

# NYPD Tapes 5: The Corroboration

## Another police officer secretly tapes his precinct—this time in the Bronx

By **Graham Rayman**

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C.S. Muncy



Adil Polanco recorded supervisors and police union delegates in the 41st Precinct haranguing him to meet a quota of arrests and summonses. He claims he witnessed supervisors refusing to take reports, a practice known as "shitcanning." He's tired of the demands, particularly the pressure to stop and frisk innocent New Yorkers.

C.S. Muncy



When his son, Christopher, was fired by the police department for refusing to make "bullshit collars," Fred Bienz, a lawyer and retired firefighter, took up the cause, and found information that sharply disputed the department's version of events. His efforts to get a new hearing for his son have been ignored.

C.S. Muncy

At the same time NYPD whistleblower Adrian Schoolcraft was secretly recording his supervisors in a Brooklyn precinct, an officer named Adil Polanco was doing the same thing a borough away in the Bronx.

Polanco, short in stature and a native of the Dominican Republic, and Schoolcraft, a native of Texas, come from different backgrounds, but they have a lot in common, particularly the belief that the NYPD's obsession with numbers distorts a police officer's job. Polanco, who was also making recordings to document what he saw as wrongdoing in his precinct, tells the *Voice* that many of the same things that Schoolcraft observed in Brooklyn's 81st Precinct were also taking place in the 41st Precinct in the Hunts Point section of the Bronx. He claims that supervisors constantly harangued cops to hit quotas for arrests, summonses, and stop-and-frisks, even when it meant harassing innocent civilians who were doing nothing wrong.

He claims that supervisors ordered officers to downgrade crime complaints and refuse to take complaints from civilians in order to manipulate crime statistics.

"It happened all the time," he says. "The reason was CompStat. They know what they are going to be asked for in CompStat, and they have to have a lower number—but not too low."

Polanco even has a recording of quota pressure coming from an unlikely source: a police union delegate.

**The Schoolcraft story was told** in a four-part



Christopher Bienz was fired as a probationary officer assigned to Queens, in part, he says, because he resisted making low-level arrests and issuing summonses to hit quotas. At one point, he says, he told a supervisor, "This is not what I came on the job to do."

#### C.S. Muncy



Councilman Al Vann, other political figures, and clergy in Brooklyn are pressuring Police Commissioner Ray Kelly to take action.

*Voice* series that began on May 5 ("[The NYPD Tapes: Inside Bed-Stuy's 81st Precinct](#)"). The series was based on digital recordings made by Schoolcraft of 117 roll calls in the Brooklyn stationhouse, which offered an unprecedented look inside the operations of a police precinct, and sparked a range of investigations and other events in the period since the articles ran.

- The revelations in the series have led so far to the transfer of the 81st Precinct commander, Deputy Inspector Steven Mauriello, to Bronx transit, and the NYPD has also opened an internal investigation into his conduct. Police Commissioner Ray Kelly replaced him with Inspector Juanita Holmes, one of the few African-American female supervisors in the NYPD. Mauriello's transfer came after demands for his ouster from local elected officials, clergy, and community groups. In a May 26 letter to Kelly obtained by the *Voice* calling for Mauriello's ouster, the pols, referring to the contents of the Schoolcraft tapes, wrote, "Not only did officers treat our community as if it were the subject of a military occupation, but they also were dismissive of criminal complaints made by residents." Kelly finally responded nine days later, on June 4, with a curt note, acknowledging the letter and saying he had ordered a review and analysis of the "assertions" made in their letter. (In the intervening period, Kelly and City Councilman Al Vann had a tense exchange in a Council budget hearing over Kelly's failure to respond to the initial letter.) On June 22, the pols were joined by three local church pastors in a follow-up letter to Kelly, which mildly criticized him for his limited response, and asked for a face-to-face meeting. "We believe that residents can no longer trust the precinct to protect and serve them in its current leadership," they wrote. Vann also issued an open letter in June describing Mauriello's conduct as "inappropriate, disrespectful, and perhaps even illegal. . . . The question is why hasn't he already been removed," he wrote. Mauriello was transferred on the Friday before the July Fourth



Steven Mauriello (circled), commander of the 81st Precinct in Bedford-Stuyvesant, received an award from Police Commissioner Ray Kelly and Mayor Michael Bloomberg in 2009. A year later, he was removed from the post in the wake of the "NYPD Tapes" series in the *Voice*. He is currently under investigation.

