IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“The Biggest Gang Here in New York City”:

From Serve and Protect to Patrol and Control
Through research and analysis, public education, policy advocacy, and coalition building, the **Police Reform Organizing Project** aims: to stop the current wasteful, ineffective, unjust, illegal, bullying, homophobic, transphobic, and racially biased practices of the NYPD; to create a strong, independent entity that monitors and assesses police priorities and policies and that effectively investigates and punishes abusive conduct; and, to establish and implement local problem solving measures that strengthen communities while reducing crime.

The **Urban Justice Center** is a unique organization which serves New York City’s most vulnerable residents through a combination of direct legal services, systemic advocacy, community education and political organizing. The Urban Justice Center’s unique structure involves ten discrete projects which work on various issues faced by politically marginalized communities in New York City. The Projects are: the Community Development Project, the Domestic Violence Project, the Homelessness Outreach and Prevention Project, the Human Rights Project, the Iraq Refugee Assistance Project, the Mental Health Project, the Peter Cicchino Youth Project, the Police Reform Organizing Project, the Sex Workers Project, and the Street Vendor Project. The advocates in these projects assist their clients with one-on-one legal advice, support accessing government assistance, as well as filing class action lawsuits or participating in legislative/policy advocacy to bring about systemic change.

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We also extend our appreciation for and solidarity with the people quoted in this report and hope that this document represents one more step toward the shared goal of creating a more fair, safe, and inclusive city for all New Yorkers.
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INTRODUCTION: Quotes and Quotas

This document presents quotes from New Yorkers throughout our city who all too often experience and endure disrespect and abuse at the hands of NYPD officers. Interested and informed persons are familiar with the statistical evidence of the NYPD’s misguided and racially biased tactics. This report seeks to put flesh and blood on the bones of these numbers, to present the terrible human consequences of stop and frisk and other objectionable NYPD practices, and to show the very real ways these law enforcement approaches hurt and severely compromise the lives and well-being of people and communities.

These quotes also provide hard evidence, in the words of NYPD victims, of the illegal tactics and racially biased attitudes endemic in the daily operations of the Department. It is PROP’s view, and the view of other informed observers, that a principal source of these problems is the NYPD’s utilization of an aggressively enforced quota system to evaluate the performance of officers on the street.

The NYPD’s “productivity goals” are a thinly veiled euphemism for a quota system. Department officials use the term to explain the pressure placed on street cops to make a required number of arrests or to hand out a sufficient number of summonses. Quotas are illegal under a state law, which, over seven years ago, a state arbitrator found that the NYPD had violated.1 When a representative of the Department, a precinct captain or lieutenant, directs officers to meet specific numerical goals regarding arrests and summonses, then deploys the officers in particular neighborhoods, everyone in those neighborhoods becomes a potential criminal, even if their criminality is fabricated to meet monthly “productivity goals.” The subsequent indiscriminate ticketing, false arrests, illegal stop and frisks, and other harassment techniques undermine officers’ relationship with communities and result in unfair and counterproductive policing. As the quotes contained in this report attest, many community members no longer feel they can turn to the police as a source of protection. In fact, they often feel they must take steps to protect themselves from the police, and lose faith in a legal system that unjustly targets and punishes them at its earliest stages and with its most public arm.

Our concern is not with the proverbial “few bad apples,” a dubious response that Department defenders often put forward when police wrongdoing is exposed. It is an argument that belies a substantial body of evidence, including what the quotes presented herein inform us about the day-to-day practices of the NYPD. Our concern is that these illegal and biased tactics employed by street cops reflect a system-wide attitude and culture. Our concern, too, is that these bad practices mainly target marginalized groups: black and brown young men, people from low-income areas, sex workers, LGBT persons, mentally ill people, street vendors, and the homeless. It is our hope, with this document and other reports, to address these systemic failures directly. As a start, the City’s policy makers should abolish the quota system, the application of so-called productivity goals, which robs street officers of individual discretion and drives many of the current everyday NYPD practices that inflict harm and hardship on so many New York City residents.

1 The state arbitrator found, among other conclusions, that "one officer ... was singled out by at least one of his supervisors for his high number of felony arrests, [but] was nonetheless given low marks on performance evaluations for not writing traffic and ‘quality of life’ summonses." Fahim, Kareem. “Police in Brooklyn Used Illegal Ticket Quotas, Arbitrator Decides.” New York Times 20 Jan. 2006. www.nytimes.com/2006/01/20/nyregion/20police.
For No Good Reason

• “You can be sitting outside enjoying a nice day and the officers will come up and ask you for your ID.”
  o Jacqueline Yates, Bronx mother.²

• “In the summertime, it’s nice outside. Why can’t I hang out in front of my building? [The NYPD] give you a ticket for trespassing ’cause you’re sitting on the bench that’s in front of your building. I can’t sit on the bench in front of my building? Why’s the bench there?”
  o Anthony T.³

• “You know how many times they tell us to move from a table when we’re here playing cards or dominoes? It shouldn’t be like this.”
  o Kim Gregory, Bronx resident.⁴

