Finding Aid of the Richard M. Mosk Christopher Commission records 0395

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On March 3, 1991, an American construction worker named Rodney King was severely beaten by Los Angeles police officers after leading them through the San Fernando Valley on a high-speed car chase. A bystander, George Holliday, witnessed the beating and videotaped much of the incident from a distance. Footage from Holliday's videotape showed a group of uniformed officers surrounding King while several of them struck him repeatedly with their batons. A large group of officers watched the incident without taking any noticeable action to stop it. When a portion of the videotaped footage was televised in Los Angeles, then by news agencies around the world, the ensuing public outrage increased tension between the local black community and the LAPD.

The public demand for evaluation and reform of police procedures involving the use of force resulted in the formation of two citizens' commissions—one created by Mayor Tom Bradley and one created by Chief of Police Daryl Gates. To avoid overlap, the two commissions subsequently merged to form the Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department, informally known as the Christopher Commission. The 10-member Commission, chaired by Warren Christopher, sought to examine all aspects of the law enforcement structure in Los Angeles that might cause or contribute to the problem of excessive force, including:

- the apparent failure to control or discipline officers with repeated complaints of excessive force
- concerns about the LAPD's "culture" and officers' attitudes toward racial and other minorities
- the difficulties the public encounters in attempting to make complaints against LAPD officers
- the role of the LAPD leadership and civilian oversight authorities in addressing or contributing to these problems.

At the conclusion of its investigation, the Commission synthesized its findings into a 228-page "Report of the Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department." Many of the problems identified by the Commission were attributed to the LAPD's management and administration practices led by Chief of Police Daryl Gates. The Commission published its report in July 1991, three months after the investigation was formally launched.

**Scope and Content**

The collection includes police commission correspondence, status reports and final reports of the Independent Commission, testimony transcripts, a transcript of messages from the LAPD Mobile Digital Terminal System, and the transcript of an oral history of Mosk.

**Related Archival Materials**

Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department records (Collection 229) is held in Special Collections at the University of Southern California Libraries.

The National Archives holds the Richard M. Mosk papers, a small collection regarding the proceedings of the Warren Commission. Mosk was a member of the staff of the Warren Commission's President Commission on the Assassination of
Biographical Note
Richard M. Mosk has been an associate justice of the California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Five since 2001 when he was appointed by Gray Davis.

Mosk was born in Los Angeles in 1939, the son of Stanley Mosk, a former California Attorney General and state Supreme Court justice. A graduate of both Stanford University and Harvard Law School, Richard Mosk served as a California Supreme Court law clerk and later was appointed to the staff of the Warren Commission (President's Commission on the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy). From 1981 to 1984, Mosk served as the U.S. appointed judge on the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal, which was established as part of the settlement of the Iranian hostage crisis. Subsequently, he served as a substitute judge on that Tribunal from 1984 to 1997. In 1997, he was reappointed to that Tribunal and served until 2001 when he was appointed to his current position on the California Court of Appeal.

In 1991, Mosk served as a member of the Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department, also known as the Christopher Commission. The Commission was formed to investigate the L.A.P.D. shortly after the highly publicized beating of motorist Rodney King.

Between 1994 and 2000, Mosk served as both Chair and Co-Chair of the Motion Picture Classification and Rating Administration (of the Motion Picture Association of America) that provides the parental ratings for motion pictures.

Justice Mosk has practiced law in Los Angeles, tried both civil and criminal cases, and argued cases before the California and United States Supreme Courts. He has taught law at the University of Southern California Law Center and the T.C. Beirne School of Law at Queensland University in Australia. In addition, he has lectured at many law schools in the United States, Europe, and Asia. For the past several years, he has taught a freshman seminar at USC.

Acquisition
Donated by Richard M. Mosk.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Police-community relations -- California -- Los Angeles -- History -- 20th century -- Archival resources
Trials (Police misconduct) -- California -- Los Angeles -- Archival resources
Police brutality -- California -- Los Angeles -- Archival resources
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Correspondence
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Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Dept. (Los Angeles, Calif.) -- Archives
Mosk, Richard M. -- Archives
Briseño, Theodore J. -- Archives
King, Rodney -- Archives
Los Angeles (Calif.). Police Department -- Trials, litigation, etc.
Gates, Daryl F. -- Archives
Powell, Laurence -- Archives
Wind, Timothy E. -- Archives
Koon, Stacey C. -- Archives

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Police Commission Correspondence: Vol.1, Pt.1 408068 April-May 1991

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Scope and Content
This folder contains the 104-page transcript of an oral history by Richard M. Mosk, as told to Matthew Mosk. The oral history was done as part of the California Appellate Court Legacy Project.