

[\[back\]](#)



Chief search a life lesson for teens

Originally published in:

The Herald-Sun

Monday, October 14, 2002

Edition: Final

Page: B4

DeWarren Langley Columnist

The continuing saga of the failed search for Durham's next police chief sends a negative message to Durham residents, including its youth.

First, former chief Teresa Chambers quit in January and City Manager Marcia Conner began a search that found its way to early July with three finalists: William Carcara, chief of the Jefferson County, Ky., Police Department, Durham Interim Chief Steve Chalmers and Gregory Watkins, retired deputy chief of the Kansas City, Mo., police department.

Chalmers was the first contender to fall after Conner learned of a domestic incident between him and his ex-wife from the 1980s. Watkins was given the job, but resigned when allegations of domestic violence surfaced, and Carcara was dropped after he wouldn't commit to taking the job.

Domestic violence is wrong, denounced by many in the city. Yet, those same individuals should agree that a person's past should be just that, especially those as experienced and qualified as Watkins and Chalmers.

Injustice is just as unlawful and cruel as domestic violence. Conner has done the city and the Durham Police Department a disservice in her search for a flawless police chief. As a result of the failed search, Conner announced on Aug. 29 that Durham would begin a new search for a police chief that she would conduct herself. The new search was expected to take at least six weeks with the assistance of the State Bureau of Investigation and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to conduct background checks for the new candidates.

The expected six weeks has lapsed and Durham is still without a police chief.

It is understood that in selected leaders, society has generally placed an emphasis on selecting the "flawless" candidate that will do the best job. Despite that generalization, we must understand the broader issue: selecting a chief that will provide the police department with the leadership it needs.

Throughout years of school, students are constantly told that they can be 'anything that they want to be.' However, in reality the message is construed because situations such as the selection process of Durham's police chief symbolizes that an individual can only be what they are allowed to be. We all have our flaws and we've all made mistakes. President George W. Bush was convicted of a DWI many years ago, a mistake uncovered during

the campaign. Former President Bill Clinton avoided the draft, yet was elected. Elected and appointed officials must be conscious of decisions they make and the messages those decisions send.

Conner has sent the wrong message and should be more citizen-conscious, rather than politically conscious. "Good things are happening in Durham," yet better things could be happening if officials did what was best for the citizens rather than what was good for their careers.

© Copyright by The Durham Herald Company. Original copyright 2002. Copyright renewed 2007. All rights reserved. All material on heraldsun.com is protected by U.S. and international copyright laws and may not be reproduced or redistributed in any medium except as provided in the site's Terms of Use.

[\[back\]](#)