

October 12, 2023

Mayor Eric Adams
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

NYPD Commissioner Edward Caban
1 Police Plaza
New York, NY 10038

Re: Discipline of officers who killed Kawaski Trawick

Dear Mayor Adams and Commissioner Caban,

As family members of New Yorkers killed by the NYPD and local and national organizations who work for the safety and well-being of diverse communities, we're concerned by recent news that an NYPD [deputy commissioner drafted a recommendation for Commissioner Caban to dismiss discipline charges against both Officers Brendan Thompson and Herbert Davis](#) for their killing of Kawaski Trawick, a Black gay man who was cooking at home when he was killed. We're concerned that this may reflect what seems to be an ongoing pattern under the current administration to downgrade discipline for serious police misconduct and weaken the NYPD disciplinary process.

It's been over four years since Officers Thompson and Davis broke the chain on Kawaski Trawick's door, refused to answer why they were in his home, tased, shot and killed him – in a matter of [112 seconds](#). Neither officer attempted to provide aid. In fact, at one point, Davis held the door shut while Mr. Trawick bled out on the other side.

The 17 families of New Yorkers killed by police and 53 organizations sending this letter stand with the Trawick family to call on you to fire both Officers Thompson and Davis. Thompson & Davis' misconduct created a crisis where there was none¹. Their unnecessary escalation of that crisis and violation of their training and Patrol Guide procedures resulted in the unwarranted death of Mr. Trawick.

We also support Mrs. & Mr. Trawick's request to meet with Mayor Adams before a final disciplinary decision is made. The Trawicks have repeatedly shared their dismay that the Mayor has never said their son's name in public – in spite of the Thompson/Davis discipline proceeding being the highest profile administrative trial during the current administration. We're concerned that the Trawicks have never heard from the Mayor or received acknowledgment from the administration of a letter they hand-delivered with elected officials for the Mayor at the conclusion of the discipline trial in May (*enclosed with this letter*). In light of Mayor Adams' statement last week that ["This is the first time that I'm learning that there was a delay in turning over video,"](#) we believe **the Trawicks and their team should have the opportunity to fully brief the Mayor on the four years of NYPD obstruction and delays the Trawicks and New Yorkers have had to endure – before Commissioner Caban makes a final discipline decision.** As [James Blake, wrote in the Daily News](#), *"That doesn't seem like too much to ask"*.

¹ Mr. Trawick had been locked out of his apartment. FDNY let Mr. Trawick back into his apartment without incident, not even mentioning that he had a knife in their internal report. Thompson and Davis created a crisis when they arrived at Mr. Trawick's apartment, while he was cooking.

The possibility that Officers Thompson & Davis may face zero disciplinary consequences for their killing of Kawaski Trawick is wrong and sends the message that when NYPD officers kill New Yorkers and when the NYPD delays and obstructs investigations, the NYPD and officers who engage in misconduct will be shielded from consequences for wrongdoing. This is not only bad policy – it promotes the dangerous and anti-democratic idea that the NYPD should be allowed to operate with impunity and will not be held accountable.

The list of delays and obstruction by the NYPD since 2019 related to Kawaski Trawick is too long to list here, but includes:

- Obstructing the CCRB investigation by refusing to turn over body camera footage to CCRB for 21 months (until January 2021).
- [Illegally refusing to release full footage of the killing until ordered to by a judge, and then being fined over \\$80,000 for the delay](#). Footage revealed that when a sergeant arrived and asked who was injured, officers responded “[Nobody. Just a perp](#)”.
- Running a faulty investigation designed to shield officers from discipline. [Files from the NYPD Force Investigation Division \(FID\) investigation reveal that Thompson and Davis were interviewed for less than 30 minutes each](#). They were asked about the weather -- but not about the video, why they violated their training and NYPD procedure, false statements, or when their statements contradicted each other or the video.
- [Splitting the discipline trial and changing the dates just weeks before the start date](#), to accommodate vacation plans of the FID head who wanted to testify for the officers – in spite of the fact that the dates had been scheduled since fall of 2022. At the pre-trial hearing where this was decided, it was also revealed that the NYPD had still not turned over all evidence to CCRB.
- On the 4 year anniversary of the killing of Kawaski, and just a week before the trial was scheduled to start, NYPD Deputy Commissioner Maldonado improperly attempted to dismiss the illegal entry misconduct charges against both officers. [50 city and state elected officials rapidly responded to denounce this miscarriage of justice & request that the charges be heard during the discipline proceeding as planned](#). While the CCRB was able to present on this charge during the trial, the DCT omitted all relevant evidence and argument from her draft report, referring only to her prior improper pre-trial dismissal – as if it had never happened.
- On the last day of testimony, the DCT took the extraordinary step of trying to cancel oral closing summations, after the trial started to expose wrongdoing not only of Thompson and Davis but also the NYPD investigation – even though she had stated weeks prior that both oral and written summations would proceed.

The latest move to try to cancel any discipline for Officers Thompson and Davis is wrong. **We urge you to reject any such recommendation and move to fire Thompson and Davis swiftly**, without “good guy letters”.

