

Description of the Rodney King Beating

Los Angeles, CA

March 3, 1991

Rodney King led police on a car chase, reaching speeds of perhaps 80 to 100mph. The chase lasted about 5 to 10 minutes.

Fifteen police officers in 10 patrol cars stopped Mr. King's white Hyundai sedan. As Mr. King lay on the ground offering no resistance, he was surrounded by officers, one of whom shocked him with a stun gun as others hit him more than 50 times with their batons and kicked him in the head and body at least seven times while he begged them to stop.

In an interview, one of the two passengers in King's car described the scene: Mr. Allen said that he feared for his life as he was made to crawl along the ground, hearing at the same time his friend's screams and the sounds of police batons from the far side of the car. "He was screaming, 'Stop!'" said Mr. Allen, who said he heard but did not see his friend being beaten. "Then he kind of quit, and all you could hear was like bones being broken, a crunching, like a whip sound."

Mr. King suffered a fractured eye socket, broken cheekbone, broken leg, facial nerve damage, and nine skull fractures. Police Chief Darryl Gates conceded that the tape showed unnecessary force being used and said that some of the police officers involved would face charges. Chief Gates further added that the incident was "an aberration," a deviation from the norm.

All three men in the car were black; the police officers were white.

The four officers were acquitted by an all-white jury on April 29, 1992. Within two hours, riots erupted in South Central Los Angeles as angry viewers took to the streets to vent their rage at the verdict.