

# Residents sound-off about Police Department

Review prompted by  
Darryl Hunt case

BY LAYLA FARMER  
THE CHRONICLE

The city of Winston-Salem will be the first to admit that its Police Department has room for improvement.

"We're not perfect," said City Manager Lee Garrity. "We're a lot better, but we're not perfect."

But then, as the city that spawned the infamous, stunningly botched case of Darryl Hunt, it would be virtually impossible not to. In the years since Hunt's release in 2003, the police department and the Forsyth County District Attorney's office have endured ample criticism for the practices and policies that helped convict an innocent man, Hunt, of first-degree murder.

As part of an ongoing effort to find and fix what went wrong with the Hunt case, city officials hosted a meeting at the Hanes Hosiery Recreation Center to allow residents to voice their concerns and opinions about the Police Department's Criminal Investigations Unit, the wing of the department made up of the detectives who investigate crimes.

"This is the beginning of a very, very important process," Garrity remarked. "As always, my commitment is, as much as possible, to have a transparent review of city government ... You are the owners of the city government; it is so important that we work with you."

Almost immediately, there was controversy, when the 60-plus citizens who crowded into the room learned that the meeting was not in fact a public forum as the audience had understood it to be, but an opportunity to meet one-on-one with representatives from the Raleigh-based consulting firm, Risk Management Associates (RMA), which was hired by the City Council to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the



Photos by Layla Farmer  
**Shawna Graham speaks about her son, Calvin Michael Smith.**

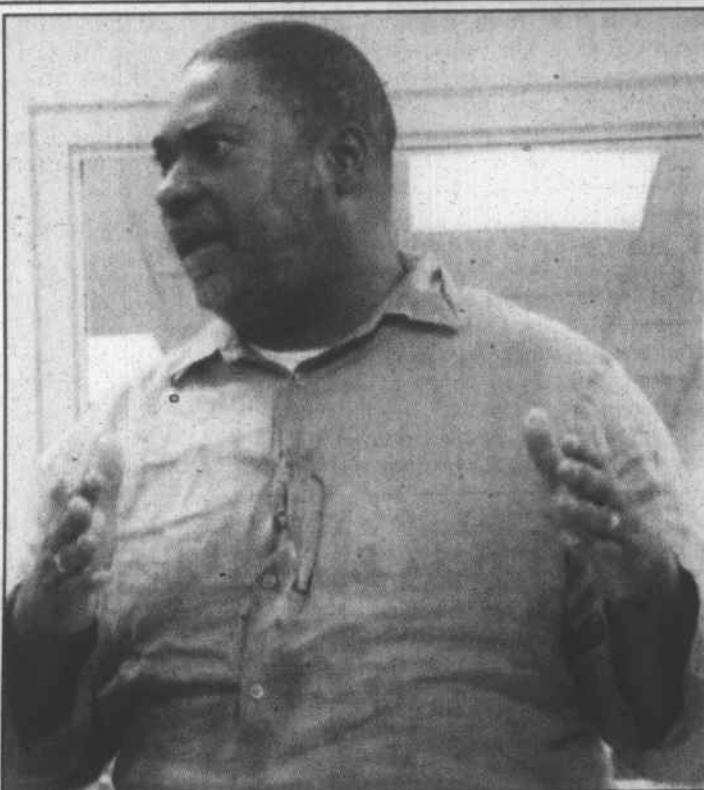
**Right: The Rev. Carlton Eversley addresses his concerns.**

Criminal Investigations Unit.

After a few moments of turmoil, Garrity stepped in and amended the evening's agenda, allowing those present to choose whether they wished to air their complaints publicly or privately.

Though most of the complaints were centered around the alleged mistreatment of myriad African Americans — mostly men — by the police department, there was a diverse group in attendance at the meeting-turned-forum.

Shawna Graham made sure she voiced her opinions publicly. Graham is the mother of Calvin Michael Smith, a black



man who was imprisoned in the mid-90s after being convicted of attacking and nearly killing Jill Marker, a white woman who was savagely beaten at the Silk Plant Forest on Silas Creek Parkway. Smith's case has been picked up by Duke University's Innocence Project and has received considerable criticism for the way that it was handled by the Criminal Investigations Unit and DA's office.

"At this particular time, I have no love for the judicial system," Graham said, rage straining the tone of her voice. "My son's case was not thoroughly investigated ... Tom Keith knows that he doesn't have evidence; my son did not commit that crime."

District Attorney Tom Keith, whose office is linked to several controversial cases in the county, took considerable heat from the crowd.

"I just have a rhetorical question," one audience mem-

ber said. "Why is Tom Keith still in office?"

Among the sea of faces were familiar ones such as Mayor Pro Tempore Vivian Burke, and the Rev. Carlton Eversley and Professor Larry Little, the latter two staunchly supported Darryl Hunt during his ordeal. Hunt was also in attendance, as were NAACP President Stephen Hairston and City Council Member Joycelyn Johnson.

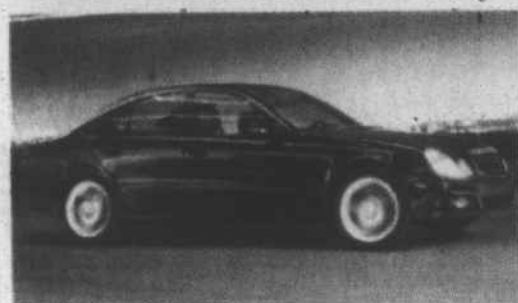
The Rev. Susan Parker of Wake Forest Baptist Church, recounted an incidence of what she called injustice that her niece, a white woman, and her African American husband experienced while visiting the city.

The couple were touring the city when they were pulled over by a police officer who questioned Parker's niece as to whether she was in the car with her husband voluntarily or if he was harassing or bothering her in any way, Parker related. If that incident helped to open Parker's eyes to the injustices that were going on around her, then her exposure to the Darryl Hunt case added fuel to the fire.

"As a citizen, I want to hear something from this city about what's going to happen in the future to make sure that we don't have recurring situations like Darryl (Hunt) or maybe like Calvin (Michael Smith)," she asserted. "Because right now, my confidence is shattered in this city and in the police force and the criminal investigation department here."

Risk Management Associates may conduct follow-up interviews with some of those who took part in the forum. The agency was hired at the recommendation of the city-appointed Sykes Administrative Review Committee (Deborah Sykes is the woman that Hunt was falsely convicted of killing). RMA is expected to report its results to the city. The agency, though, also received some criticism at the forum. NAACP President Hairston and others are concerned that apparently most of RMA employees are white males.

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