

Whereupon, what night was that?

A This was, WILLIE J. ODOM

called as a witness, first duly sworn, testified as follows:

A CHAIRMAN LILLEY: Thank you for coming.

Q This would EXAMINATION night, July 13, or early

Sunday morning By Mr. Fortunato:

Q Can you tell us where you reside?

A Yes, sir, 62 Mapes Avenue. Did you go home that

Sunday? Newark?

A Yes, sir. At approximately eight o'clock.

Q Do you have a place of business in Newark?

A Yes.

Q Where is that located? establishment is what

you Art? 1009 Bergen Street.

Q What is the nature of the business? left at

eight A's Card and gift shop.

Q Are you next door to the barber shop? next door?

A No, sir. 'clock the next morning.

Q Where are you located? morning?

A I am on the corner of Mapes Avenue. I am the second store from the corner of Bergen and Mapes Avenue.

Sunday Q Do you have an incident to relate to us that happened to your shop during the Newark riots?

A Yes. The night of when the windows were broken I closed up early and I went home and went to bed.

1 from my Q What night was that?

2 night. A This was, I think, the thirteenth.

3 Q The thirteenth was a Thursday.

4 reason. A This was a Sunday. I don't know the exact date.

5 Q This would be Saturday night, July 15, or early  
6 Sunday morning, July 16?

7 A Right.

8 Q Can you tell us what time did you go home that  
9 Saturday?

10 A I close up at approximately eight o'clock.

11 Q And you left your establishment?

12 A Yes.

13 Q What condition was the establishment in when  
14 you left?

15 A Undamaged, no damage at all when I left at  
16 eight o'clock that night.

17 Q When was the next time you saw your business?

18 A At six o'clock the next morning.

19 Q That would be Sunday morning?

20 A Yes, sir.

21 Q Is it usual for you to go to your business on  
22 Sunday morning?

23 A No, sir.

24 Q Why did you go?

25 A I have a neighbor who lives across the street

1 from my business who called me at three o'clock Saturday  
2 night.

3 Q What is your neighbor's name? Is there any  
4 reason not to mention her?

5 A I was threatened.  
6 Her name is Thelma.

7 Q And if you would rather not disclose it --

8 and what were you told by the neighbor?

9 A She called me up and told me the State Troopers  
10 were shooting into my store. This was at three-thirty.

11 She asked what was I going to do. I said, "Nothing. Don't  
12 you do anything."

13 I call I went back to bed. Approximately an hour later she  
14 called me up and said, "They are breaking out your windows.

15 What are you going to do?" I said, "I am still not going  
16 to do anything."

17 I stayed home until six o'clock. Then I went down  
18 to check the store out.

19 Q At six o'clock Sunday morning?

20 A This was after the curfew.

21 Q What did you see?

22 A My window was broken. I have pictures of this.

23 Q Where are those pictures?

24 A I have them, not in my possession on me now,

25 but I do have pictures of this. So I saw the windows were

1 broken and the front bashed in. The bullet holes were  
2 in the walls and stuff like this. I immediately called  
3 the councilman and told him what was happening. He told  
4 me I must be kidding, that the State Troopers wouldn't  
5 break them out. I know Reverend Cantrell is affiliated  
6 with the Police Department. He said he had been up all  
7 night and was very tired, there was nothing he could do,  
8 and he said I should call my councilman. So I called him  
9 back and I said, "I think you should get in touch with the  
10 mayor or the Governor because this is reverse action."

11 It doesn't look good for the mayor to have the police  
12 shoot up the shops. I couldn't get any answer any place.  
13 I called the National Guard. I figured if I could get a  
14 commander of the National Guard, if I could get the head  
15 of the Police Department to stop this, I figured that  
16 maybe my shop and a couple of more was the only one they  
17 had done.

18 When I called the police headquarters they denied  
19 it was the police. I called the National Guard. The  
20 National Guard says it wasn't the National Guard.