Details:

### **NYPD Tapes: The Series**

[The NYPD Tapes Part 1](#)

Inside Bed-Stuy's 81st Precinct

[The NYPD Tapes, Part 2](#)

Bed-Stuy street cops ordered:  
Turn this place into a ghost town

[The NYPD Tapes, Part 3](#)

A Detective Comes Forward About  
Downgraded Sexual Assaults

[The NYPD Tapes, Part 4](#)

The WhistleBlower, Adrian  
Schoolcraft

Follow [continuing coverage of the NYPD Tapes here](#) at our Runnin' Scared blog.

weekend.

- Kelly also met with clergy and appointed a special liaison from his office to communicate with Bed-Stuy leaders. But the reaction to the series exposed cracks in the relationship between Kelly and ministers in predominantly African-American neighborhoods, chiefly over civil rights issues and community resentment at the stop-and-frisk campaign, described in part 2 of the series ("[Bed-Stuy Cops Ordered: Turn This Place Into a Ghost Town](#)," May 12). In an interview last week, Councilman Vann told the *Voice* he's satisfied that Kelly removed Mauriello, but he thinks there are broader issues that go beyond the 81st Precinct: "I think it's systemic," he said. Vann called on the City Council to hold hearings on the issues raised in the *Voice* series. He and other elected officials were scheduled to meet last week with Kelly and Chief of Brooklyn North Gerald Nelson. He also said that two of Brooklyn's congressional representatives are examining whether to ask the United States Attorney General to investigate. Meanwhile, he says, several state elected officials from Brooklyn are looking into new legislation to limit the stop-and-frisk policy. "We think stop-and-frisk should be modified," he says.
- A second departmental probe is said to be under way involving Deputy Chief Michael Marino's October 31, 2009, order to forcibly handcuff Schoolcraft and transport him against his will to the psychiatric ward at Jamaica Hospital ("[NYPD Tapes 4: The Whistleblower](#)," June 16). That decision, a police source says, was "out at the edge of the universe of acceptable orders." Marino still has an open disciplinary case after he admitted to

buying a steroid cream from a Brooklyn pharmacy under investigation for steroids distribution. A departmental trial was held last September, and both sides are awaiting a judge's ruling, Marino's lawyer tells the *Voice*.

An investigation into Schoolcraft's allegations that crimes were being downgraded has been completed, police sources say. The NYPD has thus far ignored *Voice* requests to release the results of that investigation. While there is no official word on the outcome of the Quality Assurance Division investigation, police sources say that Mauriello's transfer is

a clear indication that there was some merit to the Schoolcraft allegations.

A sergeant whose voice is heard repeatedly on the tapes was indicted, along with an 81st Precinct officer, for filing false arrest paperwork. Sergeant Raymond Stukes and Officer Hector Tirado claimed they had seen a man illegally selling untaxed cigarettes from out of a backpack. That man turned out to be an undercover Internal Affairs officer. During one roll tape, dating back to December 8, 2008, Stukes tells his cops, "You gotta commit a felony to get fired from this job. How simple is that?" He goes on to suggest that cops who don't hit their numbers will be punished, and essentially tells them to do stop-and-frisks ("250s" in police parlance) solely for the purpose of making a number. "This job is so easy," he says. "Just keep the hounds off. A parker. A 250. Someone walking down the street. So what? I did a 250. What's the big deal? He doesn't want to give you his information? Who cares? It's still a 250." Previously, the *Voice* withheld the names of Stukes and other lieutenants and sergeants from publication in the series, but Stukes's indictment by a Brooklyn Grand Jury makes what he said on the tapes a matter of public interest. The Stukes indictment confirms the existence of a practice that Schoolcraft had complained about: that officers were being asked to make arrests when they had not actually seen the misconduct. But the motive for Stukes's alleged behavior remains a mystery. Police sources surmised that either he saw the arrest as another quota number, or he was simply cutting a key corner in the arrest process.

