



D&C Photo by John Metzger

Inner-city residents jam St. Simon's Episcopal Church at rally
 . . . meeting was result of death of woman shot by policeman

Inner city aroused

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1,000 jam meeting on slaying

A U.S. Justice Department official is looking into the Tuesday shooting death of a young black woman, Fight Inc. President Raymond B. T. Scott told an angry crowd of 1,000 Rochester inner-city residents last night.

Scott introduced a man to the crowd as a Justice Department official inquiring into the shooting incident. The man didn't speak to the crowd.

After the meeting, he identified himself as Fletcher Graves, and said he was with the Community Relations Division of the Justice Department's New York City regional office.

He said he would be meeting with minority group leaders and city officials

during the next several days to discuss the shooting. He declined further comment.

Dennis Wynn, a spokesman for the Justice Department in Washington, D.C., said last night the department's community relations arm is a conciliatory agency without any investigative or law enforcement functions.

Scott told the crowd jamming St. Simon's Episcopal Church at 6 Oregon St. that community pressure had already forced city officials to have the policeman involved in the shooting relieved of duty.

Police said Officer Michael Leach, 22, shot Denise Hawkins, 18, of 107 Joseph

Ave., after she lunged at him with a knife in a hallway of an apartment. Police said he had warned her to drop the knife before drawing his revolver and firing.

Scott said witnesses to the shooting said Mrs. Hawkins, who was about 5 feet tall and weighed 100 pounds, didn't lunge at Leach. He said the witnesses claim that police didn't give a verbal warning to drop the knife or fire a warning shot before shooting Mrs. Hawkins.

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Scott questioned why police would send an officer he called "a rookie cop" to a family trouble call. He also questioned why the three other policemen in the hallway weren't able to subdue the woman before the shooting.

Police said the other officers weren't close enough to assist Leach.

Although police said Wednesday their internal investigation showed no evidence for Leach's suspension or dismissal. Scott read the crowd a letter from Mayor Thomas P. Ryan Jr. delivered late yesterday that said Leach was on off-duty status, until a grand jury has completed an investigation.

The letter followed a public meeting at City Hall at which Scott asked Ryan to order Leach's suspension. At one point, Ryan started to walk out of the meeting.

"I say to you tonight if he had walked out it would have been the biggest mistake he ever made," Scott said to the applause of the crowd.

Scott, his voice growing hoarse from shouting, told the crowd several times to control their anger. He said a special committee of inner-city community leaders would work out a strategy in the next week for presentation at a similar meeting next Friday.

Scott said the next step for the community was to demand an effective citizen review process to investigate complaints against police.

Scott was interrupted several times by raucous members of the crowd, but generally maintained order. He urged the crowd not to act out of emotion, but only according to a plan.

Several youths who wore black ski masks told the crowd late in the meeting that they wanted immediate action by city officials.

—JOHN McGINNIS