Given the significant misconduct by Thompson, Davis and the NYPD related to this case, we urge Mayor Adams to meet with the Trawicks and their team as requested – before a final discipline decision is made.

We would appreciate acknowledgment of this letter. Arrangements for the Mayor to meet with the Trawicks and their team should be made through the Justice Committee.

Sincerely,

Darlene Armstead, sister of **Clifford Glover** (killed by NYPD in 1978)
Hawa Bah, mother of **Mohamed Bah** (killed by NYPD in 2012)
Iris & Mercy Baez, mother and cousin of **Anthony Baez** (killed by NYPD in 1994)
Valerie Bell, mother of **Sean Bell** (killed by NYPD in 2006)
Victor Dempsey, brother of **Delrawn Small** (killed by NYPD in 2016)
Natasha Duncan & Angie Hicks, sister and aunt of **Shantel Davis** (killed by NYPD in 2012)
Samy Feliz, brother of **Allan Feliz** killed by NYPD in 2019
Gwen Carr & Elisha Garner, mother & sister of **Eric Garner** (killed by NYPD in 2014)
Carol Gray, mother of **Kimani Gray** (killed by NYPD in 2013)
Joyce Huang, sister of **Yong Xin Huang** (killed by NYPD in 1995)
Constance Malcolm, mother of **Ramarley Graham** (killed by NYPD in 2012)
Nancy Pacheco, sister-in-law of **Jayson Tirado** (killed by NYPD in 2007)
Hertencia Petersen, aunt of **Akai Gurley** (killed by NYPD in 2014)
Margarita Rosario, mother of **Anthony Rosario** & aunt of **Hilton Vega** (killed by NYPD in 1995)
Eric Vassell, father of **Saheed Vassell** (killed by NYPD in 2018)
Shawn & Gladys Williams, father & stepmother of **Antonio Williams** (killed by NYPD in 2019)

Justice Committee	EngageWell IPA
Communities United for Police Reform	Equality for Flatbush
Housing Works	Freedom Agenda
VOCAL-NY	Future of Tomorrow
Make the Road NY	Gathering for Justice/Justice League NYC
New York City Anti-Violence Project	The Human Rights Campaign
El Puente	Jews for Racial and Economic Justice
Audre Lorde Project	Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club
Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC	Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice
5 Borough Defenders	Lambda Independent Democrats of Brooklyn
Alliance for Quality Education	Legal Action Center
Arab American Association of New York	Legal Aid Society
Black Jewish Liberation Collective (BJLC)	Malcolm X Grassroots Movement
Brooklyn Anti-Gentrification Network	Mekong NYC
CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities	Middle Church
Caribbean Equality Project	Mothers on the Move
Center for Anti-Violence Education	National Alliance on Mental Illness of New York City
Center for Constitutional Rights	New Kings Democrats
Center for Popular Democracy	New Pride Agenda
Citizen Action of New York	Nodutdol
Color Of Change	Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition
Community Access	Public Science Project
Community for a Cause	Surveillance Resistance Lab
Community Voices Heard	Transgender Law Center
Defending Rights & Dissent	Urban Youth Collaborative
Drug Policy Alliance	Youth Represent
DRUM - Desis Rising Up & Moving	

cc: NYC Public Advocate Jumaane Williams
NYC Council Speaker Adrienne Adams
CCRB Chair Arva Rice; CCRB ED Jonathan Darche
Deputy Mayor for Public Safety Phil Banks

Enclosure: Mrs. & Mr. Trawicks' letter to Mayor Adams from May 15, 2023 (Hand-delivered and emailed to City Hall after conclusion of Thompson/Davis discipline trial)

May 15, 2023

Mayor Eric Adams
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Adams:

We write to you in your capacity as Mayor of New York City - but also as a Black parent and a human – to urge you to make sure NYPD Officers Brendan Thompson and Herbert Davis are fired as soon as possible for their heinous and unjustifiable murder of our son, Kawaski Trawick.

Yesterday was the fifth Mothers Day we've spent without our son. We spent it in New York City – not to visit and watch our son dance as we had talked with him about doing, but because of one of too many NYPD roadblocks and delays. We had to take time off work to travel here from Georgia for the second time in a month, for the discipline trial that the NYPD interrupted with a two-week break to accommodate the vacation schedule of the former NYPD FID head, Kevin Maloney (who decided to take vacation during the original trial dates that had been set since last year!).

Last week you mentioned your son when you spoke about Jordan Neely. Since you've been Mayor, we've never heard you say Kawaski's name in public.

We don't know if you've ever watched the terrible video where Kawaski was killed by Thompson and Davis because we've never heard you comment on it. We don't know if you've asked to be briefed or what you think about the discipline trial of Thompson and Davis that just ended that revealed some of the cover-up and wrongdoing, or if you know about the four years of cover-ups, delays and roadblocks by the NYPD and others under two mayoral administrations and three police commissioners since our son was killed on April 14, 2019.

We need you to watch the video of Thompson and Davis' murder of our son – and we need you to imagine that that was your son, cooking in his apartment to music before he was tased and shot in less than two minutes, without ever getting an answer to his reasonable question "why are you in my home?". The video shows, plain and simple, that Thompson and Davis created and escalated a crisis when there was none, and unjustifiably killed Kawaski in less than two minutes.

