



Volume 47, Number 30

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C.

THURSDAY, May 20, 2021

# East Winston churches, businesses repeatedly targeted with graffiti

C071 W78CL

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THE CHRONICLE

Since late last year, several properties in the East Winston Community, including several churches, have been the target of constant graffiti. Several people in the community believe it's the work of individuals trying to raise racial tension.

According to Rev. Stephen Tyndall, pastor of Freedom Baptist Church, the vandalism at his church located on East 14th Street, began a few months after five officers and a nurse were charged with involuntary manslaughter in connection to the death of John Neville, a Black man who died from asphyxia after being restrained while being detained at the Forsyth County Jail.

Tyndall, who is a native of Winston-Salem and a graduate of Carver High School, said vandalism at the church began with a brick being hurled through the front window. Church officials arrived one morning and found the brick on the floor, surrounded by glass from the broken window. "It wasn't too long after I first became pastor here and I got the call that somebody threw a brick through the front window," Tyndall said while sitting in the sanctuary last week.

But that was only the beginning of the problems for Tyndall and Freedom Baptist.

After the window was repaired, a few weeks later a photo of Neville accompanied with the words "Justice for John Neville" was posted on the side of the church. Then a few days later, "BlacK Power" was spray painted on the sign outside the church. And about three weeks after that, "BlacK Power" was spray painted on the sign again, and on a van parked outside the church. The van belongs to another congregation that rents the sanctuary from Freedom Baptist. The catalytic converter was also stolen off the van.



Graffiti reading "BlacK Power" and other vandalism has terrorized East Winston for several months.

Photos by Tevin Stinson

Following the incident with the sign and the van, the vandalism stopped for a while but it has picked up in recent months.

"We painted back over that and we didn't have nothing for a while and then somebody came and did the other side of the sign. We had a funeral here last Wednesday, so we painted over it and then Saturday somebody came and hit it again," Tyndall said.

Freedom Baptist hasn't been the only target in the area. Several churches and homes have had catalytic converters stolen off vans and other vehicles in recent months and businesses, homes, bus stops, and other churches have been tagged with "BlacK Power" in black spray paint, including a car during Sunday service at St. Mark

Lutheran Church, which is located at 1151 14th St.

Around the same time, Freedom Baptist was tagged two weeks ago. "Kill the White Man" was spray painted outside a hair salon on 14th St. as well. Sometime between Sunday night or early Monday morning, the local branch of Catholic Charities located at 1612 East 14th St. was tagged with the same wording, in what seems to be the exact same handwriting that has terrorized the East Winston Community for months. Over the weekend, Iglesia Cristiana Acra de Refugio Inc., a nonprofit located at the corner of 10th Street and Cleveland Avenue was also targeted and the sign in front of the building was shattered with a brick.

Terry Smith Jr., who

works at Ultimate Access LLC, a carwash located at the corner of 14th and Liberty Streets, said they were tagged early this year as well. When discussing the vandalism Smith, who is Black, said, "It's not one of us," referring to his race.

"Why would we do this to our own businesses in our own community? That's somebody trying to start something."

Smith said he believes whoever is responsible is traveling to the area to vandalize properties and ignite conflict, and he isn't alone. Rev. Tyndall, who has never met Smith, said the same thing.

"I really don't think it's us, I think it's somebody trying to mess with us," Tyndall said.

The Winston-Salem

Police Department has said they have been getting a lot of calls about vandalism in the area and they have encouraged the community to report every incident. They also mentioned that they have increased patrols in the area. Images of the vandals have been captured on video, but they appear to have been wearing masks and bandanas on their faces.

Tyndall said it has been frustrating to deal with, but he won't let it stop him; he said it only makes him go harder. When asked what he would say if he could talk to the person responsible for the vandalism, Tyndall said, "I would say ... honestly, you're not hurting us, you're only hurting yourself at the end of the day, because this is not man's building ... this

is God's house. So before you do it again, you need to be mindful and realize who's house you're vandalizing.

"And whether you choose to believe in God or not, you're going to have to give an account for it, so while you still have a chance, make it right. I'm not even saying turn yourself in, just stop.

"Right your wrongs. Just stop, because eventually you're going to have to give an account."

*Editor's Note: The graffiti referred to in this story has misspellings and syntax errors. We printed those typos as they appear on the vandalized property.*

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