

AFD Ep 386 Links and Notes - [June 1971] 50th Anniversary of the Albuquerque Rebellion

(Bill/Rachel)

[address the show's future]

Intro: A few weeks ago marked the 50th anniversary of the 1971 Albuquerque Rebellion or the Riot in Roosevelt Park. There was a violent police crackdown on people in a public park, which triggered widespread unrest and some arson, followed by mass arrests and a National Guard deployment and a state investigation into the abuses of the Albuquerque Police Department. In this episode we'll talk about what happened, some of the factors leading to the events of 50 years ago, and some of the situation today.

<https://www.kunm.org/post/riot-roosevelt-park-50-year-anniversary-0>

- *It began on June 13, 1971 after a young Chicano man was reportedly arrested for selling a joint to an undercover narcotics agent. As the situation escalated the Black Berets, a Chicano community organization, were called in. The Berets tried to move people out of the park and speak with police, but were fired upon. This blew up into a riot fueled by decades of racism and police abuse against Albuquerque's Chicano community. Eventually, the National Guard was brought in.*
- KUNM radio covered it at the time and recently re-aired audio recorded and aired in 1971. One figure whose voice was aired from a rally after the incident used an interesting phrase that stuck out to 21st century listeners in Albuquerque for both its honesty and its ongoing applicability to the present day: "...what they may call alleged but we know are actual acts of brutality, by the notorious Albuquerque Police Department." Another speaker, representing the Black Berets group, elaborated on this point: "back in December Las Gorras Negras confronted the City commission. Our people are being harassed, brutalized and murdered. The city commission could give a damn. So when we went into a community patrol, trying to talk to the pigs on an individual basis, trying to cut down on harassment and brutality by just our presence there. We were armed because one of our brothers had been murdered, Bobby Garcia."

2 contemporary newspaper clipping scans:

<https://www.newspapers.com/clip/14469339/albuquerque-journal/>

- Pretty even-handed contemporary account of the riot. They weren't afraid to point out the overzealous use of nightsticks on the protestors, and that their actions spurred the onlookers to protest their use of force. Also weren't afraid to challenge law enforcement's narrative of the events, such as when objects were thrown at cars, and whether cops used mace against the bystanders.
- Some of the details from the KUNM account are missing in this timeline, such as the arrest for selling marijuana to a narcotics officer. The instigating event in this account was the bust up of youths drinking beer in the park. It's pretty clear from this account that the cops were choosing to escalate events by their disproportionate reaction to youthful indiscretions.
- TV footage from KOB-TV shows cops using "considerable force - perhaps justified, perhaps not - in making arrests and subduing suspects."
- This article does seem to point to white people agitating and starting a lot of the violent reaction to the cops' brutality, with latino community leaders participating in talks with authorities to discuss grievances.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1971/06/20/archives/albuquerque-divided-over-cause-of-first-major-riot.html>

- This article has some background that seems important even if the analysis is typically weird in the NYT style

- In the aftermath of the violence, city officials asked why. They asked the question of one another, refusing invitations from the city's leading militant group, the Black Berets, to meet and discuss the cause and effect. The Black Berets, a "brown power" movement with some Negro membership, said they felt that they had been shouting into a vacuum warnings about unemployment, frustration and what they see as racism and police brutality.
- Demographic shift from the Los Alamos project (noted below, but could give datapoints here from NYT)
- Reis Tijerina's 1967 ethno-religious insurrection
- 1970 campus clashes at UNM-Albuquerque
- A Federal antipoverty worker I said that the unemployment rate among the Mexican-Spanish in their late teens and early twenties is more than 20 per cent in Albuquerque. About half of the city's Mexican and Spanish families are considered to be poverty-stricken.
- Local authorities blamed "out-of-state agitators" but very few people arrested were from out of state and clearly most of the people involved were upset about local issues
- The Municipal-State Supreme Court issued a statement saying that the police had nothing to fear from the courts for "reasonable" actions taken to quell civil disturbances. Almost none of the 500 persons arrested on Sunday and Monday were tried this week. The trials had been scheduled for Thursday but they were postponed for 10 days. There was some difficulty in arranging attorneys for the accused and judges said they wanted to allow time for the situation to cool off.

Roosevelt Park (a New Deal project built shortly before [per NYT] the federal government became a major employer in Albuquerque and a wave of new, predominantly white people moved there to work for or support the nuclear weapons research project):

Although one of Albuquerque's most popular gathering places, Roosevelt Park developed a reputation as a dangerous area during the 1960s and 70s, with numerous violent incidents as well as ongoing issues with drug use and underage drinking.^[7] Nearby residents petitioned for improved lighting and a curfew in 1965, citing nighttime disturbances "ranging from shouts to screaming and calls for help".^[8] The ongoing trouble at Roosevelt Park and other city parks led the [Albuquerque Police Department](#) to establish an undercover "park patrol" unit in the late 1960s. Relations between the police and park-goers were tense, leading to incidents of rock-throwing and finally a full-blown riot in 1971 after police tried to arrest some teenagers for drinking beer in the park.^[9] The riot spread across the city, ultimately causing over \$3 million in damage and 41 injuries.^[10]

- <https://www.latinousa.org/2016/05/04/forgotten-latino-urban-riots-can-happen/>
 - Albuquerque was just 1 of at least 14 latino riots that year, but these events are relatively obscure compared to other race riots.
 - Preserving this history is crucial because the issues that sparked them, such as municipal neglect, discrimination and poverty, still exist in many communities around the country. Sadly American political culture portrays Latinos as recent arrivals, which makes it appear that these issues are temporary.
 - This article brings up an interesting point for discussion: Since latino riots don't fit into a neat black/white binary that is the prevailing paradigm of racial "discourse", do they get ignored in broader discussions of racial/civil unrest.

