

June-July 2020



The Kansas City Missouri Police Department

Protests bring changes to KCPD

The biggest civil unrest that Kansas City has experienced since the 1960s has prompted big changes at KCPD.

Protests against police brutality broke out throughout the nation following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25. Video showed a Minneapolis Police officer kneeling on Floyd's neck leading up to his death. The police officer was white. Floyd was black. Kansas City was one of many cities in the United States where thousands gathered to decry racial injustice, especially by law enforcement.

PROTESTS AND RIOTS

Protests in Kansas City began in earnest on Friday, May 29. Thousands of people gathered at Mill Creek Park on the Country Club Plaza. As the day wore on, many in the crowd became unruly, throwing rocks, bottles, fireworks and other items at officers who were there to keep the peace. Police deployed teargas to disperse the crowd.

Violence escalated on Saturday, May 30. Hundreds of officers were deployed to protect people and property on the Plaza.

"For the first time in the history of the department – at least in the 32 years I've been here – that on two separate days we called every single member who could wear a uniform to work and put them to work," Chief Rick Smith said.

In all, department members put in about \$2 million worth of overtime during the unrest.

Neighboring law enforcement agencies assisted by covering calls for service in Kansas City so KCPD members could work the protests. Officers from regional partner agencies on both

sides of the state line also joined KCPD on the Plaza.

Every officer working reported being hit by projectiles thrown by the crowd. Two KCPD officers were seriously injured and had to be hospitalized: one suffered a concussion and one suffered a lacerated liver.

Rioters made it onto the Plaza the night of

people participated in a unity march with police on June 3. Tensions eased as protests continued throughout the week on the Plaza until they flared back up at a 1,500-person gathering in front of Police Headquarters on June 5. Hundreds of the protesters confronted the National Guard soldiers and KCPD officers who were protecting the building. Eventually, police convinced protest leaders to go on a march around downtown, which led them away from the building and diffused the situation.

The evening of June 5, a few hundred protesters also gathered at East Patrol Division. They were met, however, with numerous residents of the East Patrol Division, who said they would not tolerate any vandalism or harm by the protesters to "their police station."

The most intense civil unrest in Kansas City was in the first few weeks following George Floyd's death, through mid-June. Protests continued for long after, but they mostly

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Protests against police brutality and racial injustice spread throughout the country after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on Memorial Day. Floyd died after a Minneapolis Police officer knelt on his neck. The protests in Kansas City brought civil unrest, as well as significant changes to the KCPD.

May 30, breaking into and looting several stores. Multiple KCPD vehicles were damaged, including one that was set on fire. Rioters also set a television news station vehicle ablaze.

Police used tear gas, pepper spray and less-lethal munitions to disperse the crowd after they declared the assembly unlawful. The use of these traditional crowd control tactics were criticized as overly aggressive by protesters and politicians alike.

To prevent what happened in other cities in the U.S. that had police facilities vandalized or destroyed, Missouri Gov. Mike Parson deployed the National Guard to protect KCPD facilities. They stayed for about two weeks.

Police backed off beginning May 31, allowing protesters into the streets. No more teargas or less-lethal munitions were used. About 1,000

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest in Kansas City, production of the monthly Informant was postponed. We apologize for the delay.

Two KPCD officers shot in one day

Two Kansas City Missouri Police officers were injured in shootings July 2 in separate incidents. One officer has returned to full duty and the other is undergoing rehabilitation.

In the first incident, the driver of a Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) bus saw a suspect committing a robbery mid-morning. The suspect then got on the bus, and the driver immediately notified police. The officer met up with the bus at Independence and Hardesty. The suspect attempted to shoot the officer as the officer got on the bus. The suspect then shot the bus driver. Other officers arrived, and the suspect shot toward them. One of those officers fired at and struck the suspect.

The initial officer suffered an abrasion to his shoulder that resulted from the shots being fired at him. The bus driver suffered non-life-threatening injuries. The suspect, 25-year-old Justin Rogers, also had non-life-threatening injuries. The officer was treated and released from an area hospital the same day. Rogers was charged with multiple counts relating to the shootings and remains in custody.



Officers escorted the critically wounded officer's ambulance when he was released from Truman Medical Center to go to an out-of-state brain injury rehabilitation facility.

The second incident began about 4:30 p.m. July 2. KCPD officers were called to a disturbance in which a man was walking around threatening people with a gun in a McDonald's drive-through near 31st and Van Brunt. As officers arrived, the suspect ran, and officers ran after him on foot. The suspect began shooting at officers and struck one in the head. Officers returned fire, shooting and killing the suspect. He has been identified as 31-year-old Ky Johnson.

Other officers immediately transported the wounded officer, who has been with KCPD for two-and-a-half years, to Truman Medical Center in very critical condition.

The officer underwent hours of emergency surgery and was moved to the Intensive Care Unit in critical but stable condition.

Several local police agencies stepped in right after the shooting to offer their support. They took over calls for service to allow for the officer's coworkers to be at the hospital with the family. KCPD members were so thankful for their help.

