

# Grand jury probing arrest

**Law** • The amateur cameraman who taped the incident is told on the radio of a subpoena.

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The Associated Press

## INGLEWOOD

The black 16-year-old who was videotaped being smashed into a car and punched in the face by a white police officer filed suit in federal court Wednesday, and a prosecutor revealed a county grand jury probe of the incident.

The civil-rights suit, filed on behalf of teen-ager Donovan Jackson and his father, Coby Chavis, who also claims to have been beaten, names the city of Inglewood, four of its officers, Los Angeles County and three sheriff's deputies involved in the arrest.

Grand jury probes usually remain secret while under way, but the amateur cameraman who recorded the video, Mitchell Crooks, 27, was told during a phone interview on KFI/AM's "John and Ken" radio show that there was a subpoena for him to appear Thursday.

"We want you before the grand jury, and we want the original tape," Chief Deputy District Attorney Curt Livesay told him by phone.

"I want to cooperate," Crooks replied, but said he feared for his life and was afraid he would wind up in jail. He hung up when Livesay asked him to tell investigators where he was.

The federal court lawsuit by the boy and his father seeks unspecified damages and alleges negligence, misconduct and violation of constitutional rights to due process and against unreasonable search and seizure.

"It was Donovan today, it was Rodney King yesterday; it's untold people in the graveyard that cannot speak out that have been abused by police, and it's time to stop," Donovan's cousin Talibah Shakir said at an emotional news conference held outside federal court in Los Angeles to announce the lawsuit.

"This nation has been faced with terrorists, and I ask you, was that not a terrorist act on Donovan?"

Officials with the Inglewood Police Department and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department declined comment on the lawsuit.

The videotape, which has been played repeatedly on television since Saturday, shows Inglewood officer Jeremy Morse lift Jackson, who is handcuffed, to his feet and slam his face into a car.



ATTORNEYS Joe Hopkins, left, and John Sweeney announce a lawsuit filed Wednesday against the city of Inglewood, Los Angeles County and the officers and deputies involved in the arrest of Donovan Jackson • Photo: Jim Ruymen / Reuters

Morse, who has a streak of blood next to his car, then strikes Jackson on the face with a closed fist.

The footage has sparked comparisons to the 1991 taped beating of King, which led to deadly riots when the Los Angeles police officers who beat the black motorist were acquitted of most charges.

Some civil-rights activists view the Jackson video as every bit as explosive, but most agree a major difference has been the reaction this time around of law-enforcement agencies and elected officials.

"The response by the LAPD during Rodney King was very, very defensive by Chief (Daryl) Gates. The response here by both law-enforcement agencies involved has been the antithesis of being defensive," said Ira Reiner, who was L.A. County district attorney when King was beaten. "There are substantial reasons for people to be extremely upset, but extremely upset does not equate to riot."

Inglewood police and the L.A. County sheriff and district attorney are investigating. U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft issued a statement Wednesday calling the tape troubling and noting that the FBI had opened a civil-rights investigation at the request of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Los Angeles.

Accounts vary dramatically about what took place at the Inglewood gas station before Crooks, a guest at the Econo-Lodge across the street, started rolling tape.

Sheriff's deputies said Jackson grew violent as they questioned his father after noticing that he was driving with expired tags. In a report released Wednesday by the Sheriff's Department and written before the videotape became public, Deputy Carlos Leon describes trying to get Jackson to sit in his patrol car while his father was questioned.

"Without warning, the sub-

ject lunged at me, raising his hands in front of him," Leon wrote. "I took the subject to the ground."

Jackson's attorneys, and supporters including a newly formed group called the Donovan Jackson-Chavis Justice Committee, say Jackson cooperated with deputies. They allege that sheriff's deputies, and Inglewood police who arrived to provide backup, attacked him and his father without provocation.

"They started the physical altercation," said Chavis attorney John E. Sweeney.

Jackson is developmentally disabled, his attorneys said. Sheriff's investigators are reviewing a surveillance video from the Thrifty gas station but declined Wednesday to discuss its contents.

Morse, a three-year veteran, was placed on leave with pay Monday. He has remained unreachable for comment since the arrest came to light.

In its first public comments on the incident, Inglewood's police union Wednesday urged people not to jump to conclusions.

"Our association supports the need for a thorough, methodical and unbiased investigation with no rush to judgment," the Inglewood Police Association board of directors stated.

Inglewood's 113,000 residents live largely under the flight path east of Los Angeles International Airport. The population is 47 percent black and 19 percent white with a growing Hispanic presence, according to the 2000 census.

U.S. attorney's spokesman Thom Mrozek said his office knew of no previous federal investigations of the Inglewood police force.

Since 1997, the district attorney has conducted eight investigations of Inglewood police but none involved excessive force. All were citizen complaints as opposed to official complaints.