

# FORUM

## How communities decide 'enough is enough'



Kimya N. Denni

Guest Columnist

Over the past days there has been peaceful protests and some rioting in response to Charlotte resident Keith Lamont Scott being yet another black man shot by law enforcement. The name of the officer was released by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police, Officer Brentley Vinson — a black man. There remains debate over whether Mr. Scott was brandishing a gun in a threatening way to law enforcement; or, if Mr. Scott simply had a gun, that he had a right to own, holstered (not brandishing) since North Carolina is an

open carry state; or, if Mr. Scott only had a book in his hand.

The family released a video his wife took on Friday, Sept. 23. Parts of two videos pertaining to this incident were released by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department on Saturday, Sept. 24. Despite the release of videos from different angles, there remains outrage and debate regarding why Mr. Scott was approached by police and was eventually shot.

While investigations are ongoing, there has been substantial media coverage of peaceful protests and some rioting. For example, "Anderson Cooper 360" and "CNN Tonight with Don Lemon," both live on CNN, have covered a great deal over the past few days. I continue to hope the agitating and rioting is kept to a minimum.

Unfortunately, two protests became riots that involved violent altercations between protesters and law enforcement, looting businesses, and broken windows in apartment buildings. For many blacks this simply highlights longstanding issues between law enforcement as well as segregation (both socioeconomic and racial) that has existed in Charlotte long before Charlotte became a tourist attraction, an athletic attraction and academic spotlight.

The perceived disconnect between public perception of Charlotte and what many blacks in Charlotte experience is perhaps connected to a number of factors including how, over the years, Charlotte has become a "Chocolate City" that has attracted a large amount of

blacks, including young black professionals, in a similar fashion as Washington, D.C. and Atlanta, Georgia.

This is an example of inconsistencies and inequalities that have existed for generations and cannot be "cured" through quick fixes. Therefore, we will continue to challenge these inconsistencies and inequalities in Charlotte and across the country.

As we already know, healthy protest is when we are not agitating and not harming anyone — ourselves or other people. There is enough violence in the United States and around the world. We need to express our disagreements in ways that are vocal enough to get attention but peaceful enough to maintain legality and overall health and safety. We know that we cannot phys-

ically force our voice to be heard. We cannot physically force people to take us seriously.

Therefore, we must stay informed and active in our communities. We must remain united to keep our communities safe and healthy. We will also continue to challenge the stereotype of blacks as violent and uncontrollable. Instead, we are very capable of having informed dialogues and informed, orderly disagreements and protests. We will not be dismissed as unreasonable and in need of being controlled.

As we unite toward social change, we will use freedom of speech and have peaceful, non-destructive protest. These are healthy, lawful ways to support Mr. Scott's family; as well as other families,

and hold law enforcement accountable for all investigations. On the evening of Sept. 21, Rev. Dr. William Barber said something on "CNN Tonight with Don Lemon" to the effect of, "you can be anti-'bad police' and pro-'good police.'" I agree wholeheartedly.

*Kimya N. Denni is a sociologist and criminologist with interdisciplinary work that includes suicide and suicidal self-harm and mental health. Her work reaches vast audiences with particular emphasis on blacks and the African diaspora. She is on the board of directors for LEAD Girls of NC, The Mental Health Association in Forsyth County, and North Carolina chapter of American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.*

## Hands up, hands down! It doesn't matter



James B. Ewers Jr.

Guest Columnist

I was talking to one of my childhood friends today [Sept. 20] about the shooting of an unarmed African-American male in Tulsa, Oklahoma. His remark about the shootings of black men by police officers made me realize one thing.

These shootings will not stop. There may be a temporary respite from time to time, but the shooting and killing won't stop.

This time it happened in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Terence Crutcher, a black man was stopped [on Sept. 16]. The policewoman, Betty Shelby, had Crutcher get out of his SUV. Backup police arrived and Terence Crutcher was first tased and then Officer Shelby shot him to death.

Of course, the Tulsa chief of police, Chuck Jordan, has called for a full investigation. Of course, Officer Shelby has been placed on administrative leave and of course drugs were found in the victim's vehicle.

Let's not leave out that

the audio tape between the police, the dispatcher and the police helicopter officer suggested Crutcher was on something. In a search of the vehicle no gun or anything else that could be used as a weapon was found.

The aforementioned steps have been pretty much the same in the deaths of other unarmed black men.

Black men, pay attention! Our lives are not valued by the larger society. This is what I know, not what I think.

We can comply with police requests but it doesn't necessarily mean that we will live to see another day.

It may sound a bit morbid and sad, but it is what it is.

We have to hug our loved ones each day that we leave the house just in case we don't make it home tonight.

I am shaking my head in hurt and disbelief wondering how does this continue to happen. Terence Crutcher was the father of four children. Critics will now try to find out if he was a good father.

Regardless of whether or not he was a good father shouldn't mean he should be shot and killed. His life mattered to his family and to his friends.

The United States Justice Department is now involved in the Terence Crutcher shooting. Only time will tell us what they will find upon further review. The video of the incident has been shown around the country.

Many of us have already drawn a conclusion simply based upon what we saw.

Predictably, it seems when a black man is shot there is always some evidence that we haven't seen.

Children, especially children of color, have seen the videos of some of these killings. When they ask us as parents and grandparents what should they do, what do we tell them?

Do we tell them to keep their hands up in sight like Terence Crutcher? Well, he had his hands up in plain sight and he was shot to death.