• “There’s too much harassment out here, you can’t do nothin’. Nothin’. Can’t come to the park, can’t go to the store. I go to meet my grandmother at 155th train station, they’re asking me questions, ‘Where you goin’? What you doin’? You look suspicious.’ No, I’m lookin’ like I’m looking for my grandmother.”
  o Bronx resident.⁵

• “I can’t count the number of times I’ve watched police throw my son and his friends up against a wall. Anywhere my son goes – the lobby, the courtyard, the stairwell – he can be stopped and harassed by the NYPD. A trip to the store can result in a weekend in jail for him.”
  o Fawn Bracy, Bronx mother.⁶

• “You know it’s excessive when you see people get stopped who really don’t deserve to be stopped, like kids going to school. The police just jump out, stop them, search them, take their names down, then get back in their car and leave, and the kids don’t know what went on.”
  o James Westcott, Bronx resident.⁷

• “I feel like we’re not in a free country when you can’t walk down the street. You got to be questioned about where you’re going and what you’re doing.”
  o Laverne I.⁸


• “I was stopped and frisked on the day of my graduation. I was going to receive my masters of divinity. The same day I was stopped by the police officer. So, those two things are really going to be embedded in my mind for the rest of my life. I got my degree and I got a frisk—just to remind me who I was.”
  o Rev. Al Taylor, community leader.9

• “If you’re African American, walking the streets at night anytime, I guess, after six, seven o’clock, you’re more than likely to get stopped for no apparent reason…and be harassed and sometimes even incarcerated for no apparent reason.”
  o New Yorker.10

• “The police do what they want…If I went to court to sue, what do you think would happen? Things would just get worse.”
  o Mousa Ahmad, an Arab-American who was forced to close his café after NYPD surveillance drove away customers.11

• “I told the DA that I didn’t spit, so they said, ‘So, you have a choice. You’re gonna pay this fine or you’re gonna go to trial.’ I said, ‘I’m not gonna pay a fine for something I didn’t do, so let’s go to trial.’ So, I’m actually going to trial for spitting, and I think that’s the most absurd thing I ever heard of in my life.”
  o Andre, South Bronx resident, who was falsely accused of spitting by the NYPD.12

• “When you’re a street vendor in New York, every single day it’s a different fight. Vendors like us, we start out with nothing and work hard for our families. We are committing no crime. We don’t think it’s a crime to work in New York.”
  o Alberto Loera, who sued the city for excessive ticketing of his food truck.13

• “It’s kinda crazy out here how cops target us and they think just because we live in a community like this, we’re ignorant…We treat them with respect, why we can’t get the same respect back?”
  o New Yorker.14

• “My son plays basketball, he’s a student in Howard University, comes home and he’s stopped and frisked for no apparent reason…They went through his gym bag—because he lives in public housing, or because he’s Black…Professionalism? Courtesy? Respect? None of the above.”
  o Tracy, Brooklyn mother.15

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9 Reverend Al Taylor Calls for Sit Down Between Community and Police Officers (Police Reform Organizing Project Mar. 30, 2012) www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9PjzdXX5tw&feature=ploc
10 Stopped and Frisked ‘For No Apparent Reason (Police Reform Organizing Project Mar. 30, 2012) www.youtube.com/watch?v=JO2lOEsRPsY&feature=ploc
14 Unwarranted Harassment by NYPD (Police Reform Organizing Project Mar. 14, 2012) www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8cyJW7L-yg&feature=ploc
• “The sheer number of stops is actually ostracizing a huge number of people who live in these communities that are impacted by crime. It doesn’t make sense that you’re spending so many man hours, so much energy and resources, to stop so many innocent people and end up with very little output. The number of guns that they found from the stops is extremely small. So it just doesn’t seem effective.”
  o Joey M.16

• “The police will approach you for anything. They got a bunch of stories. They here Tuesdays and Thursdays, on a regular basis, and they try to find everything they need to do to make a bust.”
  o Muneebah, Bronx mother, describes sweeps of young neighborhood men.17

• “They was on the corner of 112th, a lot of boys standing there. And the officer asked them to move, but they didn’t move fast enough. They put them all up against the gate and frisked them. They didn’t find anything. But they did frisk them, for no reason at all. For no reason at all.”
  o Marie, describing multiple incidents of NYPD stopping her son in East Harlem.18

• “[The cops] told us to stand up take off our shoes, socks, hoodies, and told everybody to take their top shirt off and leave only their undershirt or one shirt on. They told us to unbutton our pants and roll the waistband down. Three of us were in pajamas. They made us stand and wait with backs turned until a female officer came. She turned us around by our necks and frisked us. They were looking for weed. They found nothing, but took us to the precinct anyway, where our mother had to come get us.”
  o Brianna E., who was stopped by NYPD officers in her building with her siblings and cousins, ages 8-16.19

• “We were standing in front of a hospital. It was obvious that I was, for lack of better words, delusional. And [the cops’] response was to arrest me—without reading me my rights—rather than taking me into the emergency room to seek treatment. They decided to take me to the precinct.”
  o Michelle Benfield, on the NYPD’s inappropriate response to mental illness.20