21 have. Then I got together with my neighbors, Joe Bandana  
22 who owns the beauty parlor next door, and we called the  
23 press. We called the press. This was about seven o'clock  
24 in the morning. We finally got the press call us back  
25 about ten o'clock and said they were going to send someone

1 out. The next morning is when I got the call. I didn't

2 Q What press did you call? and they said they

3 A We called CBS.

4 Q Did they send somebody out?

5 A They sent someone out.

6 Q Describe that.

7 A They sent the man out to interview the store  
8 owners. My store was broken into, the window was broken  
9 and bashed in pretty bad. They decided to take the inter-  
10 view in my store. When they came to interview me the  
11 police didn't want to allow them to interview me. They  
12 told them they couldn't interview. The man from the press  
13 said, "This is news. You can't stop news."

14 going The man that was going to interview me, he took him  
15 around the corner and he came back shaking his head and  
16 he said, "I will still have to interview him. This is news."  
17 They took me in the store and we had a live interview on  
18 television. ing to kill him." so it was way it was a spray

19 and I Q Only I take it they brought in their equipment?

20 A Right. Sure. It is a portable camera they  
21 have. It is very easy to carry around. After they inter-  
22 viewed me and everything that afternoon --

23 Q What time was this?

24 A Sunday approximately eleven o'clock when the  
25 CBS came. I was on at four o'clock and eleven o'clock that

1 night. The next morning is when I got the call. I didn't  
2 get the call; my wife got the call, and they said they  
3 were going to kill me.

4 Q of You didn't get the call?  
5 course A I No. It was received at my house.

6 on the Q pad What did your wife tell you about the call?  
7 thing A She said that someone called and asked did

8 Willie Odom live there, could they speak to Willie Odom.  
9 She told them, "He is out now." He said, "You tell that  
10 such and such son of a -- " they were going to kill me.

11 stopp Q Can you relate exactly what the conversation  
12 was that your wife told you?

13 with A They said, "You tell that black nigger we are  
14 going to kill him."

15 are w Q Did the caller say who he was?

16 and th A No, but I only implicated the State Troopers  
17 when I was on television. So I am presuming they said,  
18 "We are going to kill him," so it mean that it was a group  
19 and I only implicated one individual. That was the State  
20 Troopers. I presume this was from the State Troopers. I  
21 couldn't say, but I had only mentioned the State Troopers  
22 because this is actually who broke my windows. It wasn't  
23 State Troopers; they were driving State Troopers' cars.

24 store Also when I came up there the next morning at six  
25 o'clock I had my notebook out, so I took the numbers down

1 of any cars, and the guys stopped me and threatened to  
2 put me in the jail because I was taking down numbers.  
3 He took the pad that I had away from me and tore the  
4 numbers of the police car that I had off the pad, but of  
5 course, I remembered them. I just jotted them back down  
6 on the pad, so I have the number of police cars and every-  
7 thing.

8 Q Where were these police cars?

9 wife? A Riding on Bergen Street. The ones I took the  
10 number of was the one up there at six o'clock. I even  
11 stopped the police. I stopped the city police that morning  
12 at six o'clock, and I asked them could they get in touch  
13 with some of the supervisors to stop this because to me I  
14 see the State Troopers just as bad as the rioters. They  
15 are worse because they are supposed to be protecting law,  
16 and they are going around shooting up the shops. To me  
17 they are worse than the rioters. Let's face it, if the  
18 police won't protect you, who is going to protect you?

19 lodged Q What were the numbers of the cars that you saw  
20 Sunday at 6 a.m.?

21 A I don't have it with me. I have it on information  
22 in the house. This had to be a high-powered rifle to go

23 through Q Did the people who told you about the fact your  
24 store had been shot into give you the numbers of the State  
25 Police cars?

1 A Yes, sir, and I had a man that lives over my  
2 store give me the number. Actually I have the number from  
3 four different people.

4 Q Is it the same number?

5 A It is the same number.

6 Q How many cars were there?

7 A Three.

8 Q Where were you when the call was made to your  
9 wife?

10 A I was at work.

11 Q You were not at home?

12 A No.

13 Q Did you receive any other telephone calls?

14 A No other calls.

15 Q Will you make available the number of the State  
16 Police car?

17 A Yes, sure. I also have with the FBI -- I have  
18 paperback books. One of the actual bullets that was  
19 lodged within the paper book, I still have several holes  
20 where the bullet went through, in the store. I also have  
21 a door almost as thick as this table that was penetrated  
22 by a bullet. This had to be a high-powered rifle to go  
23 through a door as thick as this table.

