



Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams  
New York City Council Committees on Oversight and Investigation and Public Safety  
December 16, 2020

My name is Eric Adams, and I am the Brooklyn Borough President, representing nearly 2.6 million people who call the borough of Brooklyn home. Thank you to Committee Chair Ritchie Torres and the members of the Council Committee on Oversight and Investigation, and Committee Chair Adrienne Adams and the members of the Council Committee on Public Safety for the opportunity to testify today at this joint hearing on Oversight – Racism, Bias, and Hate Speech in the New York City Police Department (NYPD).

As a former NYPD Captain who formed 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care, I was not completely surprised by the unmasking of “Clouseau” as a high-ranking member of the NYPD’s Equal Employment Opportunity Division (EEO). My interactions with the NYPD as a teen were what led me on the path to become an officer who fought to bring change to the organization from within. I understand as much as anyone that there is still work to do within the ranks of the NYPD. This unmasking only added to the mountain of evidence that shows the depth and breadth of the change needed.

Half of NYPD officers are non-white. NYPD leadership must understand that that diversity within the ranks is the key to the path forward. Black and Brown officers must be heard when they call for structural changes within the department. But instead of their voices being welcomed, they are put on the ‘Black Track’, where they are moved up the ranks, but further from the real decision making. Or worse, they face retaliation by way of undesirable assignments, internal affairs monitoring, or disciplinary measures.

It is time that the NYPD started to see the diversity within its ranks as the resource it needs to move towards better community engagement, more respect by the citizens they serve, and improved policing overall. To begin with:

- EEO leadership must have a demonstrated commitment to a cohesive, equitable, and inclusive department.
- There must be additional protections and protocols for officers who speak out against the systemic harms that plague communities of color both in and out of the department.
- The case review process must ensure that all complaints are treated fairly and equally.
- EEO should partner with an outside entity that can audit and review discretionary promotions and assignments.

- Community Boards and Precinct Councils should have a role in determining the leadership of the precincts in their community. They must be involved with candidate vetting and have veto power over selections if they have a supermajority.
- Increase diversity by allowing school safety officers, transit enforcement officers, and Department of Homeless Services peace officers, among others, to use their experience in lieu of the education requirements to become full NYPD officers.

We cannot have a 21<sup>st</sup> century police force without addressing the systemic internal issues that have left us mired in an old model. The citizens of New York City have made it abundantly clear that the status quo is no longer acceptable. The NYPD has the people within their ranks who can help move them toward a more equitable and community-affirming model. They just need to make the commitment in deeds, not just words.

Thank you.