



Patrick J. Cunningham / Special to The Courant

■ Elsa Huertas of the Hispanic Health Council of Hartford, third from right, speaks at Youth Summit 1994 last week at Hartford's

city hall. The meeting brought together youth groups from the city to discuss issues affecting young people.

## Looking for solutions to problems of youths

By PAMELA MITCHELL  
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Youth Summit 1994 opened Thursday afternoon with the reading of the Hartford Youth Bill of Rights.

"We have the right to a safe place to live. We have the right to be treated equally without prejudice," read Ryan Goldsmith, a member of the group Youth in Focus. "We have the right to not be judged by the color of our skin."

Thursday's meeting at city hall brought together youth groups from throughout the city to try to find solutions to problems facing Hartford's young people.

"It's not another day to sit and rehash what the problems are," said William Fothergill, adviser for Youth in Focus. "We all know what the problems are. We need to focus on the solutions."

Members from Youth in Focus, ONE-CHANE, the Hartford Street Group and the

Urban League of Greater Hartford attended, along with community leaders and Chief of Police Joseph F. Croughwell.

"It's very easy to identify the problem," said Croughwell. "With all of us working together, we should be able to come up with an answer."

Croughwell then asked for volunteers to serve on a youth police commission being formed. Young people would meet and discuss police issues and develop problem-solving strategies.

Youth group members said they thought they accomplished a great deal Thursday. They discussed a volunteer youth internship program and signed a petition supporting a youth center proposed by the Hispanic Health Council.

"Youth need to be a part of the community, not just passively, but actively involved in the things that affect them," Fothergill said.

Youth Summit 1994 was sponsored by Youth in Focus, an action group created to

address issues from a youth's point of view.

Originally called Crack Down, it was created in 1992 for selected participants of the Hartford Juvenile Case Management Collaborative, who wanted to work to better the lives of young people in the city. In 1993, the name was changed to Youth in Focus. Members range in age from 11 to 17.

They work to inform people about issues facing young people. They research social and local political structures and promote a youth empowerment agenda to improve the lives of all youths. They also produce a bimonthly newsletter, Youth Journal, and a show on Hartford Public Access Television, cable Channel 5, called "Youth in Focus."

The group plans to sponsor another youth summit in July.

"It's not going to be about problems, though, it will be more about solutions," said Solomon Hartage, a member of Youth in Focus.