

When Mom Is Right, And Tells Police They're Wrong
By NPR STAFF

When Robert Holmes' parents moved to Edison, N.J., in 1956, they were one of the first African-American families to integrate the neighborhood.

"After we'd moved to Edison, there was a resentment that we had broken into the community," Holmes says.

Even at the age of 13, Holmes felt the animosity. The neighborhood had a private swim club that opened up to anyone who participated in the Memorial Day parade. Holmes was in the band.

"I arrived at the pool on Memorial Day having marched in the parade with my uniform still on, and they called the police," he says.

The pool managers and the police department told Holmes' mother that her son was not allowed in the pool. She started to ask why, but then she stopped herself. Instead, she told Holmes to crawl under the turnstile and go into the pool.

"I looked at my mother; I looked at the police," Holmes says. "And I will tell you that as a 13-year-old, I was more inclined to do what my mother said than to be afraid of the police. So I did it."

A policeman told Holmes' mother to get him. Holmes distinctly remembers her response: "If you want him out of the pool, you go take him out of the pool. And by the way, as you take him out, you tell him why he can't go in the pool today."

"No one came. No one got me out, and I stayed in the pool," Holmes says.

In standing up to the police, Holmes' mother wasn't looking to break barriers for herself.

"I think like a lot of African-American people at the time, my parents were looking ahead of their own generation to the next," Holmes says. "I think they were deciding, we're gonna do something so that our children will have a better life than we have for ourselves."

Holmes, now 67, is a professor at Rutgers School of Law.

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Checking for Understanding

1. Describe Robert Holmes mom's personality using evidence from the text to support your answer.

2. What is the author's main purpose in the text? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Vocabulary

- Animosity
- Barriers
- Distinctly
- participated

<http://www.npr.org/2012/06/01/154100293/when-mom-is-right-and-tells-police-theyre-wrong>