We need you to listen to the FID interviews with Thompson and Davis. It'll show you how much of a sham the NYPD's "investigation" was. As revealed by mediaⁱⁱ last week, Thompson and Davis were only interviewed for about 30 minutes each – on face it's impossible those interviews were thorough. They were asked about the weather and at times were led to certain answers by investigators - but they weren't asked about the video, or why they took

actions that escalated and went against NYPD training and procedure, or about the times their testimony contradicted the video or each other. Thompson wasn't asked why he tased Kawaski even though Kawaski wasn't a threat and his partner, more senior, told him not to. There were no follow-up interviews with them to investigate inconsistencies, even though it took the NYPD close to two years to finish their sham "investigation".

During the trial, Davis admitted that Thompson shouldn't have tased or shot Kawaski. And then, after Thompson's police union lawyer called for a break, Davis came back and tried to say he couldn't say for sure that it was a mistake that Thompson shot Kawaski. When asked what made him change his mind during the break, he told the unbelievable lie that over the past four years, he had never considered whether it was wrong to shoot Kawaski.

The trial made it even more clear that these officers should be fired but we don't have faith in the NYPD to be fair. We expect that they'll want to continue their cover-up, and sweep this case under the rug, just like when they refused to release the full video for 20 months until a judge ordered them to release it. The cover-up attempts continued in the trial, including on the night before the last day, when the NYPD judge took the extraordinary step of trying to block oral summations, after the trial had started to expose wrongdoing not only of Thompson and Davis but also the NYPD investigation – even though she had said that both oral and written summations would happen weeks ago.

Kawaski was our son and he was loving and kind. He was just cooking in his apartment when Thompson and Davis used a baton to break the chain holding his door, tased him when he asked why they were in his home, then shot at him four times – all in 112 seconds. They didn't check on him or try to save his life, they let him bleed out and die. Thompson and Davis created an unnecessary crisis and escalated it, disregarding NYPD training and procedures. Thompson and Davis are a danger to New Yorkers and should be fired.

We sat through lies about Kawaski in the discipline trial, with the cops' white lawyers saying that Kawaski was "angry" even though the video shows he was calm until he was tased out of nowhere. As Black parents, we all know what it means when our children are framed as "angry" by police – it's racist license to brutalize and kill them.

The disrespect and insensitivity shown to my family over these years by the NYPD and parts of NYC government has been terrible, but we want to make clear that we're not asking for your condolences four years later. We're asking for you to act in your capacity as Mayor to correct what has been wrong, end the cover-up and obstruction - and ensure that Thompson and Davis are fired within the coming weeks. We're demanding that you not make us wait months or over a year after the trial the way Deborah Danner's familyⁱⁱⁱ has been forced to wait.

When five officers were fired and arrested within weeks after killing Tyre Nichols – even before the video was released - you commended the Memphis Mayor and police for acting "quickly and decisively"^{iv}. We know you weren't Mayor when our son was killed, but you're the Mayor now and we need you to act quickly and decisively to fire Thompson and Davis to make clear that the life of our Black, gay son mattered and to ensure the safety of New Yorkers.

You have often talked about transparency so we ask that you instruct the NYPD to notify us through our representative at the Justice Committee, of when the NYPD trial judge submits her recommendation report and also when Commissioner Sewell makes her decision. We also ask that you make the NYPD trial judge's recommendation report public as soon as it is submitted.

We are requesting that you not allow any more delays and that you ensure that Brendan Thompson and Herbert Davis are fired as soon as possible, with transparency and without any more cover-up or obstruction by the NYPD,

the police union or your administration. The only fair outcome is for Thompson and Davis to be fired, without good guy letters and without the NYPD and administration covering for them.

Sincerely,

Ellen and Rickie Trawick, parents of Kawaski Trawick

cc:

NYPD Commissioner Keechant Sewell

Deputy Mayor Philip Banks

CCRB Board Chair Arva Rice and Executive Director Jonathan Darche

Public Advocate Jumaane Williams

City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams

ⁱ “Trial extension granted for NYPD officers allegedly responsible for man’s death”, April 4, 2023:

<https://bronx.news12.com/trial-extension-granted-for-nypd-officers-allegedly-responsible-for-mans-death>

ⁱⁱ ProPublica, “Video Showed an Officer Trying to Stop His Partner From Killing a Man. Now We Know Police Investigators Never Even Asked About the Footage”, May 11, 2023:

<https://www.propublica.org/article/nypd-kawaski-trawick-killing-investigation-questions>

ⁱⁱⁱ New York Times, “A Year Later, Trial of Officer Who Killed Mentally Ill Woman Is in Limbo”, January 18, 2023:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/18/nyregion/nypd-officer-trial-danner.html>

^{iv} Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Delivers Live Address in Anticipation of Video Release Expected to Depict Violent Interaction Between Tyre Nichols and Memphis Police, January 27, 2023: <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/074-23/transcript-mayor-eric-adams-delivers-live-address-anticipation-video-release-expected-to>