• “It’s like [being stopped and frisked] is something we have to get used to, you know, almost like it’s a rite of passage. And it’s devastating.”
  o Nicholas Peart, Harlem Resident.21

17 Muneebah: Bronx Mother Talks About NYPD Sweeps in Neighborhood Police Reform Organizing Project May. 10, 2012)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iiXOQA8Wbl&feature=plcp.
18 Marie: East Harlem Mother on NYPD Harassment of Her Son (Police Reform Organizing Project May. 10, 2012)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Wn84Ra3o2I&feature=plcp.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQ6lVXinxU&feature=plcp.
21 Nicholas: Describes Stop and Frisk as a Devastating Experience (Police Reform Organizing Project Apr. 16, 2012)
Life as an NYPD Target

• “I got hit with a trespassing ticket right outside of my building. I had my identification and everything, and they said I was trespassing in my own neighborhood. So, ever since then, I’ve been not really too fond of coming out, even to come to the store, around certain times of night.”
  o Prince, who was denied a promotion at work because of this trespassing ticket.22

• “There have been periods of time in my life living in Jackson Heights where, for example, walking my dog at night, I have always felt the need to carry my ID because if I didn’t carry my ID in my own neighborhood, I would basically be putting myself [at risk] of being picked up and accused of doing sex work.”
  o Maria P.23

• “It forces me to look around wherever I am now.”
  o Jawad Rasul, a Muslim student who learned he was being monitored by NYPD.24

• “You gotta find the key quicker than [the cops] can find the key to the building. If they get there before you they're going to stop you.”
  o Angel, 17, plaintiff in a class action lawsuit against NYPD.25

• “My family, which is my sister and nephew, they would come over every weekend to visit us. My sister don't allow him to come see us anymore, nor she comes to visit me anymore. It's been over a year now.”
  o Fawn Bracy, Bronx mother.26

• “I dress better if I go downtown. I don’t hang out with friends outside my neighborhood in Harlem as much as I used to. Essentially, I incorporated into my daily life the sense that I might find myself up against a wall or on the ground with an officer’s gun at my head. For a black man in his 20s like me, it’s just a fact of life in New York.”
  o Nicholas Peart, Harlem resident.27

• “People actually lose their employment because they weren’t able to come into work. And since jobs are so hard to get right about now, employers don’t want to hear, ‘Oh, you can’t come in today because you [were] just arrested.’ And when they’re released they have to start from scratch all over again and figure out another way to be self-sufficient and to take care of themselves and their families.”
  o Mark K.28

22 Prince: On Aftereffects of Bogus Charge (Police Reform Organizing Project Mar. 28, 2012)
26 Ibid.
• “If you have violations or you have [been] convicted of crimes, you can’t get into public housing. So that’s one of the ways that it really crushes people that are homeless. It closes off that gate into New York City housing right away... And here’s the thing about it: Nobody informs you of this. [They] never tell you, ‘You know what? If you plead guilty today, you’re never going to be able to get New York City housing.’”
  o Michael P.29

• “[Cops will] ask, ‘Where are you headed?’ When you’re African-American, you have to have a definite destination.”
  o Al Blount, Harlem minister.30

• “I’m paranoid, scared...I know I can get arrested for just walking on the street. ’Cause if I’m walking with my friend, [the cops] just assume that I’m a prostitute, that I’m a sex worker, or just because I’m a Hispanic transgender woman, because of my gender, I can just get arrested.”
  o April R.31

• “[The cop] asked me if I had ID on me and I said, ‘My ID is in my house because I carry a passport.’ That’s when he told me to turn around, and put the handcuffs on me and locked me up... So that’s like a day off of your time for no reason, because they didn’t even have valid reason to pursue the case... To me, that’s like abduction because I didn’t do anything wrong.”
  o Andre, South Bronx resident, recounting the story of his arrest for disorderly conduct.32

• “Right then and there I just felt shut down. Like, I’m not gonna have no help, there’s nobody that’s gonna advocate for me.”
  o Paris, transgender woman, describing how the NYPD discriminated against her when she approached them for help after an assault.33

• “When [cops] stop you in the street, and then everybody’s looking... it does degrade you. And then people get the wrong perception of you. That kind of colors people’s thoughts towards you, might start thinking that you’re into some illegal activity, when you’re not... That’s humiliating [on] its own.”
  o Laverne I.34

• “I got family members that don't send their kids over because they're scared they're going to be stopped. The point is, I want the police to do their job. It's just how they're going about doing it, because right now I don't feel safe. I don't feel safe for my kids."  
  o Jacqueline Yates, Bronx mother.35

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28 Ibid.
29 Ibid. 9.
31 Ibid, 12.
35 Ibid.
Daily Disrespect

- “[Cops] talk to you like you’re ignorant, like you’re an animal.”
  - Christopher A. Chadwick, 20-year-old college student.  

- “[The cops] said, ‘Pull up your hoodie and turn around,’ to see if I had a gun. Being from an Arab country, I take it more personally, especially after my service.”
  - Rachiq Yassine, Moroccan immigrant and street vendor, who served three tours in Iraq with the US Army.

