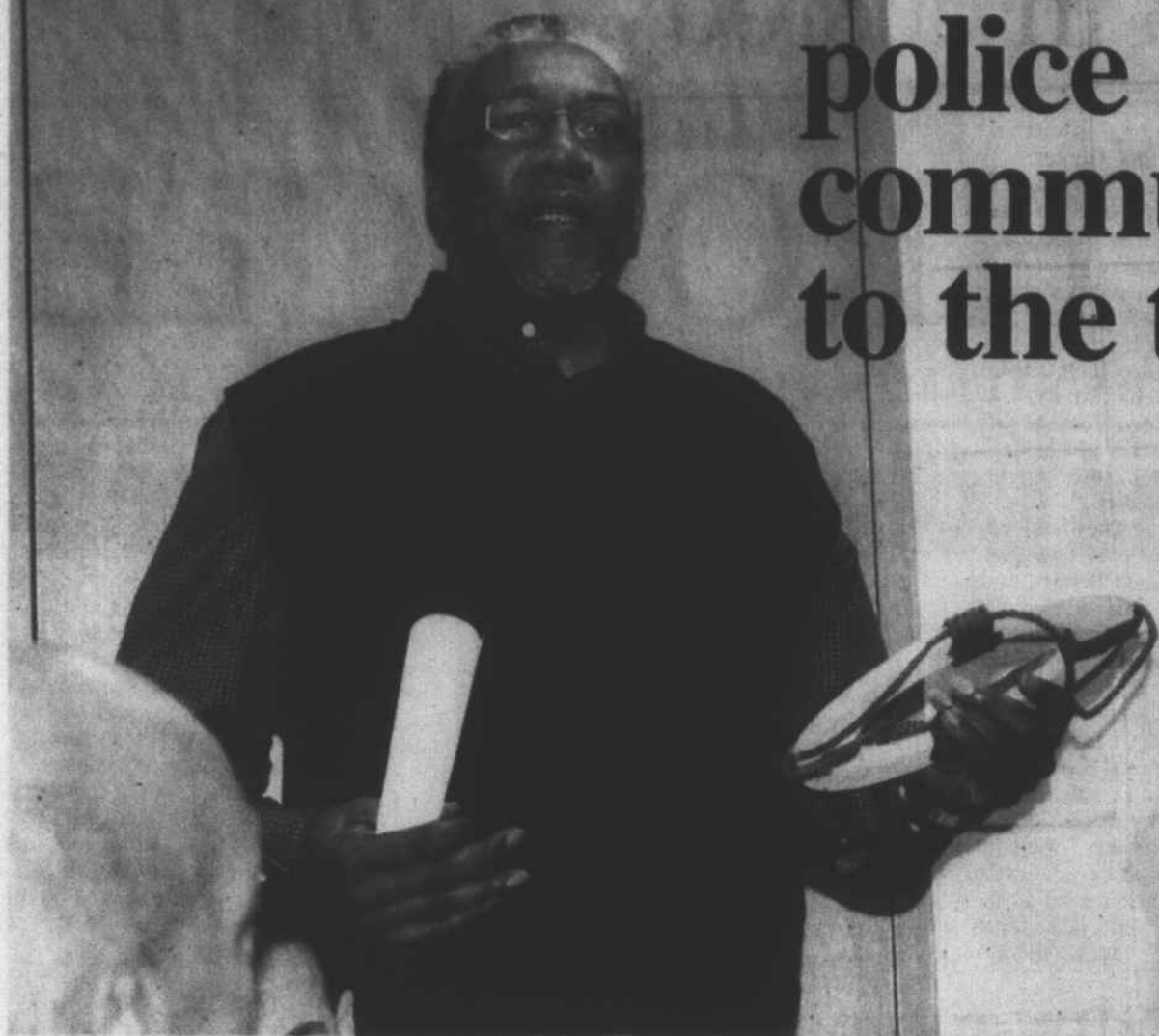


Trust Talk brings police and community to the table



BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

A Trust Talk trying to foster understanding between the police and those they serve was held at Polo Road Recreation Center on Thursday, Dec. 10.

