

On the Attack on Robert Cuffy at the Mass March to Defund the NYPD

July 6, 2020



Statement of Solidarity, Call for Information Accountability and Action

Foley Square, New York, NY, 8:55 pm -

While leading Monday June 29th's Mass March to Defund the NYPD & Abolish the Police from Washington Square to Foley Square, Robert Cuffy was filming the march when he was **blindsided and tackled by an unidentified man who then slammed Robert into another car**, dislocating his shoulder. Prior to this moment Robert was straining his voice by calling out to marchers "**We're going to City Hall!**" but he was not able to continue due to the severity of his injuries.

Police nearby observed the assault, and joked with the attacker before walking him to the Foley Square subway station, where they **released the attacker without charges**. The NYPD didn't even document the attacker's identifying information.

Robert is a well-known revolutionary socialist in NYC, and an effective organizer for Black Liberation. He is a member of the DSA Afrosocialist Caucus, a leader of the NYC Fight for Our Lives Coalition (which is part of People's Strike, a National coalition organized by Cooperation Jackson), and a founder of the Socialist Workers Alliance of Guyana. He is also a leader of the DSA Labor Branch. This made him a target.

Robert was put into an ambulance, and was told that he would be taken to New York Presbyterian. **Instead, he was driven a few blocks away where Robert waited over an hour inside the ambulance**, which did not budge from its location at Spruce and Nassau Streets. Fearing for his own safety, Robert texted marchers to gather at the intersection for support and to enforce transparency. Robert was provided no pain control for his injury. This punitive and callous treatment of Black patients, especially of movement fighters, is all too common.

Robert had every reason to be afraid that medical neglect or overt violence at the hands of police could be life-threatening; from Ferguson to Baltimore to here in New York, incidents like this have ended with the deaths of far too many Black Liberation activists and of other working class people of color. Even when treatment is provided, individual EMTs who are aligned with police will often take

activists and other Black patients past the closest hospitals, going out of their way to drop them off at the most overcrowded, underfunded, and dangerous facilities, as a particularly isolating and potentially lethal form of racist abuse and punishment. Robert was lucky to have a caring EMT named Nancy who kept him safe and even got Robert a blanket upon his request after arriving at the hospital

On the short ride to the hospital, his fear, horrifyingly, began to come true; he had been left without a seatbelt and was nearly subjected to a “rough ride” of the kind that notoriously ended the life of Freddie Gray in the back of an ambulance in 2015. Without the use of his arm, Robert (just as Gray, handcuffed) wouldn’t be able to physically protect himself from being slammed into hard, sharp metal surfaces inside the vehicle.

By responding **quickly and collectively**, activists can protect ourselves and each other from this treatment by disrupting that isolation. When dozens of supporters mobilized and gathered outside the ambulance, **the police were forced to take a statement from Robert, rather than ignore the attack, or worse—spuriously charge Robert**, potentially making good on the continued threats spewed by his attacker immediately after the assault. That collective support gave force to Robert’s demand that his seatbelt be buckled.

Too often, and for too long, Black victims of violence have been routinely subjected to exactly this sort of **revictimization by cops** and vigilantes, even in death. It is impossible to forget that Trayvon Martin was branded a “thug” by his killer, or that Mike Brown, described there as “no angel,” was blamed for his own murder in the press.

The ambulance eventually transported him around the block to the hospital where his partner, mother, and other comrades were waiting for him. NYC Fight For Our Lives Coalition, Peoples Strike, and the DSA are **SEEKING FOOTAGE AND DOCUMENTATION** of the attack, the attacker, the license plate of his car, cars parked in that location, the ambulance, and its driver/EMT, as well as badge numbers and identification of the police involved. Any information, including **witness statements**, may be useful.

The attack on Robert Cuffy was not an isolated incident. **Police and far-right vigilantes are threatening coordinated attacks** on protestors, particularly as the calendar nears **July 4**. As the **#GeorgeFloyd Uprising** continues to flourish, and as protests and rallies nationwide call to **defund, dismantle, and disarm police**, law enforcement and their backers have been stoking the fascist fire, encouraging lone-wolf attacks to terrorize supporters of the fight against police brutality.

This is a reminder that the movement will need to increase security measures and step up our game. We have to collectively prevent further attacks and protect ourselves as the movement grows, continues to win reforms, and pick up steam. Go out into the streets with your friends and comrades, use the buddy system, and coordinate security to protect the movement’s leaders as we continue this rebellion. **Remember that we are all leaders in the fight to get free.**

We call on the NYPD to identify and to immediately fire and hold accountable the officers who not only ignored this attack, but aided the attacker.

If you have any **relevant information**, or to connect with and support the work that Robert has dedicated himself to, **contact NYC Fight For Our Lives Coalition at:**

Phone: (347) 433-8652

Email: GeneralStrikeNYC2020@gmail.com

Twitter: @fight_nyc

Instagram: @fightforourlivesnyc

Hashtags:

#FireAndThunder
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#FireFranciscoGarcia
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Organization Endorsers in Solidarity:

NYC Fight For Our Lives Coalition

Peoples Strike

DSA Afrosocialist Caucus

Socialist Workers Alliance of Guyana

Cooperation Jackson

Red Bloom Communist Collective

Amazonians United NYC

Spectre

Emerge Caucus, DSA

DSA Racial Justice Working Group

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Resistance Studies Initiative

Socialist Resurgence

The Abolition Collective

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Locust Review

Social Service Workers Uprising Now

Denver Communists

Communist Party of New York

Twin Cities DSA

Resistance in Brooklyn

The Abolition Collective

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SENS-UAW

Sixth Street Community Center

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Organizations in Solidarity

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