Internal Affairs opened an investigation into how a series of sexual assault/robberies in an Upper Manhattan police precinct were classified as misdemeanors, allowing a predator to remain on the loose, police sources say. The case was the subject of part 3 of the *Voice* series ("[NYPD Tapes 3: A Detective Comes Forward](#)," June 9). The article disclosed that in late 2003, a man named Daryl Thomas got away with a series of attacks on women because supervisors in the 33rd Precinct misclassified several of his attacks as trespassing instead of sexual assault or burglary. Thomas's three-month crime spree ended by chance when an alert neighbor spotted him pushing his final victim into her apartment. Police officers responded and arrested him. It was only after the arrest that a detective, Harold Hernandez, figured out that Thomas's previous attacks had been misclassified. The current investigation is being handled by a unit known as Group One of Internal Affairs, which is tasked to probe allegations against senior-level NYPD commanders—captains and above, the sources say. The former commander of the 33rd Precinct, Jason Wilcox, has been interviewed by investigators. A half-dozen case files have been pulled and reviewed. Investigators have also spoken with others working in the precinct at the time.

In response to disclosures in the *Voice* and *The New York Times* about police downgrading sexual assault cases, the NYPD created a panel that may eventually recommend more training for police officers.

Frank Palestro, a police union delegate in the 42nd Precinct in the Bronx, is reportedly alleging that after he called Internal Affairs to report a corruption allegation, his precinct lieutenant found out about it and ordered him transferred. He says that his lieutenant ordered cops to write fake summonses, refused to take criminal complaints, and

tampered with a crime scene.

The *Voice* series sparked public outcry among residents, elected officials, and clergy in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and it was discussed in several public hearings in Brooklyn and Harlem. One speaker was David Miller, who says that his 21-year-old son has been summonsed 50 times over the years by 81st Precinct officers. In one case, he was charged with trespassing for being in the parking lot of a local pharmacy. His father had sent him there to pick up a prescription for diabetes. "There was no complainant," Miller says. "How do you give someone a ticket when there's no one complaining?" On another occasion, he was ticketed for standing in front of a grocery store and talking to friends. In a third, he was ticketed for an open container because officers saw a bag filled with empty beer cans in the front yard. The cans were awaiting a recycling pickup. In a debate in June, the Democratic candidates for attorney general said they were shocked by the disclosures in the *Voice* series, and made pledges to investigate the validity of the NYPD crime statistics, if elected. The group Picture the Homeless held two public protests to highlight the NYPD's questionable use of the disorderly conduct charge to get people off the streets. Statistics obtained by the *Voice* show that in more than 50 percent of these low-level arrests, the charges are dismissed.

The series also contributed to the public pressure in favor of limiting the stop-and-frisk database. Despite extensive lobbying by Kelly and Bloomberg, Governor Paterson signed a bill into law that would prevent the NYPD and other police departments from keeping a database of names of people stopped but not arrested.

The new law, however, does not address the core issue of the alleged unconstitutionality of the stops. As the *Voice* series reported, cops were ordered to do stop-and-frisks to hit quotas—an apparent violation of the legal standard that allows the practice.

**Adil Polanco, now 29**, began his career in Operation Impact in the Bronx's 46th Precinct in 2005. After eight months there, he was transferred to the 41st Precinct in the Hunts Point section of the Bronx, a neighborhood he calls "the poorest square mile in the country."

Polanco says he did his job, but began to object to the constant pressure for numbers from his supervisors: "I did not become a cop to be harassing people in the street," he says. "You end up summonsing innocent people. They don't go to court, and the next time you stop them, they have a warrant and have to go to jail."

That pressure included stop-and-frisks, which are supposed to be done when an officer has a reasonable suspicion that a crime has been or is about to be committed.