- “[The cops] treat you like trash. You can’t even speak because once they’re mad at you, you go to jail.”
  - Shavell Notice, Bronx resident.

- “I felt like I couldn’t defend myself, didn’t know what to do. No witnesses there to see what was going on. I just wish someone was there to witness it. I felt like no one would believe me. I couldn’t tell anyone. I kept it in till now… I still am scared.”
  - Keenan H., on his beating by NYPD Officers.

- “I was coming out of the store and the police stopped me. I felt real awful you know, it was in front of everyone and I hadn’t done anything wrong… It was a distressing experience. Makes you realize it can happen any time any place.”
  - Vinci, Bronx resident.

- “This was one of the most humiliating experiences of my life. One, because I have always worked well with police officers, have always respected their profession.”
  - Michelle Benfield, social worker, describes the NYPD’s inappropriate response to her nonviolent psychotic episode.

- “We all feel the same way — degraded, harassed, violated and criminalized because we’re black or Latino.”
  - Nicholas Peart, 23, on repeated stop-and-frisks.

- “It made me feel violated, humiliated, harassed, shameful, and of course very scared.”
  - April R.

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42. Peart, Nicholas K. “Why Is the NYPD After Me?”
• “The whole situation was unnecessary. I felt out of place. I’m not that kind of person. I’m a working man. My job is to help the police not have to work so hard, talking to kids, trying to keep them out of trouble. Meanwhile… I’m the one getting frisked.”
  o Gerald Gadsden, youth worker.44

• “It feels very unsafe. A lot of people are very afraid to walk and be free. They feel that the people who are supposed to be protecting them are actually bullying them.”
  o Tairece Flowers, 17-year-old.45

• “[Stops and frisks] belittle people’s self-esteem and character, make them feel less of a citizen and less of a person with rights. I feel that stop and frisk is another tactic to be used against people of color to make them feel like this is what they should expect to happen to them in their lifetime and that this is a normal way of life when it’s not, and it’s unconstitutional.”
  o Mark K.46

• “‘Watch yourself; you shouldn’t be in these type of neighborhoods. This is what happen[s].’ But [cops] forget that these are the neighborhoods that we live in…”
  o Charles B., resident of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, a “high-crime” area.47

• “You accept [harassment from the cops] as everyday life. It becomes very denigrating to a human soul to have to go through that.”
  o Colin Samuel, Queens resident.48

• “It makes you emotional just standing here talking about it. You get to the point where you don’t feel like a human being.”
  o Jacqueline Yates, Bronx mother.49

• “I told him I wanted to be a lawyer. So the officer, the one that gave me the ticket, told me, ‘Ha. You would never be that…I’ll give you a ticket where you won’t ever be that’… The whole time last year I thought, like, ‘Wow, I did all of this hard work for nothing.’”
  o Theresa C.50

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“Fit the Description”

• “When you’re young and Black, no matter how you look you fit the description.”
  o Tyquan Brehon, who was stopped more than 60 times before age 18. 51

• “I got a ticket for coming out of my building, for nothing…and then they started searching me, talking about ‘I fit the description.’”
  o Marcus. 52

• “These guys are rude. They throw you up against the wall. They don’t give you no explanation. ‘You fit the description.’ It’s the same thing every time.”
  o New Yorker. 53

• “I asked them why I was being pulled over and they just told me I was being pulled over because I fit a description.”
  o Rudens. 54

• “I wish this was an isolated incident, but it’s not. Not for countless others and not even for myself. ‘I fit the description’ of what stop and frisk policies are targeting. Black. Male. Young. I am a prime candidate to be stopped and searched. So much so, that I never leave my house without identification.”
  o Christian Lassiter, staff attorney with Bronx Defenders. 55

• “I had several incidents of a few of my [seventh-grade] students being stopped and frisked. What the police would tell them, in their defense, was that they fit the description of a criminal in the area. But it seemed to be very recurring.”
  o Alba Lamar, teacher, describing repeated instances of stop-and-frisk of her 7th-grade students in the South Bronx. 56

• “We had just came out the house and we was walking towards the store, which is down the block. And [the cops] didn’t ask for no I.D., they just said search yourself. Put your hands up, so they could search him. They searched him, and I was asking, ‘What is it for?’ And they said someone just got robbed around the corner and he fit the description. Just like that.”
  o Brownsville woman. 57

56 Teacher on Stop and Frisk of Students (Police Reform Organizing Project Apr. 25, 2012) www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8RacC31kGw&feature=plcp.
• “What is it about me that makes me so suspicious, and gives police officers hunches to
  search me? Honestly, I think it’s because of the way I look.”
  o Emanuel Candelario, Bronx youth worker, who has been stopped ten times by the NYPD.58

• “Now, I’m not a thug, I’m not a hoodlum. You know, I’m well educated. But I’m still a
  Black man… and I can get stopped, day or night, it doesn’t matter.
  o Bronx resident.59

• “That’s when I first understood that cops are employed to help everyone except black men.”
  o Moses Merisier.60

