

Chapter 4

Marcus Lab

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Arthur Hilson
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torture screams
excruciating pain

EDITORIAL/OPINION

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No place for police torture

On April 19, seven student protesters were arrested at a University of Massachusetts at the Amherst weapons research laboratory. Putting aside for a moment the moral issue of electronic and biological weapons research at the university, I would like to discuss the issue of police conduct.

Andrew Sirulnik

It is important to understand that when the student protesters occupied the weapons research laboratory, they stated to the police their intent to commit an act of strictly nonviolent and civil disobedience that would be non-destructive of property — by their physical presence the student protesters were halting weapons research.

At about 2:00 p.m., Director of Public Safety Arthur Hilson announced to the approximately 30 protesters and reporters that arrest was imminent and that all reporters and protesters who didn't want to be arrested must leave. After the room had been cleared of all but nine protesters and nine policemen, Mr. Hilson told the protesters that they would have to wait for someone from the Dean of Students office to arrive and recite relevant passages from the University Code of Conduct prior to arrest.

30 minutes later, when this was finally accomplished, Mr. Hilson ordered a mock arrest. Police surrounded the group as a police video camera was swiftly moved into position. Mr. Hilson then stepped into the middle of the anxious group of protesters and said, in a disinterested tone, that he and other university officials had decided not to arrest them, and that they were being let off easy just this once, expecting the group to utter a muffled sigh of relief, shrug their shoulders, and leave the building. None of the protesters left.

Inside, the students were confined by police to a small area of the lab. They were not permitted to use a toilet, and women and men alike were forced to urinate in a wastebasket while the all male contingent of police were present. A police officer told one protestor that he hoped that he would make a false move, so that he would have

an opportunity to beat him.

Mr. Hilson returned at 6:00 pm and said that the Chancellor had changed his mind and the students were to be arrested immediately. He finally allowed water to be delivered, which had been provided by other protestors and not by Mr. Hilson as some reports read. Mr. Hilson's announcement of probable disciplinary suspension from the university convinced one more protestor to leave, and the arrests began.

While none of the protesters offered any active resistance to being removed, those who did not offer to walk out voluntarily were intentionally subjected to the severe pain of being dragged by their wrists, which were handcuffed behind their backs and forcefully twisted. One man was targeted for special treatment by a device that is specifically designed to cause one's handcuffs to imbed in the ulnar nerve, inflicting excruciating pain.

As he was being dragged out of the building, that protestor's screams were not of indignation or anger, but of physical received agony. At least one newspaper reported that protesters received medical care for "soreness." The young woman who was carried by one arm while both were handcuffed behind her back, and who now has one of her arms splinted and one in a sling, would use other words to describe her injuries.

After the protesters who were treated at the University Health Services were returned to the University Police Station, all seven were released.

The university is an institution of higher learning, and not a seething inner-city district. While I met several University police who acted sincerely and with decorum, many were blatantly cruel. Physical and psychological torture by police, as well as research on developing a more efficient technology of death by scientists, have no place at the University of Massachusetts, and should be actively challenged by all who are blessed with a conscience.

73 Andrew Sirulnik is a UMass student who was involved in Wednesday's demonstration. All of the protesters contributed to this column.

special treatment