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The Rodney King Case as a Prime Example of Police Brutality

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ABSTRACT :

Before we move on to our topic, we should first understand what brutality means. According to the Cambridge, dictionary brutality means—a behavior that is very cruel or violent and shows no feelings for other.' So, Brutality means hurting in a criminal way someone badly without thinking that he can even die from that strike or act. Brutality is mostly found in murder, torture, crime, and police torture.

Police brutality is one of the forms of brutality. It means when police officer misuses their power of arresting or using force against a civilian. It is a form of police conduct that violate the civil rights of the individual. It is not only limited to beating, improper arrest or taking down, shooting, or arrest without warrant, the police can use its power in many ways which can harm the civil rights of the individual.

Now we will talk about the personal Rodney King, who was the victim of police brutality, which has led to public protests, riots, and police reforms. The full name of Rodney King was Rodney Glen King who was born on 2 April 1965, in Sacramento, California, USA. He was an African American. On the date 3 March 1991, he was arrested and beaten by an officer of the LAPD¹(Los Angeles Police Department). Now let's talk about what actually happened in the case, the whole event was captured by George Holliday² in his Cam recorder.

The fact of the case :

The incident took place on Sunday morning dated 3 March 1991. King was driving a 1987 Hyundai Accent on the foot Hill Freeway in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles with his two friends i.e Bryant Allen and Freddie Helms.³ All three were coming from their friend's house in Los Angeles, where they have spent their night by watching basketball and drinking. It was around 12:30 AM. Tim and Melanie Singer the officers on duty, noticed that the king was overspeeding his vehicle on the freeway. They both perused his car with siren and light

¹ Officially known as city of Los Angeles Police Department. It is the municipal police department of Los Angeles.

² He was a plumbing salesman and an amateur videographer

³ <https://en.wikidat.com/info/rodney-king>

at the speed of 188 km/h but the king refused to pull over. Later in his defense, the king refused to pull over because he was driving under the influence which would violate his parole for the previous robbery conviction. He left the freeway and the pursuit continued through the residential street at 90 to 130 km/h of speed, later the pursuit was joined by several police cars and a helicopter and in the next 13 km, they cornered the king's car. The first five officers that have arrived, were named, Stancy Khoon, Lawrence, Powell, Timothy wind, Theodore Briseno, and Rolando Solano.

The officer, Tim ordered two passengers along with king to get out of the car and lie down on the ground. The two passengers except King came out of the car and then the same as they were instructed. Allen claimed that he was manhandled, kicked, and threatened, while the other person's helm was hit on his head, while lying on the ground, and his baseball cap was taken by police. It was reported that when the king emerged out of the car, he loved and waved to the helicopter over his head. King then grabbed his buttocks which officer Melanie singer took to mean king was taking out his weapon, so she pointed her Gun toward the king and ordered him to lie down on the ground, but later he was found to be unarmed.⁴ At this point, Stancy Koon the ranking officer told Singer that he was taking command and ordered all officers to take out their weapons.⁵ According to the official report of LAPD – Koon ordered the four other LAPD officers at the scene – Briseno, Powell, Solano, and Wind to arrest the king using a technique 'swarm'.⁶ The four-officer claimed that king has resisted their attempt to restrain him. In his defense, King also said that he did not resist, and witnesses also claimed that the king did not resist. The officer also claimed that he was under influence of phencyclidine (PCP) but in his report of toxicology, he was tested negative for drugs.

In the video recording, when the king was on the ground, he was teased by Koon then he rushed towards Powell either to strike or flee but he collided in rush with Powell then he stroked King with his baton and started repeatedly doing so by this attack king was knocked down to the ground. Koon reportedly said "Stop! Stop! That's enough! That's enough!" King rises again but Powell and Wind kept hitting him with their batons.⁷ Koon as was seen in the

⁴ <https://www.democraticunderground.com/100211883331>

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ <https://en.wikidat.com/info/rodney-king>

⁷ *Ibid*

video ordered officers to strike with power strokes on the joints, wrists, elbows, knees, and ankles of the King. Officer Wind, Briseno, and Powell have attempted a number of 33 strikes with 7 kicks and few misses and then after that 8-officer evolved in a swarm – handcuffed and cord cuffed him, and dragged him to the side of the road on his abdomen to wait for the emergency medical rescue. Due to this king has suffered multiple damages and fractures on his body.⁸

Verdict, charges, and punishment were given to the accused⁴ :

The crime which was committed by the officers comes under two levels of government for punishment - at the federal level and at the state level. The word applied to the accused– (Theodore J. Briseno, Stancy Cornell Koon, Laurence M. Powell, Timothy E.Wind). At the federal level is – Koon, and Powell were considered guilty, and Briseno and Wind were not considered guilty. Now the verdict at the state level is –Briseno, Koon, and Wind was considered not guilty on all counts, and Powell was not considered guilty for the use of excessive force, filing a false report, Hung jury on a count of assault.

The charges that were applied on the accused at the federal level on –Briseno, Powell, and Wind, for willfully and intentionally use of unreasonable force. Koon was charged with willfully permitting and failing to take action to stop an unlawful assault. The charges at the state level were – assault with a deadly weapon, excessive use of force, and filing a false report by Koon and Powell.⁹

The punishment was given to both **Stancy Cornell Koon** and **Lawrence M. Powell**. They both were sentenced to 2 ^{1/2} years in federal prison.