The Department provided peer support services and chaplains to its members at several of its stations, as well as at the hospital and Fraternal Order of

Police Lodge 99. Food was donated to the family and the officers at the hospital.

Classmates from the officer's Academy recruit class began collecting challenge coins after the injured officer's family members remarked on his fondness for collecting them. The hope was the collection would serve as a visual reminder of all the people and organizations that stood with him and his family during this difficult time. Coins from around the world came pouring in. The family was very appreciative.

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PROTESTS BRING CHANGES TO KCPD, CONT. FROM P. 1

remained peaceful. One at Police Headquarters the night of July 17 resulted in the vandalism of the building and the department's memorial statue to fallen officers. The vandals were arrested, and volunteers, including the owner of a power-washing company, came out the next morning to clean off the spray paint.

CHANGES AT KCPD

The Department listened to the community and was responsive to many of the protesters' demands. One of their demands was for KCPD officers to have body-worn cameras, for which the Department has long been trying to identify a funding source.

In the midst of the unrest on June 3, the DeBruce Foundation stepped up and donated more than \$2 million to help purchase the cameras. The Police Foundation of Kansas City provided additional funds, as well.

"We've been listening to the community's call for change," Chief Rick Smith said in the

announcement of the donation, which took place at the June 3 Unity March. "The community has repeatedly asked for body cameras."

Mayor Quinton Lucas called an emergency meeting of the Board of Police Commissioners on June 4. The Board ordered several changes after that meeting:

- * Outside agency investigations for officer-involved shootings: KCPD detectives no longer investigate shootings or excessive use of force incidents involving KCPD officers. The Missouri State Highway Patrol agreed to take over those investigations to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest.

- * A codified whistle-blowing process: Any Department member can now submit a report of misconduct by another KCPD member to the Office of Community Complaints. The allegations and statements will be kept confidential and reviewed exclusively by the Board of Police Commissioners. Additionally, department policy is in the process of being updated to include

explicit language about members' duty to intervene in the event of excessive force by another member.

- * KCPD must review its use of tear gas and other projectiles and determine ways to restrict their use.

- * KCPD must provide weekly updates to the City Council to inform the public about ongoing community engagement efforts.

PUBLIC SENTIMENT, FALL-OUT AND MOVING FORWARD

Several people during the civil unrest in Kansas City and throughout the nation called for defunding or abolishing police. Public support for law enforcement seemed to wane, but behind the scenes, many people quietly stepped forward. During the protests, community members brought snacks, bottled water and sports drinks,

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Woman's kindness to officer is repaid

A week after a KCPD officer was shot in the head and critically injured (see story, p. 3), a woman called the police department asking how she could help him and his family. But the department ended up helping her.

The afternoon of Friday, July 10, the woman's call was transferred to the Media Unit. The woman told Public Relations Specialist Sarah Boyd that she had lived in the urban core and supported the police because of her experience with them in 2012 when her oldest daughter was murdered.

"The detective, he was like a father, therapist and lifeline to me all in one," she said. "...People would say he did his job, but he did more than his job."

She said she'd lived in the urban core and felt that more African-Americans should support the police, and she wanted to do so in the department's time of need. She said she wanted to do that even though she had been laid off due to the COVID pandemic and was having trouble paying her bills. She said she went to the grocery store with her 12-year-old daughter, and they found a dollar in the parking lot. She used that dollar to buy a scratch-off lottery ticket and won \$100. She said she wanted to give that \$100 to the family of the critically wounded officer. Boyd urged her to keep the money given her financial situation, but the woman insisted she would bring it to East Patrol to donate.

After thinking about it over the weekend, Boyd decided to share the story of the woman's radical generosity on the department's Facebook page. When she did, the post went viral and comments started pouring in from people who wanted to help the woman. They asked if a fund could be set up for her. There was only one problem: the woman never gave her name, and the call came from an unknown number.

So Boyd went to work to track her down. In her phone call, the woman mentioned the detective who had meant so much to her may have been named "Sullivan." Boyd looked up all homicide cases of young black women that occurred in 2012 and found one assigned to Detective Bruce Solomon, who is sadly now deceased. Believing it could be the case of the woman's daughter, homicide detectives pulled the archived case file and found the next of kin was a woman named Shetara Sims. The phone number and address no longer were valid, however.

A search of current police records showed Shetara Sims was in a car crash in January. That gave a new address and phone number. The num-

ber didn't work, but a Shoal Creek officer was able to locate the woman at the address. She confirmed she was the woman who called wanting to donate to the injured officer. It had taken three days to find her. When she learned people wanted to help her, she thought it was a prank. Boyd was able to convince her to let the department set up an online crowd-funding

account through GoFundMe on her behalf.

Boyd set the goal of the GoFundMe campaign at \$5,000. Donors gave that much the first day. So Boyd raised it to \$10,000. As of this writing, donors have given nearly \$165,000 to Sims.

Donors around the world said they were touched by Sims' generosity toward the police department, especially given recent tensions between African-Americans and police. Sims credits her 12-year-old daughter, Rakiya, with the idea to donate to the injured officer in the first place. Rakiya said she wanted to be sure the family of the injured officer had enough money to visit him in the hospital.