The Winston-Salem Human Relations Department has been holding quarterly Trust Talks in different parts of the city for four years now. The talks take citizens and Winston-Salem Police Department officers and divide them into discussion groups. The comments from the meetings are incorporated into the training of Winston-Salem Police Department (WSPD) officers.

Nationally, it's a tumultuous time for relations between the police and the communities they serve. Incidents like one in Chicago where a police officer shot a black teenager 17 times have sparked outrage and protests. The night before the Trust Talk, 31 year-old Travis Nevelle Page died while in WSPD custody. According to the WSPD, officers were responding to a discharged weapon report and there was a struggle in which Page was pepper sprayed. He became unresponsive after being handcuffed according to authorities and was taken to the hospital where he was later pronounced dead.

Former Human Relations Commissioner Dr. Ernie Wade cautioned attendees not to jump to any conclusions about the incident and local police officers in general.

"Already there are peo-

ple saying, 'See? They killed one here,'" he said. "Already, without knowing any of the details."

The talk drew a variety of people with different backgrounds and views of the police.

Claudette Bailey, who heads the Pecan Ridge Neighborhood Association and Neighborhood Watch, said those in her neighborhood "think the world" of the police. She said police have worked with her neighborhood watch to keep her area safe.

Others have been on the other side of the law. Dave Moore served time for dealing drugs and now teaches the auto body trade to at-risk youth, ex-felons and others to keep them from going down the same path. He said many have been arrested by police themselves and are weary of the authorities. He's been trying to get police officers to come by his Southside Rides body shop and spend time with those in a program to show them a different side of policing.

"They don't like the police, half of them don't even know really why," said Moore. "But they don't know them as a person, they know them as a uniformed officer who arrested them."

Many had questions about the interactions they or people they know have had with the police, particularly about why police pull some people over and search their vehicles. Moore said he was pulled over and searched. He said he remained calm though his wife, who was riding with him, was upset. An officer apologized to him when nothing was found. Moore said he felt he'd

been profiled, which was a common concern among black participants.

Rev. Curtis Friday of The Love Church also participated. He said the Ministers Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity, which he's a member of, continues to field many complaints about the police. He described the relationship between the police and the community as a "roller-coaster" and that communication like the Trust Talks was vitally needed.

"I think we're both scared of each other," he said.

Anxieties with stereotypes went both ways. Several officers were concerned that all police were being judged by the actions of a few officers who acted inappropriately. Sgt. Rhoneek Readus said he was concerned that young people were growing up with negative views of the police.

"It's taking us back when we need to be moving forward," said Readus, who added that WSPD is trying to recruit young minorities with a scholarship program.

Sgt. Tim Taylor thanked attendees for coming. He said he'd been an officer for 25 years and it was his first Trust Talk. He felt the dialog was beneficial and all police officers should strive to treat those they serve equally.

"I had a sergeant who was over the police academy and that's what he told me, what he told the entire class, when you get this badge on, you're still a citizen with a job in a police uniform," he said. "Treat people the way you want to be treated."

Photo by Todd Luck
Dave Moore shares his thoughts during an icebreaker session at the Trust Talk last week.

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Correction

The Chronicle apologizes for some errors made in a story written by Cash Michaels and printed in The Chronicle on Dec. 10. The article, on page A1, has the headline "Guardian accused of 'theft.'" The story stated that attorney Bryan Thompson's signature is not on the court receipt from the Clerk's Office, but a signature next to the type-written name of witness "Amanda H. Jones" is." In fact, after closer examination of a copy of that court receipt, attorney Bryan Thompson's signature is next to his name, but because of the way it was written, it was mistaken to be part of the signature written immediately below it. The Chronicle regrets any misunderstanding that may have resulted from this error. The Editor

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