• “I was walking, and a cop said, ‘Where’s the weed?’ In my mind, I’m like, ‘Yo, this guy’s a
  racist.’”
  o Michael Delgado, 18, on stop-and-frisk incident in East New York, Brooklyn.61

• “This practice of stopping, frisking and intimidating kids really angers me. I am a kid who
  follows the rules, goes to school every day, and spends my free time trying to make my
  community a better place. But none of that matters because I am young and Latino.”
  o Justin Rosado, 17, Brooklyn resident and member of Make the Road New York.62

• “[Cops] harass the Hispanic transgender community in Queens, because they know that most
  of them, 60 percent of the community, are mostly immigrants… And some of them, they
  came illegally; they don’t have a legal status. So it’s an easy target to go after them. They just
  go for Hispanic, transgender women, because they know they don’t speak English. And they
  don’t have education. They don’t know the law in the United States.”
  o April R.63

• “I have a mentally retarded son that the police have stopped in my neighborhood, and frisked
  him, and almost took him into the police car for something that they thought he was doing…
  I felt like he was a target after a while.”
  o Muneebah, Bronx mother.64

• “I feel like the NYPD’s stop-and-frisk policy is based solely upon the impression that all
  children around my age that dress the way I do, or are my color—unfortunately, or have
tattoos, are automatically up to something bad, or automatically trying to hurt other people,
automatically the villain.”
  o Cory Smith, 16-year-old.65
• “I’ve been a victim of these racist ‘stop and frisk’ tactics since before there was a name for it. Now it breaks my heart to know that I’m going to have to sit my son down and tell him that, like myself, chances are he will be searched, groped, stripped, and maybe even beaten by the cops, just because he’s Latino.”
  o Steve Kohut, Justice Committee organizer.  

• “I’m in college, I go to school, I’m a good person, but when [the cops] look at me, they don’t see that.”
  o Prince.  

• “If you’re a Black male and you’re not walking around with a suit and tie on, you’re always suspected of committing a crime.”
  o Brent C., Brooklyn resident.  

• “Sometimes I’m targeted as a drug dealer, sometimes as someone interfering with the quality of life, sometimes as a gay African-American man in a place I don’t belong.”
  o Chris Bilal, who has been stopped three times by the NYPD.  

• “[Police] need to see citizens as human beings and not just as quotas and [not see] young men as threats, young Black and Latino men, but as people.”
  o Emanuel Candelario, Bronx youth worker. 

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70 Emanuel: Bronx Man Describes NYPD Harassment and Racist Policing (Police Reform Organizing Project Apr. 12, 2012) www.youtube.com/watch?v=ub5U1ishfIk&feature=plcp
‘The Biggest Gang Here in New York City’

- “You want to see police officers and feel safe. But, myself included, and the young men that I work with, we feel threatened by the police. When a group of police officers… I get the same feeling as if a gang was coming down the block. I don’t know what’s going to happen, because of my own past experiences [with cops].”
  - Emanuel Candelario, Bronx youth worker.

- “When I came to this country, when I was 13 years old, we had cops in our community that knew people, interacted with people, got to know the kids. We don’t see that anymore. All we see is cops pushing us against the wall. We’re automatically suspects.”
  - Constance Malcolm, Bronx mother of Ramarley Graham, 18, who the NYPD shot and killed in his home.

- “The police department has become the biggest gang here in New York City.”
  - Rev. Bernard Walker, Bronx father of Jateik Reed, who was beaten by NYPD officers.

- “To me, NYPD is the biggest gang in New York. They’re worse than any gang, ’cause they could get away with stuff. When they’re killing people and they don’t get [any] kind of disciplinary action.”
  - Laverne I.

- “They’re supposed to serve and protect, but all they do is patrol and control. Walking down the street doesn’t make you a criminal.”
  - Eric Togar, Brooklyn resident.

- “I thought the model was ‘to serve and protect.’ For whatever reason, it’s simply not like that. In certain areas of New York, I guess you would say the slum areas, it’s more harassment than it is protection.”
  - Cory Smith, 16-year-old.

- “We don’t feel protected by the police… I think the main job of the police is protecting the community, and what they’re doing is just bullying us.”
  - Angel V.

- “Like I tell them, ‘I’m on your side to make sure there is courtesy, professionalism and respect. Isn’t that what you advertise on the side of your car?’”
  - Joseph “Jazz” Hayden, Harlem resident who documents police-civilian encounters.

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71 Emanuel: Bronx Man Describes NYPD Harassment and Racist Policing (Police Reform Organizing Project Apr. 12, 2012)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=uB5U1i4ufJk&feature=plcp.


