

**Testimony**

**New York City Council Committee on Public Safety  
January 11, 2021**

Samy Feliz  
Brother of Allan Feliz  
Justice Committee Member

I am Samy Feliz, the brother of Allan Feliz. On October 17, 2019, my brother was unjustly stopped in his car, beaten, tasered, shot and killed by NYPD Sgt. Jonathan Rivera and Officers Michelle Almanzar and Edward Barrett at the intersection of Bainbridge Ave. and East 211 St. in the Bronx.

I clearly remember one day, when I fell into a well while visiting relatives in the Dominican Republic. Even though he was very young, Allan jumped into the well to help me. He could have run away to get help, but he risked his life to be with me and help me himself. His personality was already mature and caring. He stayed that way for the rest of his life, until the NYPD took it. That's who the NYPD stole from me and my family.

Over a year ago, Rivera, Almanzar and Barrett pulled my brother's car over, falsely alleging Allan wasn't wearing his seat belt. However, when they got to the car door, they admitted that he was wearing his belt. There is video evidence of this. The stop should have ended there. The NYPD had no legal justification for continuing the stop, but they escalated, and moments later, my brother, who was unarmed, was dead.

After Sgt. Rivera shot Allan, Officer Barratt aggressively yanked his limp body from the car, exposing his genitals in the process. After this, none of the officers even had the decency to cover Allan up. Instead they left him bleeding in the road, cuffed and exposed.

In spite of all of this, Attorney General James did not charge these officers, Mayor de Blasio has said nothing, the NYPD has taken no disciplinary action and Rivera, Almanzar & Barrett are all still collecting NYPD paychecks.

My family and I are calling for the NYPD to be removed from traffic enforcement so that no one else is killed as my brother was. We are also calling for the firing of Sgt. Jonathan Rivera, and Officers Edward Barrett and Michelle Almanzar.

Sadly, my family's story is not unusual. So many other families are fighting for accountability just like us. I am here to stand with these other families by calling for the firing of:

- Officer Wayne Isaacs for killing Delrawn Small
- Officers Justin Damico, Mark Ramos, Craig Furlani and Lt. Christopher Bannon for killing of Eric Garner
- Officers Brian Mahon, Robert Wichers, and Keith Figueroa, Dt. Beddows and Sgt. Valentino for killing Antonio Williams.
- Officers Brendan Thompson and Herbert Davis in the killing of Kawaski Trawick,
- Officers Edwin Mateo, Andrew Kress, and Michael Green, Sgt. Joseph McCormack and Lt. Michael Licitra for killing Mohamed Bah

I am also here today to make three main points:

- **First, NYPD violence is a very serious problem, and so is the city's process to fix it.**
- **Second, we must defund the NYPD and invest in communities to make New York safer.**
- **Third, the City Council and Mayor must take action to address these problems.**

***1. NYPD violence is a very serious problem and so is the city's process to fix it.***

We're all here because we want to stop police violence. Of course, police killings are the most devastating – I just named a few of the worst cases over the years – but there is also daily, non-fatal police violence, including racial profiling, abuse of power, abusive social distancing enforcement and police brutality at recent protests.

The NYPD even has problems with the basics. If you are Black or Latinx, just having a conversation can be abusive: officers are combative and intimidating. Yes, they have badges but that doesn't give them the right to harass and disrespect us.

On top of this the City's "reform process" following Gov. Cuomo's executive order is its own big problem.

Mayor de Blasio's response to the EO has been a sham from the start. He waited until the last minute to announce public meetings and has let the NYPD dictate the process from the very beginning. Community engagement has been an illusion, and the meetings have been nothing more than NYPD propaganda sessions.

We want community meetings but not if they are nothing but a NYPD public relations strategy.

There is no reason to believe that the City's process will result in any more safety from police violence for Black, Latinx and other communities of color when the NYPD are the ones in charge.

Instead of a completely non-transparent city process that's led by the NYPD and will not bring any real change, the City Council must take decisive action. We need to reframe this process: if you want reform the police to make the City safer, we have to ensure police accountability and take money from the NYPD and invest it in our communities.

This brings me to my second point.

## ***2. We must defund the NYPD and invest in communities to make New York safer***

The pandemic has devastated our city, making inequality worse and heightening police abuse in communities of color. We cannot afford for our communities to continue to be starved for resources during the pandemic while the NYPD's budget is given special protection by the Mayor and the City Council.

We need resources for our education system. We need teachers, counselors and cleaning and sanitation during the health crisis. We need community centers and programs so young people can get off the streets before they get into trouble. There are kids in my neighborhood that work on cars and have other skills. They could be helped to go into business, but they have no place to learn a trade.

We need resources for healthcare. I work in a nursing home. Last year we didn't even have the money for enough PPE. If some of the NYPD's bloated \$6billion budget had gone to this nursing home for proper protection, we could've saved 30 lives just where I work.

The call to #DefundNYPD is a grassroots demand to reduce public dollars invested in policing and mass criminalization and redirect them to public infrastructure, services and other needs in Black, Latinx and other communities of color.

## **3. The City Council and Mayor must take action to address these problems.**

To the City Council and Mayor: you must substantially defund the NYPD in the FY22 City Budget. This can be done by:

- Reducing the NYPD's role in our daily lives. Get the NYPD out of traffic enforcement, mental health response, schools and other social services roles and cut their headcount.
- Firing abusive officer, like Sgt. Rivera and Officers Barrett and Almanzar, who killed my brother, all of the other officers I named in the beginning, and others who have committed brutality and misconduct and defund the NYPD for the amount of their salaries and benefits.

- Defund the NYPD for the costs of police misconduct civil suit judgments and settlements from the previous year. Money for civil suit outcomes doesn't come from the NYPD budget – it comes from taxpayers' pockets – but the Mayor and City Council can push the NYPD to discipline and fire abusive officers to avoid civil suits through the budget process. The worse police units and precincts, which are sued much more, should get even bigger cuts.

Finally, I want to close by saying: to those of you who are watching this hearing live, or seeing or reading about it later – put pressure on the police commissioner, the Mayor, and the City Council to make real change. That means taking it to the streets and marching for justice Allan Feliz, Delrawn Small, Eric Garner, Kawaski Trawick, Mohamed Bah, Antonio Williams and others who have been unjustly killed by the NYPD in our own city – just like so many marched for George Floyd.