"My mom taught me to care about strangers," Rakiya said. "I thought about his family and how they might need to go buy food and go see him."

The injured officer's family mem-

bers said they were taken aback that someone in such a difficult situation themselves would give so generously to them.

Shetara and Rakiya met with some of the injured officer's sector mates on July 20, all of whom were involved in the shooting incident. Local media also came to Police Headquarters that day to speak with Shetara and Rakiya. Their story spread and touched hearts around the world, earning them appearances on Fox News' Fox and Friends, the Kelly Clarkson Show, People Magazine and more.

Sims said it wasn't all the donations that poured in that touched her the most: it was the comments posted about her online.

"These people didn't even know me, and they were saying what a great person I was," Sims said. "Looking at the comments gave me all the riches in the world."

Police are setting Sims up with a financial adviser. She has used some of the GoFundMe money to pay off bills and purchase two box trucks to run her own local distribution business. She was a commercial truck driver before being laid off.

Sims said the donations have changed her life.

"Your parents tell you all the time to be a blessing to someone, and someone will be a blessing to you," she said. "It's true."



Shetara Sims, center, and her 12-year-old daughter, Rakiya, met with the officers who were there when the KCPD officers was critically wounded.

PROTESTS BRING CHANGES TO KCPD, CONT. FROM P. 1

even sunscreen for officers working on the Plaza. KCPD received dozens of supportive messages daily through its social media platforms. Businesses and community organizations welcomed officers and offered free meals. As time wore on throughout July, public support for KCPD increased again on social media and on the streets of Kansas City.

Meanwhile, the City Council voted to dismiss municipal charges against more than 200 people who were cited for city ordinance violations during the protests over KCPD's objections.

Some community organizations called for Chief Smith to resign. He did not. A slightly higher number than normal of KCPD members resigned or retired in the months that followed the civil unrest, however.

Amid it all, violent crime surged in Kansas City, with shootings and homicides occurring at record rates, further stretching department resources that already had worn thin.

Chief Smith said the national narrative about law enforcement as brutal and racist that arose from the civil unrest in Kansas City and across

America was false, in his opinion.

"This department responds to hundreds of thousands of calls a year where we just help people," he said. "We do nothing but help people. Some of those calls we have to enforce, there's no doubt about it, but our enforcement action compared to our community interaction overall is a very small portion of what we do. ... The mission has not changed. Our mission is to serve the citizens of Kansas City. They need us now more than ever."

Officially Speaking

25-Year Rings

Detective Cristin Allen
Sergeant Richard Anthony
Officer David Barbour
Asst. Manager Mark Crawford
Detective Michael Curley
Inventory Spec. Richard
Curtin
Officer Larry Dunaway
Sergeant Owen Farris
Officer Mark Fogel
Officer Roderick Gee
Officer Kevin Jurgielski
Sergeant Timothy McClure
Sergeant Kevin Murray
Captain Jonathan Patton
Sergeant Jeremy Potterf
Master Police Officer Bryan
Quinn
Sergeant Brian Rawley
Sergeant Jason Rusley
Captain Scott Selock
Sergeant Timothy Smith
Detective Donald Stanze
Officer Matthew Tourtillott
Asst. Manager Christopher
Waddell
Officer Joseph Windsor

Retirements

Sergeant Christopher De-
Freece
Detective David De La Mare
Officer Timothy Fillpot
Supervisor Rita Garcia
Fiscal Administrator Terry
Headley
Public Relations Specialist
Carolyn Merino
Officer Alexander Wasser

Obituaries

Retired Major Charles Braden
Retired Officer Robert
Bunyard, Jr.
Retired Officer Andy Cox
Retired Sergeant
Kenneth Creech

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OFFICERS SHOT, cont. from p. 2

After nearly two weeks in ICU, the officer was upgraded from critical to stable condition. He no longer needed breathing assistance and had become more alert. He started physical therapy and was able to stand with assistance.

On July 23, the officer was released from the hospital to continue his healing at a rehabilitation facility out of state. The facility focuses on brain injury and neurological rehabilitation and recovery.

The KCPD and the officer's family thanked the doctors, nurses and staff of Truman Medical Center for their extensive expertise and efforts in treating the injured officer. At an online news conference, one of the initial doctors to treat him said the officer had a 1% chance for survival.

Department members further appreciated the outpouring of support from the community, including individuals, businesses and churches.

The officer continued to build his strength and mobility every day at the rehabilitation facility. He has been talking and walking unassisted on his own. He is not paralyzed, but one of the challenges he has been facing in rehab has been getting his brain to control the left side of his body. Through the challenges, his progress is better than normal. He has returned to Kansas City and is undergoing therapy at a local, long-term, outpatient rehabilitation facility.

He appreciates all of the cards, gifts and visits that he has received. The family appreciates and asks for everyone's continued prayers and support and said that the community has been a significant part of his healing.

Many people in the community have asked what they can do for the officer. We posed this question to him, and he replied, "Actions have repercussions, so think twice before you react with violence, and treat others the way you want to be treated."