

# **Testimony before the New York City Council in Support of the Right to Know Act**

## **Consent to Search/Int 541 and NYPD Identification/Int 182A**

Monday, June 29<sup>th</sup> 2015

Good Morning,

My name is Elliott Fukui, and I am the coordinator of TransJustice at the Audre Lorde Project. TransJustice is a political organizing group led by and for Trans and Gender Non Conforming People of Color. We work to educate, organize and mobilize our community and allies on the pressing political issues we face, one of which has been discriminatory policing and broken windows policies since our inception 11 years ago.

The Audre Lorde Project is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans and Gender Non Conforming People of Color center for community organizing, focusing on the New York City area. Through mobilization, education and capacity-building, we work for community wellness and progressive social and economic justice. Committed to struggling across differences, we seek to responsibly reflect, represent and serve our various communities.

I am here today not to speak for my community, but to lift up our experiences and express our firm support for the Right to Know Act as members of the Communities United for Police Reform Coalition.

Trans and Gender Non Conforming New Yorkers, particularly those of us who are also People of Color, Disabled, Low Income, or Homeless, are often targeted and profiled by police officers here in New York City. We have been subject to unlawful and unconstitutional searches, we have been publicly humiliated and shamed by police officers, and we know that this cannot continue.

According to the New York Anti-Violence Project's 2014 Hate Violence Report, Trans people of color are 6.2 times more likely to experience police violence when compared to other survivors of hate violence. This is clearly an unacceptable number, and something that needs to be addressed by the NYPD and city council.

We have found that when people do not understand their rights, it is far easier for the NYPD to abuse their power and use fear tactics to compel our community members into unlawful searches and seizures. When officers do not identify themselves, it makes it that much harder for us to have recourse when we are experiencing discrimination and violence.

When the police can violate our rights, dehumanize and cause harm to Trans and Gender Non Conforming people without recourse, why would any other New Yorker believe that they would be held accountable for transphobic violence and discrimination?

We are not asking for extraordinary measures. We are asking for something quite simple and necessary for any community to function; Accountability.

We have seen the impact of broken windows policing, and rather than creating trust and building up our communities, it has effectively destroyed the ability for Trans and Gender Non Conforming people of color to access safety in our spaces. These abuses of power have created a fear and distrust of the NYPD.

Many of us do not go to the police when we experience violence because we have found that the police are not actually here to protect and serve us, they are not here to support us. We have learned they are here to intimidate, control, and violate our rights. They are here to humiliate us, out us publicly, and dehumanize us.

If the NYPD is actually here to serve and protect the people, then there should be no questions around the importance and necessity of ensuring that our people know their rights, know the name and badge number of the officer who is questioning them, and know that there are clear channels for recourse in the event that their constitutional rights are being violated by a police officer.

I strongly encourage the city council to pass the Right to Know Act to create pathways to accountable policing. In order for New York to be a safe city for Trans and Gender Non Conforming People of Color, we need to know that there are accountability measures in place that protect our rights, and that there is implementation of those measures.