



Photos by Tevin Stinson

More than 100 people gathered outside the Public Safety Center in Winston-Salem on Sunday, July 17 for a prayer vigil designed to honor law enforcement officials.

# More than 100 people gather to pray for law enforcement

BY TEVIN STINSON  
THE CHRONICLE

Last Sunday, just a few hours after three law enforcement officers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, were gunned down by a man identified as Gavin Long, more than 100 people gathered outside the Public Safety Center in Winston-Salem to pray for police.

According to reports, on his 29th birthday, Long, a former Marine who spent time in Iraq, went on a shooting rampage that left two police officers and a sheriff's deputy dead. Following the ambush on officers, Long was killed in a gun battle with other officers.

During the vigil held next to the police memorial on Cherry Street, citizens dressed in different shades of blue held signs that read, "Blue Lives Matter," "Protect Our Officers," and "Police Lives Matter."

As she stood before the sea of blue, vigil organizer

Gloria Corn led a prayer that gained a rousing applause from the crowd. Corn noted, although the vigil was planned months before the shootings of police in Baton Rouge and Dallas, now more than ever law enforcement needs the support of the community.

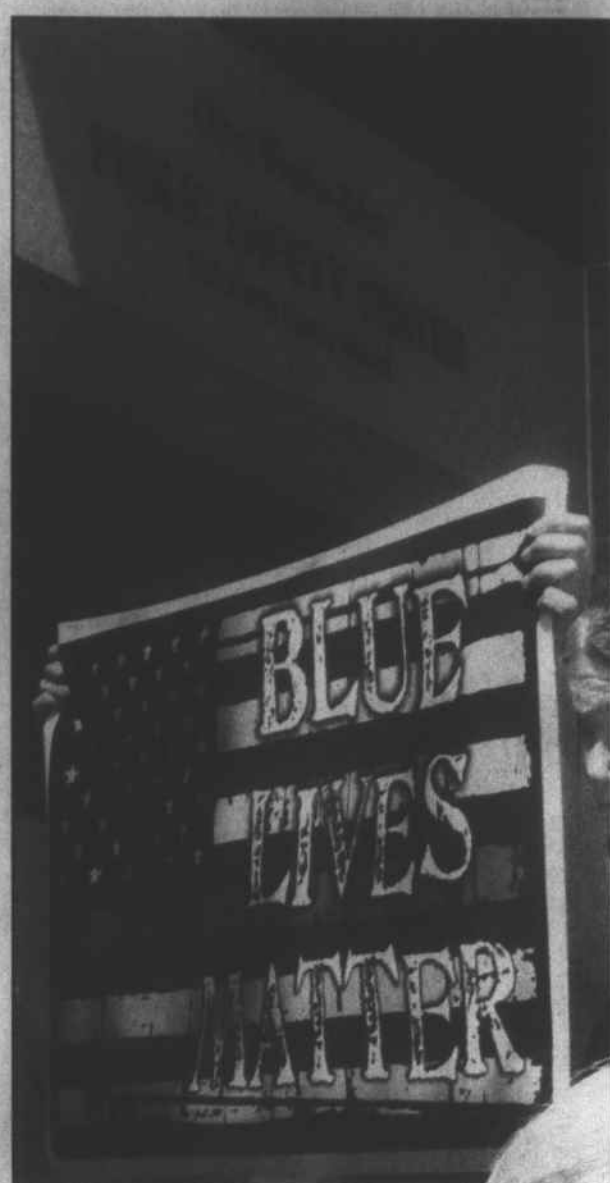
"Every day these officers risk their lives to ensure our safety," she continued. "They are willing to risk their lives to protect ours, and for someone to try to kill them is just horrible."

Corn told participants that holding vigils in support of police officers will prevent attacks from happening in the future. She said although it will take some time to fix the relationship between the community and police, she feels confident that change will come.

"I know there is a way we can fix it without using violence," she said. "More hate does not bring about positive change."



People praying outside the Public Safety Center.



A participant in the prayer vigil holds a sign that reads "Blue Lives Matter" outside the Public Safety Center in Winston-Salem on Sunday, July 17. More than 100 people gathered for the vigil designed to honor fallen police officers.

While participants took turns praying for officers out loud, city resident Samuel Dixon took a moment to talk about the relationship between police officers and the black community. Dixon, who is black, said, "It's time that the community starts to learn how to interact with law enforcement."

"It breaks my heart to see what is going on. I tell black men all the time, if you don't like police officers, change it by becoming one," Dixon said.

"... If the black community wants to take issue with something, take issue with the crime going on in our community every day."

Organizers of the vigil noted that more vigils will be held in support of officers in the coming months. After the vigil, Corn said it is important that officers understand they have the support of the community at all times and not just during tragedies.



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