. They talk to the little homies and try to keep them out of trouble. They make a difference out here. Antwine ain't gang-banged in 15 years, and neither one of them ever beat down a Black man with a flashlight."

"Their backgrounds don't have anything to do with whether they can ask questions and look at stuff and see if things are being done right. It's another assault on us."

For his part, Ali said he is much more comfortable not being on the mayor's commission. "It's all political," he said moments after his resignation. "I don't need this. I'm being called 'nitwit' by the police chief and City Council members are attacking me ... I don't need to be

on this commission to fight for my community. I can stay where I am and do what I do."

Councilman Martin Ludlow, who hosted a large community no-press-allowed meeting on the beating, decried the personal attacks being hurled by officials. "I honestly believe this episode needs responsible leaders who do not call residents names ... These personality clashes only detract from the real issues," he said.

Ludlow questioned the creation of the mayor's Monitoring Committee. "What is this commission authorized to do? What is it for?" he asked.

"(The City Council was not consulted about it and none of us were asked to submit names of people to be on it. While I wholeheartedly respect the people on it, I feel

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Miss Nevada

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her biological mother flew to Reno to abandon the child before returning home to the San Francisco Bay Area.

Muto's cause for the pageant was a group she formed called Heal Evaluate Learn and Progress, or HELP, which is designed to help children overcome adversity.

During her on-stage interview, she was

asked what she thought about same-sex marriage. She said she supports it, noting interracial marriages — such as her adoptive parents' — once were unacceptable.

"If love were limited, then I wouldn't have my family," she said. Muto still holds a track record at Reno's Wooster High School, where she graduated. She's fluent in Spanish and also speaks French.

Heart

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tension.

"We are trying to reach as many African-American women as possible. We would like to have 200 women attend this workshop. We want all of them to come."

"Our focus is African-American women, but as a university we cannot discriminate. If other women want to show up, that's fine," Gamell said. Come to the workshop prepared to get involved.

"We are really trying to stress physical activity at this conference," Woodson said. "We are going to give them some skills to reduce the risk factors and help them make changes in their lifestyles. Women 45 to 50 are especially at risk beyond that age."

The morning will begin with a free continental breakfast. Among the gifts in the attendance bag will be a programmable pedometer valued at \$35. Members of the Southern Black Nurses Association will provide blood

pressure and glucose checks at no cost.

Dr. James Mock, cardiologist, and Dr. Trinia Wiggins, a recent competitor in the Ms. Fitness competition, will teach and motivate for an afternoon of movement. A sit-down lunch will conclude an exciting morning. The workshops will include an exercise session lead by Cindy Braden, owner of Work-For It Fitness.

Jennifer Loupias will lead yoga instruction and stress management lead will be Dr. Charles Regin, associate professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Woodson will teach a good nutrition workshop.

"Nutrition is as important to a healthy heart as exercise is," Woodson said. "We need to learn to watch our diets, reduce fat and sodium content. One of the main things is having portion controls. Sixty-one percent of Americans are either overweight or obese."

For more information and registration, call (702) 940-5423.

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