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Civil Liberties Union
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
of Massachusetts

July 30, 1982

Councillor Walter Sullivan
Cambridge City Council
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Dear Councillor Sullivan:

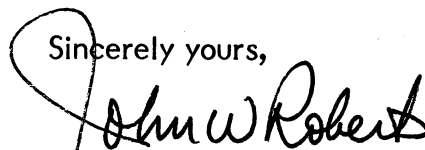
I am writing to express our concern over the recent reports of racial incidents within the Cambridge Police Department and to urge the City Council to undertake an investigation of the situation and to take all necessary steps to eliminate racial problems in the department.

According to reports published in the Cambridge Tab, there have been several racial incidents within the department including the posting of a letter containing ethnic slurs in a locked glass-covered display case at police headquarters and the painting of "KKK" on the lockers of a Portuguese officer and four black officers. It also appears from the story that these are not isolated incidents and that racial tensions have been building within the Cambridge Police Department for several months.

In the face of this evidence of racist attitudes within the Department, Chief Cusack has failed to recognize the seriousness of the problem, claiming that the incidents were not racially motivated. He is quoted in the Tab story as saying that "to my knowledge, there are no racial problems at the police department." Chief Cusack's apparent insensitivity to racial issues is more than just regrettable. It clearly indicates that the Cambridge Police Department cannot or will not properly investigate these incidents and that nothing will be done to improve race relations within the department.

For this reason, it is imperative that the City Council authorize an independent external investigation of these incidents and of the need for improved race relations within the department. The elimination of racist attitudes from the department should be given the highest priority by the City Council. The police department is the most visible agency in the city government and frequently the only point of contact between the city and its residents. It would be an affront to the citizens of Cambridge, and particularly to its minority community, for the city to countenance racism in such an important agency.

Sincerely yours,



John W. Roberts
Executive Director

JWR/g

AN AFFILIATE OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

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S-561

Comm. from Paul E. Healy, City Clerk, transmitting comm. from John R. Roberts, Exec. Dir. Civil Liberties Union of Mass. Re: reports of racial incidents in the Cambridge Police Dept.

*copy sent to Chairman Comm. on Public
Safety 9/14/82*

In City Council,

September 13, 1982

9/13/82

*Referred to the
Committee on Public
Safety-*