

Rally for Collaborative Agreement

Post staff report

Several religious leaders of metropolitan Cincinnati planned to gather today at City Hall to call for extending and completing a police agreement forged after the riots of 2001.

They support the so-called Collaborative Agreement between Cincinnati community groups and the Cincinnati Police Department.

The 2001 lawsuit claimed a 30-year practice of racially biased policing by Cincinnati police. It alleged that police stops, detentions and searches were based on race. Blacks were more often the target of police force, and were disproportionately charged with minor traffic violations and

other so-called "discretionary offenses" such as jaywalking, it said.

An investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice and separate mediation to settle the lawsuit ended in the collaborative agreement, but the five-year monitoring program of police is set to expire Aug. 5.

The Rev. Damon Lynch III, former president of the Black United Front and a persistent voice on racial inequality in Cincinnati, said progress has been made in the community's relations with police, but he thinks initiatives — like the Vortex Unit credited with curbing crime in Over-the-Rhine — warrant the agreement's continuation.

He said his biggest concern is the

agreement ending and police reverting to old, bad practices.

"My fear is (about) some of what is happening now," he told The Post in February. "We think it's been a good start, but we think it ought to continue."

But Kathy Harrell, president of the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 69, the union representing Cincinnati Police officers that was a signatory to the agreement, discounted fears that the progress that has been made will be lost.

"I think there is some concern or worry that we would do away with everything that has been happening the past five years. That's not going to happen," she said earlier this year. "The agreement was put in place and the (union) members vot-

ed to be part of the Collaborative for a certain part of time."

Speakers scheduled for today's rally include:

► **Cincinnati's Roman Catholic Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk.**

► **Thomas Breidenthal**, bishop-elect of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio.

► **Rabbi Thomas Heyn** of the Jewish Community Relations Commission.

► **Bishop Dwight Wilkins**, president of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance.

► **Imam Ilyas Nashid**, of the Cincinnati Islamic Center.

► **The Rev. Damon Lynch Jr.**, father of Damon Lynch III. He will be master of ceremonies at the rally.
