

## Case 11

You are the Executive Director of a large professional organization. One of your responsibilities is to oversee arrangements for the organization's annual convention. In the first instance, this involves making recommendations about convention sites to the organization's Board of Directors. On your recommendation, in 2000 the Board approved Cincinnati as site for the 2003 annual convention.

In the spring of 2001 fourteen groups in Cincinnati initiated a boycott movement, appealing to organizations, such as yours, not to hold their conventions in Cincinnati. The boycott movement is principally a response to the following situation. On April 7, 2001, a Cincinnati policeman shot and killed a young African-American man. In the course of pursuing the young man, who had refused to stop when ordered to do so, the policeman thought the young man had reached for a gun, although later investigation revealed he had been unarmed. News of the young man's death set off three days of rioting, in which arson, looting, property destruction, and shooting took place. Police arrested more than 800 individuals.

The riot, one of the worst civil disturbances in the United States over the past decade, reflected pent-up anger of numerous African-Americans in Cincinnati concerning, what they perceive as, grievous police misconduct over many years toward African-Americans, especially in the vicinity of the Over the Rhine area adjacent to the downtown Cincinnati business district. At the time of the shooting, there had been four African-Americans killed by Cincinnati police since November of 2000, and fifteen killed since 1995. The police contend that every such incident involved circumstances justifying the use of deadly force. Credible evidence seems to establish that in many of the incidents the police indeed responded appropriately. Nonetheless, African-American and civil liberties organizations in Cincinnati have numerous additional complaints against the police dealing with racial harassment and discrimination. In March of 2001, the month before the rioting occurred, the Cincinnati American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and a coalition of African-American organizations, the Black United Front (BUF), filed a lawsuit in federal court against the city, alleging decades of police misconduct toward African-Americans.

In the aftermath of the rioting, two potentially significant efforts to address the underlying problems were initiated. First, Cincinnati mayor, Thomas Luken, announced the formation of a panel to explore ways of improving race relations in the city, and he invited the leader of BUF, Reverend Damon Lynch III to serve as co-chair of the panel, which was named Cincinnati Community Action Now (CAN). Reverend Lynch accepted the mayor's invitation. Second, the city council of Cincinnati agreed to participate in an effort at achieving a mediated settlement of the lawsuit filed in federal court by the ACLU and BUF. Under the innovative procedures for mediation that the parties agreed upon, focus groups of city, police, and community leaders were to develop six goals for a settlement. The city government, police department, ACLU, and BUF were then to

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attempt negotiating an agreement to address the six goals, and, if successful, they would then submit the agreement for approval to the federal judge presiding in the lawsuit.

Both of the above mentioned efforts to address Cincinnati's problems in the area of race relations have moved forward since the weeks following the riots, but, unfortunately, in a polarized atmosphere that makes their success uncertain. Toward the end of September in 2001 the policeman who shot and killed the young man was acquitted (He had been charged with negligent homicide, a misdemeanor). In November of 2001 another Cincinnati policeman, brought to trial on assault charges in connection with the suffocation of an African-American man in November of 2000, was also acquitted. After the second acquittal, Reverend Lynch, leader of BUF, co-signed a letter supporting the boycott movement which accused police in Cincinnati of "killing, raping, planting false evidence, and, along with prosecutors and the courts, destroying the general self respect of black citizens." In early December of 2001, an incensed Mayor Luken removed Reverend Lynch from his position as co-chair of CAN.

So far the boycott movement has not generated much attention from the media outside of Cincinnati. Most members of your organization seem unaware of it. None has raised the issue with you -- yet. Many member of the organization, however, have deep interest in and concern about, racial justice and civil liberties. (Time still remains for your organization to cancel the arrangements that have been made with the convention center and hotels in Cincinnati.)