"We'd make up a bullshit reason to justify the stop, when, most of the time, we had no reason to justify the stop," he says. "We were told to say they 'fit the description.' But that just meant you were Spanish or black. It was just for the quotas."

Polanco says precinct commanders need positive statistics to improve their chance of

promotion: "They want you to summons people for disorderly conduct, when they aren't doing anything," he says. "If the summonses are down for the month, they rush to get them up, so they'll stick you in a checkpoint just for the purpose of getting 10 summonses. What happens when you don't witness anything illegal, but still have to hit your quota?"

He says it was a common practice in the precinct for officers to be ordered to make arrests when they hadn't actually seen the misconduct: "One time, I was ordered to give a guy a summons for no dog license, but the problem was I didn't see a dog," he says.

The effect of this approach is that it strains relations with the community, he says: "A lot of the time, I would apologize," he says. "They are frustrated. They don't trust the police. They feel we're here to harass them."

Like Schoolcraft, Polanco also observed manipulation of crime complaints. He cited three incidents he personally witnessed during which criminal complaints were either downgraded or not taken.

In one incident, he says, he responded to a call of a burglary in a city-owned apartment. When he arrived, he noted that a window had been broken, and the occupant said cash and a video game had been stolen. He called his sergeant and a lieutenant. When the lieutenant arrived, he wondered skeptically how a guy who lived in public housing could own a 40-inch flat-screen television. He ordered Polanco and his partner to leave the scene. Even though the victim wanted a report taken, the lieutenant closed the case as "unfounded."

In a second incident, an alleged burglary, the door had been pushed in. The victim claimed that \$600 in cash and some jewelry had been stolen. But a sergeant arrived at the scene and ordered Polanco to take a report for something called "unlawful eviction."

"He said, 'Don't mention the money and jewelry in the report,' " Polanco says. "He told me that the numbers were high that week. They look at the numbers weekly and compare them to the same week the previous year. What they want is to show a decline in the numbers, but not too low, because it will be harder the next year to show a decline."

In a third incident, Polanco responded to a call of shots fired. A bullet had gone through a vehicle window, but he was ordered to take the report as reckless endangerment. "I was told to write that a 'sharp object' went through the glass," he says. "They didn't have the perp, and it would look bad for the precinct taking the report for attempted murder."

Polanco says precinct supervisors routinely called crime victims back to try to persuade them to withdraw their report or change their account in some way that would allow the incident to be reclassified as a lesser crime: "They'll say, 'You know we're not getting anything back on this,' or 'Do you really want to make the report?'," he says.

If a robbery victim refused to return immediately to the precinct to speak to detectives, cops were told not to take the report, Polanco says. "If the victim couldn't identify anyone

from mugshots, they would tell them they would follow up, but they wouldn't take a report," he says. "A lot of the time, they were Mexican or Chinese delivery people who don't really know how the system works."

The sergeants in the crime analysis unit would call cops on the carpet to get them to explain why they took a given report, he says. He says there was a special bin for complaints involving the seven major crimes, and the following day, the complaints would be reviewed and "edited."

There were also a couple of arrests that bothered Polanco: In one case, a sergeant ordered the arrest of a young man for having a warrant for an open container, even though he had been slashed across the back—a wound that required 40 stitches to close. In another case, a man who had been shot in the leg was arrested and taken to the hospital in handcuffs because he had a prior warrant on a minor charge.

Polanco started wearing a tape recorder in August 2009 to capture some of the practices he had witnessed. "It was the only way to prove what was going on," he says.

He caught some of the same things that Schoolcraft recorded, particularly the quota pressure.

"Twenty [summons] and one [arrest, the monthly quota]—make sure you take care of what you gotta take care of," a supervisor tells cops in one of Polanco's tapes. "I don't give a shit," another supervisor tells him. "You need to take care of your business, feel me? As a cop to a cop, make sure you take care of what you gotta take care of."

Polanco also recorded something more controversial: two police union delegates haranguing him to increase his summons and arrest numbers.

In one conversation, a Patrolmen's Benevolent Association delegate tells Polanco: "Twenty and one is what the union wants. . . . This is what the job is coming down to."

