

A HISTORY OF THE ATLANTA CITY DETENTION CENTER

Summary: In 1996, the Olympics came to Atlanta. The city built a new jail in record time; it was the first facility completed for the Games. (Cost = \$56 million)

Major Players:

- Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell
- Police Chief Beverly Harvard
- Billy Payne, head of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG)
- Renee Glover, Head of the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA)
- Olympic Ring Neighborhoods and Poor, Black, and homeless residents

Major Themes:

- Broken-window policing & the introduction of new “Quality of Life” ordinances, aimed at removing Black, poor, and homeless people from the view of incoming visitors/investors.
 - Anita Beaty, co-director of the Atlanta Task Force on the Homeless, documented more than **9,000 arrests of homeless people from May 1995 to May 1996**. A number 4x’s greater than what her group had recorded in other years.
- The use of “zero tolerance” drug policies to remove individuals and families from housing projects in Olympic Ring Neighborhoods.
- Bulldozing and complete destruction of public housing in the Olympic Ring Neighborhoods and displacement of Black, poor residents.
- Increased policing of Black poor communities in the area.

History of ACDC:

- On **September 18, 1990**, the International Olympic Committee awarded the right to host the 1996 Summer Olympics.
- **1991:** The year following Atlanta’s bid win in 1990, the City of Atlanta passed a series of **Quality of Life Ordinances**. These included measures against: “aggressive” panhandling, including panhandling within 10 feet of an automatic teller machine, or transit stop; loitering; “camping in a public;” and remaining in a parking lot without having a car.
- The **Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games**, a group of business leaders (owners of major private corporations), **headed by Billy Payne**, led the bid for the Olympics, projected to bring millions of dollars into the city and create a tidal wave for more business. **Payne partnered with civil rights icon Andrew “Andy” Young** (first black congressional representative of GA in a hundred years and the mayor of Atlanta for most of the 1980’s).

His mayoral administration had been characterized as one that cemented the **“alliance between city hall and business leaders.”**

- The **ACOG** needed to **cleans the city of it’s high-crime image**, to overcome the fears of prospective tourists, and more importantly, investors! Thus, **the new Black mayor, Bill Campbell**, a former city council representative and protege of Maynard Jackson, elected during the pre-Olympics frenzy, announced that **“reducing crime was the most important issue facing the city.”**
- **“Olympic Ring Neighborhoods”**: **92% of the residents** living in the newly-named Olympic neighborhoods **were black and poor**. Worse Atlanta’s overall poverty rate was 32% (higher than the national average).
 - This led to a kind of **emergency plan to remove** them from sight of the projection **2 million visitors and potential investors**. (It’s important to note that these decisions were profit-driven. The games were slated to raise the gross state product by 5.1 billion.)
- **1994: Campbell appointed a new police chief, Beverly Harvard** (first Black woman to head the police department of a major city, this was widely publicized. She also had **absolute allegiance to Campbell**. She took command of **1700 uniformed police and \$100 million budget**.)
- **1995:** Chief Harvard increases initiatives for “Community Policing Atlanta” and establishes and expands the juvenile section, domestic violence unit and gangs and guns task force.
- In addition, **Campbell appointed Renee Lewis Glover to the head of the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA)**. When Glover took over **AHA was the fifth largest housing agency in the nation, with an annual budget of \$500 million**.
 - **By July, 1996**, Glover had obtained \$42 million in federal funding and had **bulldozed the homes of all poor black families from over a thousand units** of the massive Techwood Homes (the first housing project in the nation, built for whites only) as well as of the neighboring Clark Howell Homes, casting them from sight of the adjacent downtown “Olympic Village.”
 - **Residents were displaced to alternative cheap housing**, clinging to “Section 8” federal housing vouchers.
 - **“Further Assurances Agreements:”** These **resident agreements to move out, which facilitated their mass removal**, were conceived by Glover, a former corporate attorney who soon become one of the highest-paid housing agency administrators in the nation.
- **AHA’s “Olympic Legacy Program:** Residents remaining in the yet-to-be-developed blighting housing projects.
- **Residents of the AHA’s “Olympic Legacy Program**, suddenly became subject to Glover’s harsh new policies.

- **'Zero tolerance' drug policy:** This was used in the pre-Olympics years to remove any and all residents and their entire families. People could be removed, for being suspected of drug dealing or use.
 - **With APD's 1700 officers, headed by Harvard, and newly hired bands of private police, Glover began sweeping clean the housing projects of its poor residents, making way for more bulldozers.**
- At the same time, the city of Atlanta passed "**urban camping**" ordinance that permitted the **arrest of homeless people** (estimated between 8,000 - 22,000 mostly black people, at the time). **Camping included:**
 - **Sleeping**
 - **Lying down,**
 - **Residing,**
 - **Or storing personal property in any park or on any public sidewalk, and**
 - **Using any public space for living accommodations**
- The year following Atlanta's bid win in 1990, the City of Atlanta passed a series of **Quality of Life Ordinances**. These included measures against:
 - **"aggressive" panhandling,** including panhandling within 10 feet of an automatic teller machine, or transit stop;
 - **loitering,**
 - **"camping in a public"** and,
 - **remaining in a parking lot without having a car.**
- **The city also closed down Woodruff Park and renovated it.** The city took its time--it was their best chance to move out the homeless men and women who slept in the park--and **when the park was reopened, it had been landscaped with a wide open slope to make it easier for police to keep it clear of the visibly poor.**
- Officials with the Atlanta Olympic Committee insisted the police were not used to clear poor black people out of downtown Atlanta for the Games. Yet, **the visibly poor--nearly all black--disappeared from Woodruff Park for the duration of the Games. The county jail's population shot up from 2,200 to 4,500 before and during the Olympics.**
- Anita Beaty, co-director of the Atlanta Task Force on the Homeless, documented more than **9,000 arrests of homeless people from May 1995 to May 1996.** A number 4x's greater than what her group had recorded in other years.