

MILLIONHOODIES

MOVEMENT FOR JUSTICE

NYC City Council Hearing – June 29, 2015

Right to Know Act

Remarks by Dante Barry, Executive Director

My name is Dante Barry and I am the Executive Director of the Million Hoodies Movement for Justice, a national racial justice network founded in the wake of the murder of Trayvon Martin to protect and empower young people of color from mass criminalization and gun violence. We seek to build a safer and more just America by transforming the public narrative on the criminalization of young people of color while providing our members and allies with the tools necessary to protect themselves. In 2012, Million Hoodies created a new tool to help track and document incidents of police misconduct and institutional discrimination, collecting over 2,000 incidents of police misconduct in New York City alone.

Over the past year, in response to a series of high-profile police killings and police violence, communities across the country have erupted in massive protests, sustained acts of civil disobedience demanding an end to police brutality and a recognition that Black lives matter. Black people have always had a complicated and violent relationship with citizenship in this country. There has been a monopoly on who has the right to feel and be safe – a monopoly that is often regulated and enforced by cops. If safety is to be the point, we must not tweak but rather transform every inch of policing from recruitment to discipline. That's why it is time for the City Council to make New York a national leader by passing the Right to Know Act. The number of increased officers in our communities only

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further demonstrates the need for these basic, common sense protections of New Yorkers.

In order to change the fundamental nature of how communities are interacting with and being treated by police, we must start with everyday interactions and address the communication, transparency, and accountability in them. About a month ago, I was at a protest here in New York City in Union Square where NYPD came out in full force against a community peacefully demonstrating their right to protest. I stood next to my friend's seven-year old son whose face and emotions I'll never forget. As NYPD violently clashed with protestors, I watch a seven year old kid scream for his life: shouting: "I don't want to die, I don't want to die. I don't want them to kill me." Although this isn't a normal every day interaction with NYPD officers, it is a demonstration of the kind of intimidation, fear, and trauma our young New Yorkers are experiencing and suffering through every day.

I think about the next set of interactions that seven year old will have with a NYPD officer. In order for our communities to start feeling safer, the very nature of how communities are interacting with NYPD officers must change and that is why passing the Right to Know Act is the right thing to do and prevent further negative interactions from every corner and every aspect of life in New York. Too often New Yorkers have no idea why they're being questioned or stopped by an officer and it can be intimidating. Let's take the step in leading the country in police accountability and pass the Right to Know Act!

Thank you.

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