Later, another delegate tells cops in a roll call, "Things are not going to get any better. It is going to get a lot worse. If you think getting one and 20 is breaking your balls, guess what you're going to be doing? You're going to be doing a lot more. A lot more than what you think. This was all dealt with in the last contract."

This delegate is later heard to say: "This is not coming from me—this is coming from higher up. The unions agreed on it. We're unionized here. This is what we pushed through. And let's be smart about it. You gotta be smart about it."

"Play the fucking game," a delegate says on another tape.

"The delegates were basically saying, 'Go along with the program,' " Polanco tells the *Voice*.

This is controversial because the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association has long spoken out

against quotas. But Polanco's tapes capture the PBA's own representatives essentially ordering officers to make their numbers.

A PBA spokesman says one of the delegates, Gaetano Fundaro, was found to be lying to his members about the quotas and was removed.

"There is not now, nor has there ever been, support for quotas by this union," PBA President Patrick Lynch tells the *Voice*. "When confronted with information regarding a delegate who made false claims regarding support for quotas, the union took immediate action that resulted in his removal as a delegate."

Lynch adds that the PBA has filed grievances in the past on quotas, and actually won such a case related to the 75th Precinct. He said the PBA has proposed a statewide bill that would allow the union to challenge any punitive action against a police officer for failing to meet a quota. "The PBA is unified in its belief that quotas for summonses and arrests are wrong and counterproductive for both police officers and the communities they patrol," he says.

In another parallel to the Schoolcraft story, Polanco was suspended on December 13, 2009, after he contacted the Internal Affairs Bureau (IAB) to make allegations about downgrading, the constant demand for artificial quotas, and what he saw as retaliation by his lieutenant. "My supervisors knew I had gone to IAB," he says. "They were asking me why did I go to IAB?"

On the day he was suspended, he says, Polanco and his partner were working a checkpoint. His partner developed chest pains. Polanco wanted to accompany him to the hospital, but his lieutenant wanted him to stay at the checkpoint and write more summonses.

When Polanco insisted on going to the hospital after his partner's condition worsened, the lieutenant grabbed him. Polanco pushed him away. The lieutenant ordered him suspended, and demanded his gun and shield. Polanco refused, because he didn't feel safe giving his gun to someone who had pushed him. The lieutenant told Emergency Services he was to be treated as an "emotionally disturbed" person—the same term that Schoolcraft was tarred with.

Polanco is married with two children, and his wife is pregnant with their third child. He lives in Rockland County. While he is suspended with pay, he must drive each workday downtown to Internal Affairs on Hudson Street and sign a logbook, then turn around and drive home.

He is assigned to the military extended-leave desk, which seems like an attempt by the NYPD to hide him away. Instead, he has been outspoken, giving a deposition to the Center for Constitutional Rights.

**Meanwhile, a former rookie police officer**, 26-year-old Christopher Bienz, is telling



the *Voice* about the quota pressure he faced when he joined the police department.

Bienz, of Smithtown, Long Island, says that when he graduated from the police academy, he was assigned to the 115th Precinct in the Jackson Heights section of Queens. He was sent to work a foot post on Roosevelt Avenue, and was expected to make low-level arrests and issue summonses to hit quotas.

"When I got there, they gave me my post and a map and threw us out there," he says. "I remember walking out and not having the slightest idea of where I was going."

His supervisors told him he was expected to make two arrests and issue 30 summonses a month. He was also expected to do eight stop-and-frisks a month: "You're constantly getting yelled at. They make you feel this big," he says.

Bienz, who comes from a family of cops and firefighters, says he came to believe that what he was ordered to do amounted to harassing regular working people. "I did not come on the job to lock up people for riding their bikes on the sidewalk," he says. "I'm not going to hassle a normal guy as long as he's not causing a problem, when there are other real crimes going on."

He started missing his quota, and his super-visors immediately started pressuring him.

At one point, after being called on the carpet for not writing enough summonses, he told his sergeant, "This isn't what I came on the job to do. I'm not going to make bullshit collars." The next day, he was chewed out by the precinct commander.

