

PEOPLES' JUSTICE

For Community Control and Police Accountability

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Peoples' Justice, Coalition of NYC-based Grassroots Anti-Police Brutality Organizations, Launches City-Wide CopWatch at 1 Police Plaza

PJ Says: The Eyes of New Yorkers are On the Police

June 12, 2008, New York, NY – Peoples' Justice, a coalition of New York City grassroots organizations formed to combat police violence and misconduct, launched a city-wide Copwatch program today. The CopWatch program involves groups of people monitoring police activity in neighborhoods that are heavily policed by the NYPD. The monitoring involves videotaping police actions with the goal of preventing police misconduct, as well as documenting abuses in an effort to insure accountability. PJ's CopWatch program will also focus on informing New Yorkers on their rights through Know Your Rights trainings that will offer practical advice on how to deal with police encounters. In addition, PJ will offer training to residents on how to form their own neighborhood CopWatch-style programs.

The program, a multi-racial, multi-gendered effort, will begin immediately in Manhattan and Brooklyn, with plans to employ teams in the remaining boroughs in July. PJ member group, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, has been conducting its CopWatch program in central Brooklyn since 1998. PJ member groups FIERCE and the Justice Committee have also recently instituted CopWatch programs in lower Manhattan and Washington Heights, respectively. The coordinated efforts of these groups and the others in the coalition will create a dynamic step toward creating a culture of CopWatch in the city to curb, and hopefully eliminate, police violence.

As part of the information component, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement will host a "Know Your Rights Forum" on Saturday, June 14, 2008 at Food for Thought, located at 445 Marcus Garvey Boulevard in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The forum will begin at 3 p.m. and is open to community members. Similar workshops hosted by PJ member groups will follow later this month in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens.

The acquittal of the officers who fired fifty shots killing Sean Bell and wounding two others is more evidence that New Yorkers cannot rely on the police department or the courts to protect them from rogue and incompetent policing.

"CopWatch is a way to put cops on the defensive and consequently lower their level of abuse in our communities—if they see that there are people watching what they're doing and videotaping their behavior, they're less likely to illegally stop-and-frisk people, and less likely to commit any other sort of abuse," said **PJ member Latanya White**.

After the murder of Sean Bell in 2006 as well as after the verdict was announced in the trial, Peoples' Justice organized several rallies and demonstrations calling for police accountability. For more information, please visit www.peoplesjustice.org.

About Peoples' Justice:

Peoples' Justice is a coalition of NYC grassroots organizations that are working together to fight police violence. PJ includes: Audre Lorde Project (ALP); CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities; FIERCE!; Immigrant Justice Solidarity Project (IJSP); Justice Committee; Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM); National Hip-Hop Convention; and Nodutdol for Korean Community Development.

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