• “When I was comin’ up, the police department knew the community. They knew the community. Now they don’t know the community. It’s always a different officer… Every month you see a different officer in our community. And it’s bad, it’s real bad. And you have police officers coming in the community with the wrong type of attitude. Everyone that they see in their eyesight is a criminal.”
  o Rev. Bernard Walker, Bronx father of Jateik Reed, who was beaten by NYPD officers.79

• “When I was young I thought cops were cool. They had a respectable and honorable job to keep people safe and fight crime. Now, I think their tactics are unfair and they abuse their authority. The police should consider the consequences of a generation of young people who want nothing to do with them — distrust, alienation and more crime.”
  o Nicholas Peart.80

• “To know that there's cops around, you're supposed to feel safe. But now when you're walking to your house, and you're not looking back behind your back to see if somebody is going to rob or steal from you, you're looking for a cop. How you live like that?”
  o Angel, 17, plaintiff in a class action lawsuit against NYPD.81

• “I said, ‘I know my rights!’ They just threw me up on the wall and searched me.”
  o Emmanuel, 15, who was stopped while skateboarding.82

• “These kinds of experiences have made me really distrust the police, in spite of the fact that I try to live my life as a law-abiding citizen.”
  o Bronx resident.83

• “These experiences changed the way I felt about the police. After the third incident, I worried when police cars drove by; I was afraid I would be stopped and searched or that something worse would happen.”
  o Nicholas Peart.84

• “A male officer should not have a right to touch me in any sort of manner, even if it’s on the outside of my clothing. We’re girls. They are men. And they are cops. It feels like a way for them to exert power over you.”
  o Ashanti Galloway, who has been stopped and frisked by NYPD.85

• “People from communities of color don’t see NYPD as being there for them or being there to provide safety or security for them. If anything, they see NYPD in their communities as a form of keeping control in those communities.”

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80 Peart, Nicholas K. “Why Is the NYPD After Me?”
84 Peart, Nicholas K. “Why Is the NYPD After Me?”
• “One police officer grabbed my ass and called me ‘faggot.’ The issue [with stop-and-frisk] is that it’s left up to the police officer’s discretion to choose who to stop… It’s a bullshit policy that allows a police officer to make any type of judgment they want.”
  o Mitchell, gay man who has been stopped and frisked four times.

• “Even when I have tried to exercise the rights I knew I had, there was no way of ensuring they were respected in reality – during one stop, the cop’s only response was to call me a ‘faggot’ while conducting a search over my objection.”
  o Mitchell Mora, Latino youth leader with Streetwise and Safe.

• “Yep, that’s what [the cops] said, ‘You guys are immigrants.’ We can’t say anything to them. They curse at us. They treat us like we killed somebody.”
  o Alex Mejia, 16, describing an incident with NYPD officers.

• “An officer grabbed me, as if I’m a criminal, slammed me up against the mailboxes, and began to ask me if I seen someone run into the building… Because I live in public housing, I’m a criminal?”
  o Tracy, Brooklyn resident who was stopped in her building on the way to church.

• “[The cops] can’t catch the people who are actually doing crimes, committing crimes, but people like me that’s actually trying to make a living—an honest, decent living—are still getting harassed.”
  o Prince.

• “Wherein as parents we were often afraid of kid-on-kid crime, of Black-on-Black crime, now we have to be seriously concerned about Blue-on-Black crime.”
  o Reverend G. Morgan-Thomas, Harlem resident.

• “I understand there’s a lot of crime going around. But being a police officer, you have to have some training to separate regular citizens from criminals.”
  o Shameek Townsend.

• “I think that there’s really deeply entrenched racism in the NYPD. And not only racism, but classist prejudice. So, the way that you see people being treated in low income neighborhoods, that’s not how the NYPD treats people who live in the Upper East Side.”
  o Emanuel Candelario, Bronx youth worker.

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90 Ibid.
• “There [were] days when you’d see all these little kids lined up, with their legs spread, holding [onto] the wall, and the cops are going through their pockets and stuff. It’s just like a terrible, disgusting, horrible thing to see.”
  o Ben F., describing cop presence at a predominantly Arab and Latino middle school.95

• “As a whole our community is fed up with the militarized form of policing that we experience. We don’t feel like we live in a neighborhood that’s protected by the police. We feel that we live in an occupied zone patrolled by law enforcement. It’s a very containing feeling. It almost feels like you’re in an outside prison.”
  o Jon T.96

• “This is what Harlem has turned into—an open-air prison. You can get stopped for anything.”
  o Joseph “Jazz” Hayden, who documents police-civilian encounters.97

• “There’s still issues of race and class that permeate all the relationships that exist in the country, and none more inflammatory than the one between upholders of the law and people of color. It’s really easy for the relationship between police anywhere with anyone and the general public to become one of hate instead of one of understanding.”
  o Franz Jerome, Harlem Resident, Community Activist.98
Corruption and Brutality, Real and Threatened

• “My jeans were ripped. I had bruises on my face. My whole face was swollen. I was sent to the precinct for disorderly conduct. I got out two days later. The charges were dismissed. At central booking, they threw out the charge. No charge.”
  o Keenan H.99

• “[NYPD] beat up three brothers from up the block. One of the guys was coming in from buying Chinese food, they told him to get against the wall, he put his hands up—they proceeded to beat him up. His other two brothers came downstairs, and [the cops] just beat them up like it was nothing, like ‘you’re animals.’”
  o Denise.100

• “For three days we weren’t allowed to see our son. I finally saw him on his arraignment. When I saw him, I broke down… Even the court officers in there couldn’t believe how they beat him up.”
  o Cap, South Bronx mother of Shabazz, who was brutally beaten by NYPD officers.101

