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Dallas police chief, residents discuss 2 recent shootings by police in Oak Cliff

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In the wake of two recent shootings by police, mutual understanding and responsibility were the themes at a community meeting Saturday between [Dallas Police](#) Chief David Brown and residents in east [Oak Cliff](#).

That's the neighborhood where on Oct. 29, police shot and killed an unarmed man named Tobias Mackey. Nine days later, police shot and killed Tony Menchaca, who was also unarmed, near a taco stand in west Oak Cliff.

The audience of about 40 people at Bible Way Baptist Church included members of the Mackey family and a lawyer for the Menchaca family. Relatives of Mackey did not speak. The lawyer for the Menchaca family, Paul Grinke, said they're still upset and told him, "We just want justice."

Brown said he'd like residents to hear from officers who've been shot by suspects, to understand where they're coming from.

Mackey was black. Menchaca was Hispanic. Some local civil rights leaders believe the shootings were racially motivated, so they've formed a coalition to call for better police training and hiring.

Police leaders have defended the shootings. They say that in both cases, officers fired shots after the suspect ignored police orders and moved his hands toward his back waistband, as if to grab a gun. Menchaca told police he had a gun and planned to fire it – but it turns out he carried only some cigarette packaging made to look like a gun.

A special Dallas Police Department unit is investigating both shootings. Brown said that because of the investigation, he was unable to address specifics of the cases. But he spoke in broader terms of the need for mutual understanding and responsibility.

For instance, Brown said residents need to file complaints if they believe an officer has gone too far.

"You have to hold us accountable," he said. "That doesn't mean complaining among yourselves. ... That means coming to internal affairs or calling me on the phone."

The Rev. Derrick Bowman, president of the Dallas chapter of the [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](#), said residents who are stopped by police can take steps to avoid escalating the situation.

"If they tell you to put your hands up, put them up. ... But get the badge number and get their names and go forward with that."

Several speakers also said many blacks and Hispanics don't trust police because they've had bad experiences with them. Police need to be aware of that, they said.

"The community does not trust the police department. It's because of what the PD has done to the community," said W.R. Smith, pastor of Bible Way Baptist. He said officers have stopped him and his wife on the way home from church before, for no apparent reason.

Brown said he was there to listen and would not make any immediate changes to police policies or training – though he said the department is constantly looking for ways to improve.

Saturday's meeting was geared toward black residents. The coalition, called Concerned Citizens for Good Law Enforcement, plans to hold a second community meeting for Hispanic residents Dec. 18.