

THE CHRONICLE

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Ministers' Conference calls for full disclosure of scuffle, arrest of teen

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

After a cell phone video showing a 15-year-old being taken to the ground with excessive force by an officer with the Winston-Salem Police Department (WSPD), the Ministers' Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity (MCWSV) has called for full disclosure and transparency from the WSPD.

Here's what we know: On Saturday, Nov. 7, around 6:30 p.m., police were investigating reports of several teenagers trying to break into abandoned houses. Officers approached a group of teenagers on Hartford Street.

Cell phone video recorded by a resident who lives on Hartford Street shows officers asking one of the teenagers in particular her name and the young lady refused. When the young lady tries to walk away, Officer Zachary Jones follows the teenager and asks for her name again and again she refused. At that point the group of teenagers appeared to begin arguing among themselves. Visibly frustrated with the teenagers and the person recording, Officer Jones can be seen trying to grab the teenager and she begins to resist. In just a matter of seconds, Officer Jones forced the teenager to the ground and eventually put her into handcuffs.

Earnest Sides, father of the teenager who was heaved to the ground by the officer in the video, said he didn't have the words to express what he felt when he saw the video.



Chief Catrina Thompson speaks during a recent press conference.

submitted photo

He said after seeing similar incidents play out in cities across the country, he never thought he would have to explain something like this to his daughter.

"I hate that under the circumstances we have to be here at this second, but we are here. It is real, it's not fake, and there's nothing that I can see in that video that calls for (her) to be attacked or pursued, or made to give any information without my presence. I've played it clip by clip to try to understand the officer's actions as well as my child's actions, and I just don't think it was necessary."

When discussing the cell phone video, Bishop Todd Fulton, chair of the MCWSV's social justice

committee, said one of the things that was most disturbing was when Officer Jones violated the 15-year-old's first amendment rights when she refused to tell officers her name. While some will argue that the teenager should've just given her name, Fulton said, "It was in her right not to give her name."

"This young lady was exercising her first amendment right by not giving her name and the first amendment right was violated by Officer Jones," he said. "Not only were the first amendment rights violated, Officer Jones violated the citizen whose yard he was in by telling her to get back or she would be put in handcuffs. These are the things the

African American community has been experiencing for years and we're not expecting empathy or sympathy. We're here today to call out the powers that be and say that we've had enough."

The Ministers' Conference also contends that Officer Jones never attempted to use any de-escalation techniques and was "overly aggressive" while engaging with the teenagers. The group is calling for full disclosure from the WSPD about the incident and the release of the 911 dispatch call, all video from the police department, and any information related to the alleged criminal charges and pending investigation be released to the family.

Mayor Pro Tempore Denise "D.D." Adams said Officer Jones' actions were unacceptable and she didn't mince words when discussing her thoughts on the role race played in the incident.

"I don't care how you shape it ... how you want to construct it, how you want to put it on a platform, it's unacceptable," Adams continued. "This is racism, y'all ... Let me ask you one question: If she had been white ... if this had been in Buena Vista, if it would've been a group of teenagers walking down Stratford Road, would this have happened?"

Chief Catrina Thompson has said the WSPD has launched an internal investigation into the inci-

dent. "As your chief of police and as a mother of two teenage African American children, I share your concern," Thompson said during a press conference last Sunday. She said after seeing the video, she immediately directed the Internal Affairs Division to begin their investigation.

Thompson also mentioned that the family of the juvenile in the video has been given information on how to file a formal complaint against Officer Jones. Although laws prohibit the WSPD from releasing the body camera footage to the public, Thompson assured that they would be transparent throughout the investigation.

"We have pledged to complete a prompt, fair and thorough administrative investigation and we have asked for your patience until the investigation is complete," Thompson said.

Chief Thompson also took a moment to send a message directly to the Sides' family. She asked the family to trust her. "I give you my word that we will conduct a thorough, complete investigation using facts and evidence and guided by our laws, our Constitution, and our departmental policy," she continued.

"Once that investigation is complete, we will act appropriately. You have my word."

The Chronicle has received information that the Sides' family has hired a lawyer to look into the incident.

CDC, NCDHHS advise scaling back Thanksgiving

BY TEVIN STINSON
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With the COVID-19 pandemic seemingly tightening its grip on communities across the country, health experts have advised Americans to forget

the traditional gatherings during the holiday season to help turn the tide against the rising number of cases.

At the time of publication there were more than 11 million active cases of infection nationwide and here in N.C. things are worse than ever. There are 315,000 active cases across the state and numbers have been on the rise since September. Over the past two weeks the number of daily positive tests has topped record highs five different times.

Here in Forsyth County nearly 2,000 people have tested positive for

the virus over the past 14 days and there has been reported outbreaks at several schools throughout the district impacting teachers and staff, as well as students.

In response to the rise in cases across the state, during a press conference on Thursday, Nov. 10, Gov. Roy Cooper extended Phase 3 for three weeks and reduced the limit on indoor gatherings from 25 to 10. Cooper said science has shown us that indoor gatherings increase the risk of transmission of COVID-19, and the Executive Order seeks to

limit gatherings that could spread the virus.

"This reduction in our indoor gathering limit aims to slow the spread and bring down our numbers," Cooper said. "It also sends a serious signal to families, friends, and neighbors across our state: Success in slowing the spread will help our businesses."

With Thanksgiving a week away, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has urged people to avoid activities that risk spreading the virus even more, including the traditional potluck style dinner, shopping, and holiday parades.

If you do plan on having dinner guests, the CDC suggests having one person wearing a mask serve all the food, limit the number of people going into the kitchen, and require everyone in attendance to wear a mask when they're not eating.

Dr. Mandy Cohen, secretary of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), stressed the importance of wearing a mask in public and taking the necessary steps to keep loved ones safe.

"Let's keep our friends, family, and loved ones

safe this holiday season. If you are going to travel or get together, plan ahead to reduce the risk to your family and friends," Cohen said. "Remember, it's not how well you know someone when it comes to wearing a mask. If they don't live with you, get behind the mask."

The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) also re-leased health guidelines to help people celebrate the holidays safely. The guidelines can be viewed by visiting www.ncdhhs.gov.

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