• “One day over here, the cops stopped me—plain clothes cop stopped me—they threw me on the floor, because I came out of the building with my brother. They choked me, they arrested me. I slept overnight in jail. When I come out next morning to the judge, they said I was pissing by the building. This was their justification to try to protect themselves.”
  o New Yorker.102

• “I have a friend who got beat up by the police. They maced his eye. They threw him on the ground, put their knee on his face, and he didn’t do anything wrong.”
  o Tairece Flowers.103

• “There was an ambulance parked in front of the precinct. No one told me that was for my son… We found out that they took my son Shabazz to the hospital, because they beat him up so bad. They couldn’t tell me why. The only thing they could say was, ‘We were told that your son tried to beat up three officers.’ I know that’s not what happened.”
  o Cap, South Bronx mother of Shabazz, who was brutally beaten by NYPD officers.104

• “I do feel that it’s important for this [officer] to be disciplined. I don’t know if he should be an officer or not — what he was doing was so violent.”
  o Justice Thomas D. Raffaele, about the NYPD officer who struck him in the throat.105

101 Cap: Mother Speaks on Police Brutality (Police Reform Organizing Project May. 10, 2012) www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1saNy5k8F4&feature=plcp.
104 Cap: Mother Speaks on Police Brutality (Police Reform Organizing Project May. 10, 2012) www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1saNy5k8F4&feature=plcp.
“After they arrested [Jateik], I have witnesses that say they were still beating him in the van. They still beat him when they brought him to the precinct. Sprayed him in the face with mace in the precinct and everything.”
  
  Schuan Reed, Bronx mother of Jateik Reed, 19, who was beaten by NYPD officers.106

“I came in contact with the video about an hour after Jateik was arrested. And it was very, very shocking to me to see my child being beat the way he was being beat. But this is something that I know goes on in the community, on and on and on again.”
  
  Rev. Bernard Walker, Bronx father of Jateik Reed, 19, who was beaten by NYPD officers.107

“That’s what [the cop] says to me. ‘Step over here. I don’t want to make a mistake and shoot my partner.’ Now I haven’t resisted; I haven’t raised my voice; I haven’t given him any reason to put out a threat like that.”
  
  Bronx resident.108

“You could have got on your walkie-talkie. I gave you my name, my date of birth, you could have ran a check right here and seen that I wasn’t wanted or didn’t have any warrants. You took me in handcuffs—strip-searched me in the precinct—to find out if I had any warrants. And when I didn’t, you just released me, like, ‘OK, go about your day.’”
  
  Andre, South Bronx resident, recounting the story of his arrest for disorderly conduct.109

“I said I don’t want to speak to the sergeant because he had something to do with the incident, so he can’t help me. So I asked: ‘What do I have to do in order to be able to speak to the captain?’ He said, ‘You can’t speak to the captain. We can’t even speak to the captain.’”
  
  Schuan Reed, Bronx mother of Jateik Reed, 19, who was beaten by NYPD officers.110

“[The cops] asked me what I was doing in front of the shop and I said I was the owner. They asked, ‘No, you’re not. You’re not the owner. Let’s see some ID.’ [Mr. Carrion was then shoved against a wall.] I was like, ‘You’re using police brutality. You’re not supposed to be doing that. Let me show you ID.’”
  
  Felipe Carrion, barbershop owner in the South Bronx.111

“While it may have been one out-of-control officer that began the process, no other officer had the courage to stand up against what they knew was a poor decision.”
  
  Samantha Zucker, college student, about her arrest.112


• “It would’ve been [the cop’s] word over mine. He would’ve said I was resisting and going crazy. It would’ve been brushed under the rug.”
  o Sean Pagan, 19, whose violent treatment by the NYPD was captured on video.113

• “Of all the things that go on around here, I’m more scared of the police…They should be our protectors, but we don’t get that feeling in this neighborhood. Every time they approach me I feel threatened.”
  o New Yorker.114

• “I really think it’s sad that I was held in shackles for 36 hours without any thought of how my mental illness had impacted this whole situation… In this situation they wanted to penalize me for being ill.”
  o Michelle Benfield.115

• “As I walked past the crowd I was grabbed up and tossed up on the wall too… One of the officers planted, I say ‘planted’ because I never possessed the bag of marijuana that he said that I had… I was released after three days of being incarcerated against my free will for absolutely nothing. For simply just walking home from work.”
  o Jerry, Bronx resident, who was arrested on a false marijuana possession charge.116

• “Abuse is abuse, and no one deserves to be beaten the way my child has been beaten.”
  o Rev. Bernard Walker, Bronx father of Jateik Reed, 19, who was beaten by NYPD officers.117

• “It’s not just about Ramarley. I’m fighting for all these black and Latino men out here, because this is who this problem is affecting. And I’m fighting for my 6-year-old son, knowing that if he gets older and he sees a cop and tries to run, he might get shot in the back—not because he’s doing something wrong, but because he’s scared.”
  o Constance Malcolm, Bronx mother of Ramarley Graham, 18, who the NYPD shot and killed in his home.118

Hope for Change: “Something is Really Building.”