24 MR. GIBBONS: You say the FBI has that  
25 bullet?



1 THE WITNESS: I made them stipulate I  
2 you are go could get it back at any time. So on request  
3 doubt in they will actually return that bullet to me.  
4 of whether By Mr. Fortunato:

5 thing: Q What other law enforcement officials have you  
6 complained to about this other than what you have already  
7 said? to his house until about eleven o'clock, eleven-  
8 thirty A Well, I filed a complaint down at the mayor's  
9 Human Relations Commission, and I contacted my lawyer  
10 actually. I have about \$400 worth of damages. It cost  
11 me about \$300 to get my front fixed, and I had merchandize  
12 shot up in the store. I had records in there that were  
13 shot through, a stack of records. So it is approximately  
14 about \$400 or \$500 for the damages.

15 sure So I contacted my lawyer to actually see if he could  
16 take the case. He said he would charge me \$250 to go to  
17 court, so this has knocked it out.

18 taking I would like to say one thing. What reference is  
19 this hearing for? Everybody seems to think that this  
20 didn't happen, that this really didn't happen. But,  
21 gentlemen, I have a store there that is shot up. There  
22 is a man down there dead, who was the gentlemen that came  
23 by my store, with 39 bullets in him. It don't take 39  
24 bullets to kill no man. I don't think anybody can survive  
25 39 bullets.

1 would I would like for you to take a realistic view. What  
2 you are going to do is truly up to you. If there is any  
3 doubt in anybody's mind here of really what happened or  
4 of whether it was the State Troopers, I will tell you one  
5 thing: At twelve o'clock the night my store was shot up --  
6 my brother lives on the other side of Bergen Street. I  
7 stayed to his house until about eleven o'clock, eleven-  
8 thirty, and I walked across Bergen Street. There was one  
9 car on Bergen Street and it belongs to the gentleman next  
10 door to me. It was an old station wagon. For the whole  
11 block of Bergen Street for six blocks there was one car,  
12 and I didn't see one individual there at twelve o'clock at  
13 night. Maybe somebody else came on the street after then,  
14 but at twelve o'clock there wasn't one car. I am pretty  
15 sure that with the State Troopers shooting down the street  
16 there wasn't anybody on the street. If they had been there  
17 they would have been dead like the other fellow shot  
18 taking out the garbage.

19 **Q** It isn't a fact that you are trying to say who  
20 actually did it. We know who did it. It is just a matter  
21 of: What are you going to do?

22 **A** You made a comment to the effect that you  
23 wondered whether people believe that it happened.

24 **A** Actually happened.

25 **Q** What put this doubt in your mind that people

1 would not believe what happened?

2 the way. After I called the councilman up he says, "You  
3 are kidding. The police wouldn't do it." I feel this,  
4 too. We are all intelligent people. If I was a governor  
5 or whatever, if this did happen -- this is why I tried  
6 to contact the head of these individuals. This to me is  
7 a stupid thing for a police department to do, a very stupid  
8 thing. They talk about the rioters. It is a bad thing.  
9 "Look how Newark looks after the riot." But what do you  
10 expect in a town where a person would shoot up a shop? I  
11 work everyday for my living.

12 Q Can you tell me the name of your councilman?

13 A Yes. Bernstein.

14 Q Have you received any word back from anyone  
15 that you have talked to concerning what happened to your  
16 store? I have a friend on Avon Avenue that was in his

17 A I don't understand what you mean.

18 Q Has Mr. Threatt from the Newark Human Rights  
19 Commission reported back to you about the State Police?

20 A No.

21 Q Did the State Police say anything to you?

22 A No.

23 Q How about the FBI?

24 A They have been in contact with me because after  
25 I was threatened I called them. They said this is a bad

1 time. I could understand that. They said, "We need all  
2 the men. This is your problem. You get killed if you want  
3 to. You got to stay out of sight." This is true. It was  
4 more important to hold the town than to actually protect  
5 me, but yet still I was threatened and I was threatened  
6 by somebody.