Riots in Los Angeles :

After the video recording of the arrest of King was played, the people of Los Angeles thought that this happened just because of the race, the colour of the king and all the people including the Tom Bradley¹⁰ of Los Angeles said, "the jury verdict, will not blind us to what we saw on that video. The man who beat Rodney King do not deserve to wear the uniform of LAPD “. ¹¹ Within the hours of acquittal, the riots begin, which last for 6 days in which African

⁸ <https://www.famous-trial.com>

⁹ <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/114085>

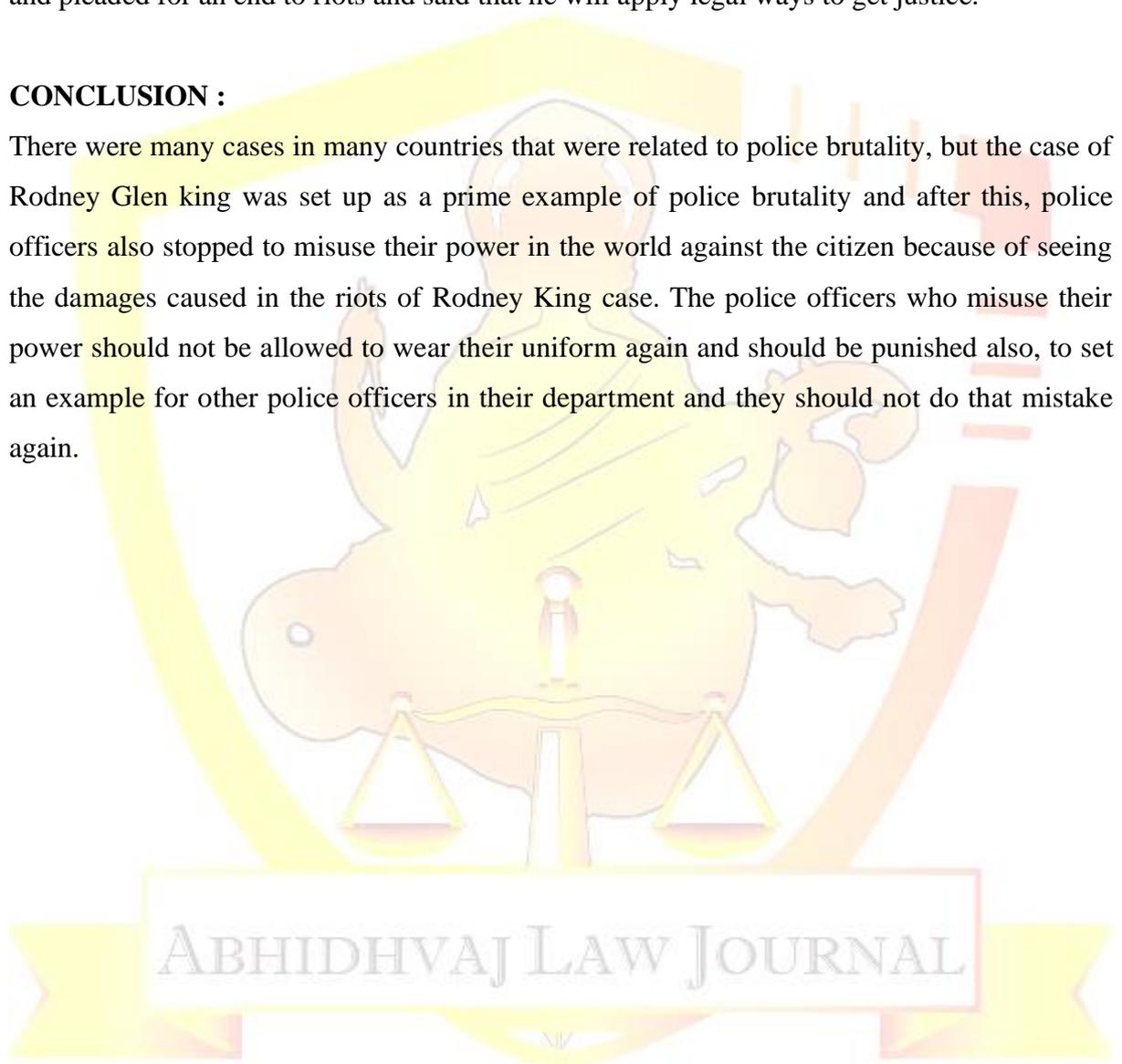
¹⁰ He was the American politician and police officer and was the 38th mayor of Los Angeles.

¹¹ <https://en.wikidat.com/info/rodney-king>

Americans were outraged by the verdict, and rioting began on the street along with Latino¹² communities. The riots have resulted in 63 deaths, 2383 injuries, more than 7000 Fires, 3100 businesses damaged, and nearly around \$1 billion in financial loss. Similarly, smaller riots took place in other U.S. cities – San Francisco, Las Vegas, Seattle, New York, and Atlanta. After lots of destruction made by the citizen. On May 1, 1992, King appeared on television and pleaded for an end to riots and said that he will apply legal ways to get justice.

CONCLUSION :

There were many cases in many countries that were related to police brutality, but the case of Rodney Glen king was set up as a prime example of police brutality and after this, police officers also stopped to misuse their power in the world against the citizen because of seeing the damages caused in the riots of Rodney King case. The police officers who misuse their power should not be allowed to wear their uniform again and should be punished also, to set an example for other police officers in their department and they should not do that mistake again.



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¹² According to USCB , it refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican , south or central America ,or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. (<https://en.wikidat.com/info/rodney-king>)