• “We do need police, but we don’t need to live in a police state. And I think organizations, such as myself and others in other community groups that are out here, need to come to the table and say, ‘We appreciate you coming in to help us, in fact, we pay you to help us. So why not create a balance so that what you do and what we do comes together and complements each other?’”
  o Rev. Al Taylor, community leader.119

• “As you get to know individuals, you have more respect for them. If the officers were constant in our communities, then they would be able to develop a sense of respect for the residents of the community. When you’re rotating [officers] in and out so frequently, they don’t really get to have an understanding of the culture of the neighborhood, or get an understanding of who the residents are.”
  o Rev. G Morgan-Thomas, community leader.120

• “Give the community back the P.A.L. centers. Give the community back the Y.M.C.A.’s. Start these baseball leagues again in the community. Start these basketball tournaments again in the community. Let people have the block parties again in the community. These are the things that kept the community safe; these are the things that kept the community connected. These are the things that parents was to come out and speak with each other, and every parent knew every parent, and every parent knew every other child in the community. We don’t have that no more.”
  o Rev. Bernard Walker, Bronx father of Jateik Reed, 19, who was beaten by NYPD officers.121

• “If more people came together to improve stop-and-frisk, I think the whole system would change. It motivates me more to want to be a lawyer.”
  o Tyquan Brehon, who was stopped more than 60 times before age 18.122

• “I felt like my voice didn’t count. But…I was wrong. Because now my voice do count. And [telling my story] does stand for a great cause, and it stands for a great purpose.”
  o Charlie Hobbs, the target of homophobic slurs by an NYPD officer, comments on PROP’s Narratives Project.123

• “Something is really building. I think we have a chance to change [stop-and-frisk].”
  o Mitchell, gay man who has been stopped and frisked four times.124

119 Reverend Al Taylor Calls for Sit Down Between Community and Police Officers (Police Reform Organizing Project Mar. 30, 2012)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9PjzdXx5sw&feature=plcp

120 Reverend Morgan-Thomas on Community Policing (Police Reform Organizing Project Mar. 30, 2012)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=py0u1IlqX3U&feature=plcp

121 Rev. Walker: Advocates NYPD Investment in Community Programs(Police Reform Organizing Project May. 8, 2012)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPheDHZe1HSQ&feature=plcp


123 Charlie: On Officer’s Homophobic Response to a Plea for Help(Police Reform Organizing Project Jul. 9, 2012)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5BXrGZTIYV&feature=plcp
CONCLUSION: Next Steps

Our report highlights these troubling quotes, not merely because they reflect specific incidents, but because they are emblematic of objectionable and widespread attitudes and practices within the NYPD. We see the Department’s prevailing culture as toxic, fostering harsh, aggressive, and corrupt conduct by police officers without any sense that sanctions or blowback will result; in effect, offering incentives rather than consequences for bad behavior.

That the city’s Police Department pursues such misguided and aggressive policies is disturbing but should not be surprising. History and experience tell us that whenever powerful law enforcement agencies, like police or prisons that can forcibly deprive people of their freedom, operate without checks and balances within government or without external, independent oversight, abuses and corruption are inevitable. That is what Attica and Abu Graib teach us. That is what recurring police scandals that have blighted New York’s landscape all too often teach us. At this moment, the New York City Police Department is a revered, sacrosanct and politically untouchable agency. It is effectively accountable to no political figure including the city’s current mayor, or any government or civic body. Its commissioner is an iconic figure. He and his policy setting team do not have to account to anyone when they set arrest priorities or other policies for the Police Department. Such unlimited power is dangerous, and should be unacceptable to all New Yorkers, not just the members of our city’s most marginalized groups who bear the brunt of the Police Department’s current harsh policies.

It is long past time that the NYPD stop its wasteful, ineffective, illegal, unjust, homophobic, transphobic and racially biased practices. It is way past time that the city’s citizens and elected officials demand transparency from Police Department leaders. New York City should establish an autonomous agency that monitors and assesses the Police Department’s policy agenda as to matters like arrest practices and that has the authority to investigate claims of abusive conduct and to punish the officers found guilty. City officials should also abolish the use of so-called productivity goals or quotas as the primary way of measuring the performance of cops on the ground. Finally, the city should focus its resources on supporting proven problem-solving programs and services that address the social and economic difficulties plaguing our communities that cut crime while stabilizing rather than disrupting neighborhoods, and that foster adherence to social norms while building positive rather than hostile relationships with local residents. Such an approach would help provide New Yorkers of every race and income level with the chance to fully experience a more livable, safer and inclusive city.

SOURCES


42. Muneebah: Bronx Mother on NYPD Harassment of Her Son and Other Young Men (Police Reform Organizing Project May. 10, 2012) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBjmfPjQXx0&feature=plcp.


68. Seku: Bronx Teacher on Aggressive Police Tactics in His School (Police Reform Organizing Project Apr. 25, 2012)  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60ymQmtTz8w&feature=plcp.