Do we tell our children to respect the police? Yes, we do.

Being a law enforcement officer is a tough job. The overwhelming majority of law enforcement officers are good people and do a great job.

It is now time for the police to develop some new strategies and programs as it relates to fighting crime.

It can't always be what citizens must do, it now

must be what the police should do.

Is killing the only option? Are we to fear the police or are we to respect the police?

This paradigm of black men living in fear of police must change. When we leave our homes in the morning, we want to return to our homes at night.

So now, unfortunately, we will just sit back and wait on the next time an African-American male is shot and killed hands up, hands down or on the ground by the police.

Be in prayer for men of color around the country.

[Note: Charlotte, N.C., resident Keith Lamont Scott was another black man shot by law enforcement in Charlotte on Sept. 20].

*James B. Ewers Jr. Ed.D. is a former tennis champion at Atkins High School in Winston-Salem and played college tennis at Johnson C Smith University where he was all-conference for four years.*

*He is the President Emeritus of The Teen Mentoring Committee of Ohio and a retired college administrator. He can be reached at ewersjr56@yahoo.com.*

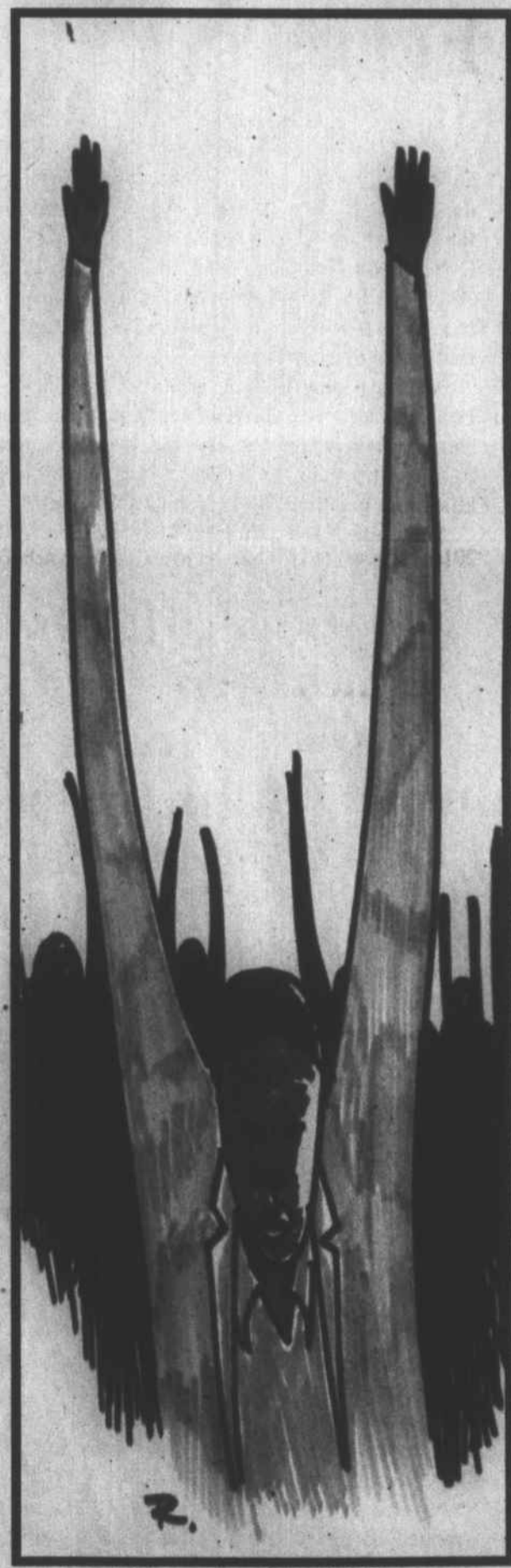


Illustration by Ron Rogers for The Chronicle

## Free Nurse-Family Partnership helps first-time moms succeed



Amber Draughon

Guest Columnist

high-risk pregnancy. Laura had concerns and fears about becoming a mother.

Laura was eager to learn more about her pregnancy and how to care for her child, which encouraged her to enroll in the NFP program.

When Laura first joined the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program, she was in the midst of a

The NFP program, managed by the Forsyth County Department of Public Health, pairs low-income, first-time mothers with experienced registered nurses. The nurse visits a client starting early in pregnancy until the client's child turns 2 years old.

Clients and nurses work as a team to achieve goals, including a healthy pregnancy, a healthy baby and increased economic self-sufficiency. A nurse provides a client with information, support and community resources needed to raise healthy children in the Forsyth County community.

Laura delivered a healthy child and

was ready to begin the next chapter in her parenting journey. Laura and I discussed several important aspects of care, including proper nutrition, attachment to caregivers and protection from illness and injury.

Around 18 months, Laura became concerned with her child's speech development. Laura and I focused on activities to support her child's growth and community resources available to assist Laura.

Laura's child now receives speech and play therapy as a result of an NFP referral. Laura reports her child's speech development has grown "bounds and leaps" and her child is now counting and naming ani-

mals.

Laura attributes her parenting success to NFP stating, "the knowledge and assistance [NFP] provided helped me become the mother I am today". Laura has begun online schooling for Medical Billing and Coding and will graduate in September 2016.

If you are pregnant with your first baby and want more information about the Nurse-Family Partnership Program, call 336-703-3185.

*Amber Draughon, RN, BSN, is a Nurse Care Manager with the Forsyth County Department of Public Health.*