

Investigating Houston Police Department Police Brutality

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By ReShonda Tate Billingsley, Special to the NNPA from the Houston Defender –



The investigation into alleged police brutality by the Houston Police Department is heating up as community and political leaders call for swift justice, and one congressional leader is going so far as seeking federal intervention. The issue has even garnered the attention of national civil rights leaders.

The Houston Chapter of the NAACP is among those civic and community leaders asking for stiffer penalties for the accused officers, more transparency in the justice system, and a civilian review board to investigate claims of police brutality.

“There is a problem with police brutality and use of excessive force that will no longer be tolerated,” said Rev. D.Z. Cofield, president of the Houston chapter of the NAACP.

Cofield hosted a townhall meeting at his church, Good Hope Baptist, where hundreds of people attended to protest against the videotaped beating of 16-year-old burglary suspect Chad Holley.

Caught on Tape

Authorities said police suspected several young men of breaking and entering, and then fleeing the scene in a pickup truck. After a short chase, police caught Holley, then an Elsie High School sophomore, near a self-storage facility on Cook Road and allegedly handcuffed him on the ground and began hitting and kicking him.

The controversial tape shows several Houston Police Department officers punching and kicking Holley, who was later convicted. The video showed one officer delivering at least seven kicks to Holley while another officer punched Holley five times. Holley is not seen on tape struggling with the officers or resisting arrest.

Defense attorney Dick DeGuerin, who represents one of four officers indicted, said the release of the tape has him considering whether to request a change of venue for the trial. Seven police officers were terminated in connection with the incident. Four officers were also charged in connection with the incident

Former officers Andrew T. Blomberg and Drew Ryser were indicted on official oppression. Former officer Phillip Bryan and Raad M. Hassan were indicted on official oppression and violation of the civil rights of a prisoner.

For months, rumors swirled as to exactly what was on that video, which had been recorded on a surveillance camera at a nearby storage facility. An employee of that facility, Cindy Paxton, gave the video to activist Quanell X. Paxton was later fired.