Bienz says he was also ordered not to take a criminal complaint from a victim. The man was drunk, and he was saying that he had been robbed of his wallet, credit cards, and cell phone. A police supervisor arrived at the scene and told Bienz, "We can't take reports from drunk guys—get rid of him. Tell him to call us in the morning."

Bienz says the precinct had a policy that if a victim did not want to return immediately to the stationhouse to speak with detectives, no report would be taken. Both Schoolcraft and Polanco say their precincts had a similar policy.

Like Polanco and Schoolcraft, Bienz says he was ordered to take arrests even when he didn't actually see the misconduct.

After eight months in the 115th Precinct, Bienz was transferred to the 114th Precinct in the Astoria section of Queens. There, he made a series of drunk driving arrests that earned him praise from his precinct commander.

One night, though, he was sent to Astoria General Hospital to guard a man who had been arrested on a gun charge after shooting himself in the foot, and he ran afoul of a captain who arrived to check on the prisoner.

The captain claimed that Bienz had been sleeping on duty, and issued him an official

reprimand.

Bienz went on working at the 114th. Nearly six months after the reprimand, a precinct supervisor ordered him to surrender his gun and shield based on the captain's claims, which had somehow changed from sleeping on duty to insubordination.

Just before Bienz's probationary period expired, he was terminated. He had little recourse because rookie cops have no job protection. The NYPD did not have to give a specific reason for his firing. He could have been fired for any reason.

Bienz's father, Fred, a retired firefighter turned lawyer, tried to fight his son's firing. Suing for unemployment benefits for his son, he was able to find a nurse and the wounded prisoner, both of whom testified that Bienz was neither sleeping on duty nor insubordinate toward the captain. He also produced telephone records that showed his son got a heads up from a fellow officer before the captain arrived, and thus could not have been sleeping.

In an interview with the *Voice*, Fred Bienz accused the captain of either perjuring himself or filing a false report. He also alleges that someone altered official documents in his son's case.

"To this day, I honestly don't know why my son got terminated," Fred Bienz says. "I have documentation to substantiate the altered evaluation, the false report, and the forged termination letters, but nobody from the commissioner's office seems to care to address the issues. They refuse to speak to me about it despite the fact that I've made every effort to communicate with them."

Christopher Bienz is now working as a mechanic in a bowling alley and living at his parents' home. He would still like to work as a police officer, but his firing makes that unlikely.

"I'm living the dream," he says, sarcastically.

In addition to Polanco and Bienz, two more police officers have come forward to make similar allegations, Schoolcraft's lawyer, Jon Norinsberg, says. Norinsberg requested that the *Voice* withhold the names of the officers.

One of those officers is from the 81st Precinct, the same stationhouse where Schoolcraft worked, the lawyer says. He alleges that the precinct commander at the time, Steven Mauriello, was given a "heads up" that Internal Affairs was investigating Schoolcraft's allegations.

If true, that claim would add ammunition to Schoolcraft's allegation that the precinct commanders retaliated against him after they found out that he had gone to IAB.

Mauriello, this officer has told Norinsberg, described Schoolcraft as "that rat upstate."

In addition, this officer alleges that as recently as last April, precinct supervisors were issuing actual quota numbers, and threatening to fire officers who didn't meet those quotas. This officer also alleges that the practice of downgrading complaints was a common occurrence.

The second officer, who labors in a Bronx precinct, claims that the downgrading of crime reports is a consistent practice that he called "shitcanning," Norinsberg says. Like Schoolcraft, this officer found reports that were questionable and followed up with victims. He claims that his precinct commander would file legitimate crime reports as "unfounded" so they wouldn't appear on the all-important precinct crime statistics.

**For Adrian Schoolcraft**, life remains in a sort of limbo. He is living with his father in a small apartment in upstate New York, and has no income. He has been suspended without pay, and is facing departmental charges for going AWOL and, ironically, "impeding an investigation."

He has filed a \$50 million lawsuit that accuses the NYPD of violating his civil rights when he was dragged to the Jamaica Hospital psychiatric ward for six days after he blew the whistle.

