



**Girls for Gender Equity Testimony
The New York City Council's
Committee on Public Safety and Committee on Women**

T2018-1641, T2018-1709, T2018-1711, and T2018-1710

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Good Afternoon, Committee Chair Rosenthal and Richards and members of the Committee on Women and Public Safety. My name is Léa Jean-François I am 18-years-old and a first year at Barnard College of Columbia University. Today, I represent the Young Women's Advisory Council at Girls for Gender Equity. Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) is a Brooklyn-based coalition-building and youth development organization that acts as a catalyst for change to improve gender and race relations and socio-economic conditions for our most vulnerable youth and communities of color.

Through challenging structural forces that work to obstruct the freedom, full expression, and rights of cis and trans young women of color and gender non-conforming youth of color, we are committed to ensuring the rights of sexual assault and gender-based violence survivors while also ensuring police accountability.

Women of color experience higher rates of sexual violence than their white counterparts and it has been well-documented that trans and cis Black women, girls, & gender non-conforming (GNC) people are disproportionately criminalized for self-defense. After experiencing sexual abuse for multiple years I decided to go to the NYPD when I was fourteen. I walked up to an officer on the sidewalk in midtown and asked where should I go to report this, and was told by one officer that if I do not share in detail to him everything that happened there was no point in going to the NYPD – he did not help me.

Then later during the school year while I was at Curtis High School, which is a highly policed inner city public school, I gained enough confidence to reach out to one of the NYPD officers



that was in the school. I was told to figure something out or talk to my parents and then the officer told me to go to class. **A move to expand the number of Special Victims Division detectives must be couched in a broader commitment from the New York Police Department to *prioritize* sexual and gender-based violence.**

There is also little to no transparency or accountability for NYPD officers who commit sex crimes. Who are survivors supposed to go to when the person who has hurt them is an NYPD officer? The lack of responsiveness from patrol officers and the downgrading of cases or refusal to send cases to the Special Victims Division is an opportunity to call for greater NYPD transparency and accountability for officers who harm people in communities. Funding for proposed trainings should come from reallocating funds within the New York Police Department (NYPD), **not by securing more** funds for the agency. Increasing resourcing to an agency with a budget of \$5.57 billion dollar agency has not demonstrated evidence of increased safety for women & people of TGNC experience and/or communities of color.

The report from the Office of Inspector General, An Investigation of NYPD's Special Victims Division - Adult Sex Crimes, demonstrates that there is a lack of leadership and commitment to taking sexual assault seriously in the New York Police Department and we ask you to please help change that so we can grow up safely in our communities.