7 Q What do you expect this Commission to do?

8 A I think this Commission should report to the  
9 Governor and the mayor, and I think really there should be  
10 I know the Police Department. They are not going to  
11 condemn the Police Department and the State Troopers or  
12 prosecute anybody. But it isn't a bad thing to give them  
13 a tongue lashing and to publicize this thing in the news-  
14 paper that these were actually State Troopers that did this  
15 and we know it.

16 I have a friend on Avon Avenue that was in his  
17 cleaners. This man had to take his wife and kid from the  
18 first floor and go up on the second floor because they  
19 were shooting. He lives in back of the cleaner on the  
20 first floor.

21 MR. LEUCHTER: What is his name?

22 THE WITNESS: His name is King. He had  
23 to go on the third floor. He could have been  
24 killed right in his place. I know the troopers  
25 were mad. You know and I know why they were mad.

1 because the Negro shops were not touched. This  
2 is why they were mad.

3 I expected my shop to be broken into, but  
4 I didn't expect it to be broken into by the  
5 State Troopers. I figured maybe some of the  
6 white people in the area around would get  
7 jealous. If they had broken out my shop, I  
8 couldn't have been too mad about it because I  
9 feel it is a little unfair for one shop to get  
10 broken into and not another. But for this to  
11 come from the State Troopers and the National  
12 Guard, to me I think it is a very dirty thing.  
13 You know what this means, don't you? This  
14 means it is very corrupt.

15 Anytime witnesses -- I mean you can see  
16 an isolated incident where they would do this  
17 or maybe one or two people saw them and they  
18 figured these people won't talk, but it is a  
19 known fact. It is a known fact this is what  
20 happened. I will give them to you.

21 MR. MEYNER: But did you personally witness  
22 any firing of guns by the State Police?

23 THE WITNESS: No, sir. I can't say. Out  
24 of my window at home I can just see the cars  
25 going along Bergen Street. This is all I can see.

1 and at the time, I tell you, I was really  
2 wondering what was happening at three o'clock  
3 at night because I live close to the end of  
4 Bergen Street, and I heard the shooting when it  
5 started and as it went up Bergen Street.

6 MR. MEYNER: This is about three o'clock  
7 Sunday morning?

8 THE WITNESS: Yes. I was wondering what  
9 was happening that the firing would start at  
10 one end of the street and then go up to the  
11 other end of the street.

12 MR. MEYNER: You heard that it was  
13 decreasing in sound as it went along?

14 THE WITNESS: Right. I could tell it was  
15 low and then it got loud. I live about a block  
16 and a half from my store. I can see Bergen  
17 Street, but I can't actually see any detailed  
18 activity there. So I was wondering what was  
19 happening because about eleven-thirty when I  
20 walked across Bergen Street I knew there wasn't  
21 anybody there. I didn't see anyone walking.

22 MR. MEYNER: Is one of the witnesses you  
23 are referring to Joseph Hayden?

24 THE WITNESS: Yes, he is.

25 MR. MEYNER: And he just testified earlier

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A As you may know.

Q Do you THE WITNESS: Right. The other lady is

A not here. This lady lives across the street.

Q She was able to get a better view because her

A house is back. There is a small parking lot

Q on the corner. The people real close, I don't

A blame them. They were not going to get up in

from my the windows like they were shooting in. I

Q wouldn't have gotten up and looked out myself,

A to pull a blind back and look out. This lady

Q happens to be back far enough that she can look

to it during and not worry too much about them shooting at

A her. a pet shop. I sell all kinds of pet

and supplies. CHAIRMAN LILLEY: Any other questions,

I didn't gentlemen? Thank you very much.

that morning I was told by four (Witness excused.)

people. These people I can't find today. Some of them I

Whereupon, there is only one fellow I can get my hands on

that did see some ROBERT H. PITTS

called as a witness, first duly sworn, testified as follows:

the butts of the CHAIRMAN LILLEY: Thank you for coming

rifles. here tonight, Mr. Pitts.

Q When did EXAMINATION

A By Mr. Fortunate: I don't remember the exact

date. Q Tell us where you reside.