In an odd touch, an NYPD official recently approached a *Voice* reporter to forward a settlement offer to Schoolcraft. After the message was delivered, the police official spoke directly to Schoolcraft and his lawyer. The offer was this: If Schoolcraft agreed to return to work and be served with departmental charges, he would "probably" keep his job and would also become a witness in the case against Mauriello, his former precinct commander, and Deputy Chief Marino. Schoolcraft declined the offer.

The Schoolcraft tapes have become evidence in two other lawsuits against the city: one regarding the NYPD's stop-and-frisk practices filed by the Center for Constitutional Rights; the other, a class-action lawsuit involving two dozen plaintiffs, which alleges that quotas are what's driving arrests and summonses.

Joshua Fitch, a lawyer in that case, says the tapes are the "smoking gun": "You take the tapes and juxtapose them to the statistics, and then you take the stories from the individual plaintiffs, and you have a very clear picture of what's going on," he says.

Incredibly, when Schoolcraft filed for unemployment benefits, the NYPD fought him on it.

"The NYPD is making life very difficult for him," Norinsberg says. "There's a level of spite here that is extraordinary," adding: "His hospitalization was a shocking violation of somebody's civil rights."

Meanwhile, Schoolcraft gained a valuable supporter in famed NYPD whistleblower Frank Serpico, who called him and spoke with him for two hours. Serpico declined a *Voice* interview request, saying only, "I just wanted to let him know, having been there, that I understand how he feels."

Curiously, despite the damning evidence contained in the tapes and in the *Voice* series—not to mention the disturbing treatment of Schoolcraft—the city's elected officials have been largely silent.

"You would certainly hope to see more aggressive action on the part of elected officials," Norinsberg says.

Mayor Bloomberg has said nothing, and his spokespeople, Stu Loeser and Jason Post, have not responded to any *Voice* e-mails on the series. The series was met with silence by Deputy Commissioner Paul Browne, the NYPD's chief spokesman.

Other than Council members Al Vann, Darlene Mealy, and Letitia James, the City Council has largely been mute. Council Speaker Christine Quinn has said nothing.

Councilman Peter Vallone, the chair of the public safety committee, stuck his toe in the water, but opted not to dunk it in all the way. He has the power to hold public hearings on police issues, but he has held none. None of his fellow Council members on the committee even returned repeated *Voice* phone calls.

Vallone, however, now tells the *Voice* that his probe of these issues continues, and he is seriously considering holding a hearing on the subject: "As I have continued to investigate, the more concerned I have become," he says. "I've heard of everything from reclassification of complaints to actual discouraging of victims. I've spoken to victims from throughout Queens and the entire city. If the mayor is going to use the crime statistics to justify fewer officers, then the numbers better be accurate."

As for the oversight agencies, they, too, have been alarmingly mute. The Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) has uttered not a peep, even after Chris Dunn, associate legal director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, called on the board to investigate allegations in the series.

When the *Voice* asked the CCRB whether it would investigate elements contained in the tapes, CCRB spokesman Graham Daw offered a tortured written statement essentially saying that the board's role is confined to investigating specific complaints: "The jurisdiction of the CCRB extends only to particular encounters between police officers and members of the public, and, in most cases, not to more general questions of policing policies or practices," he wrote.

But that's not really true. The CCRB does launch investigations on "more general questions," according to its website. The agency has, in the past 12 years, issued reports on stop-and-frisks, policing protest marches, strip searches, search warrants, pepper spray, and the use of hollow-point bullets.

Daw added that the CCRB doesn't have jurisdiction to investigate whether a precinct commander is giving "appropriate" orders.

The irony of this statement is that in 1998, the CCRB actually did investigate why there was an unusual rash of civilian complaints in the 75th Precinct and 81st Precinct—the very same precinct that was the subject of the *Voice* series.

Finally, the Mayor's Commission to Combat Police Corruption has naturally been mute. That agency, created in the wake of the police corruption scandals of the early 1990s, has become a toothless husk, gutted of any influence.

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