Present day: Albuquerque Police have been under US Department of Justice monitoring for years, with investigations launched in 2012 and a consent decree agreement reached in late 2014. Regular reports are still being published to the DOJ website as of this year:

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-nm/apd> The investigations begun in 2012 were overseen by then-Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division Tom Perez, the future US Labor

Secretary and DNC Chair. The investigation focused on “on allegations that APD officers engage in use of excessive force, including use of unreasonable deadly force, in their encounters with civilians.”

https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/usa-nm/legacy/2015/01/20/2012-11-27_apd_investigation_pr.pdf In April 2014, the findings of that investigation were released:

The Justice Department found reasonable cause to believe that the Albuquerque Police Department engages in a pattern or practice of excessive force in violation of the Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution. The Justice Department specifically found three patterns of excessive force:

- Officers too frequently use deadly force against people who pose a minimal threat in situations where the conduct of the officers heightens the danger and contributes to the need to use force;
- Officers use less lethal force, including Tasers, on people who are passively resisting, non-threatening, observably unable to comply with orders, or pose only a minimal threat to the officers; and
- Encounters between Albuquerque Police officers and persons with mental illness and in crisis too frequently result in a use of force or a higher level of force than necessary.

The Justice Department also found systemic deficiencies of the police department, which contribute to these three patterns. The causes include deficient policies, failed accountability systems, inadequate training, inadequate supervision, ineffective systems of investigation and adjudication, the absence of a culture of community policing, and a lack of sufficient civilian oversight.

<https://www.justice.gov/usa-nm/pr/summary-department-justices-findings-albuquerque-police-department-investigation>

In October 2014, the US DOJ and City of Albuquerque reached a binding court agreement for police reforms...

Under the settlement agreement, the city and APD will implement comprehensive reforms in nine substantive areas. An independent monitoring team will be selected jointly and will oversee the reforms, which are expected to be implemented within four years. The areas covered by the settlement agreement are:

- Use of force: including requiring supervisors to report to the scene of uses of force; providing medical care to subjects of force immediately after an incident; improving the quality of force investigations; developing a force review board to detect and correct patterns and trends, and utilizing surrounding law enforcement agencies as part of a multi-agency task force to investigate officer-involved shootings to provide greater objectivity and accountability;
- Specialized units: including measures that require clearly defined missions and duties for specialized tactical and investigative units; ensuring that officers are sufficiently trained to save lives in high-risk situations; and dismantling APD’s repeat offender project to restore its core mission as an investigative, rather than tactical, unit;
- Crisis intervention: including establishing a mental health response advisory committee; providing behavioral health training to all officers, police dispatchers, and 9-1-1 operators; and maintaining groups of specially-trained first responders, detectives, and mental health professionals that provide crisis intervention and ongoing support to individuals with serious mental illness or who are chronically homeless;
- Policies and training: including developing clear and comprehensive policies on use of force, preventing retaliation, supporting officers who report misconduct, and improving

- the field training program to ensure that officers develop the necessary technical and practical skills required to use force in a lawful and effective manner;*
- *Internal and civilian complaint investigations: including measures to eliminate arbitrary deadlines for the submission of civilian complaints; standards for conducting objective, thorough, and timely investigations; steps to ensure that the disciplinary system is fair and consistent; and protocols to protect officers' rights against self-incrimination;*
 - *Staffing and supervision: including completing a staffing and resource study to determine the appropriate allocation of resources; holding supervisors accountable for close and effective supervision; and providing guidance on the effective use of on-body recording systems to promote accountability and strengthen public trust;*
 - *Recruitment and promotions: including developing a strategic recruitment plan that includes clear goals, objectives, and action steps for attracting qualified applicants from a broad cross section of the community and ensuring that fair and consistent promotion practices are implemented;*
 - *Officer assistance and support: including measures to ensure that APD personnel have ready access to mental health services and that supervisors are trained in making referrals in a manner that minimizes stigma; and*
 - *Community engagement and oversight: including measures to strengthen the City's civilian oversight process; public information programs that keep members of the public informed of APD's progress toward reform; requirements on fostering community policing at all levels of APD; and establishing community policing councils throughout the City to ensure that meaningful feedback is obtained from the community.*

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-nm/pr/justice-department-reaches-agreement-city-albuquerque-implement-sweeping-reforms-use>

From what I've heard, I think many residents would say that police brutality is continuing despite federal oversight.

<https://www.kob.com/albuquerque-news/4-investigates-list-reveals-lsquoalarmingrsquo-picture-of-police-misconduct-in-new-mexico/5912987/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/06/albuquerque-new-mexico-fatal-police-shootings> (Since 2015, police in the Albuquerque metro area have shot 44 people, 42 of whom have died...Among cities with more than 500,000 people, Albuquerque has had among the highest rates of fatal police shootings since 2015. [Only Las Vegas was higher. The state overall trails only Alaska in per capita killings by police.])