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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

The Exoneration Project, Legal Aid and Others Call for Commitments from Manhattan District Attorney Candidates to Overturn Convictions Once in Office on Cases Where Corrupt NYPD Officers Played an “Essential Role”

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Exoneration Project, The Legal Aid Society, The Bronx Defenders, Brooklyn Defender Services, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, New York County Defender Services, Queens Defenders, The Office of the Appellate Defender, The Center for Appellate Litigation, Appellate Advocates, the Innocence Project, and the Exoneration Initiative, in a [recently issued letter](#), [called](#) on New York County District Attorney candidates, once in office, to commit to vacating convictions in cases where the purported evidence of guilt was obtained or produced by corrupt New York City Police Department (NYPD) officers - i.e., those convicted of crimes in connection with their law enforcement duties. The People’s Coalition for Manhattan DA Accountability - an expansive group of advocacy organizations, grassroots-led networks, and legal aid providers - also echoed this call.

Last week, the same coalition [urged](#) New York City’s District Attorneys to [vacate problematic convictions](#) in cases where 22 corrupt New York City Police Department (NYPD) officers played an “essential role”

Last month, the District Attorneys in New York, Kings and the Bronx counties [vacated or announced plans to vacate convictions](#) in cases that rested largely on the account of former NYPD Detective Joseph E. Franco, who is currently facing perjury charges in Manhattan for framing innocent New Yorkers.

The letter requests the next New York County District Attorney to commit to:

- vacate convictions in which the NYPD officers identified by defenders and innocence organizations on May 3, 2020 (the "Officers") played an "essential role";
- conduct a full, transparent review with the participation of the convicted person and their counsel of all cases involving the Officers where the Officers did not play an "essential role";
- vacate convictions whenever an NYPD officer is convicted of crimes relating to their duties in which they played an "essential role" and conduct a full, transparent review with the participation of the convicted person and their counsel;
- Conduct a full, transparent review with the participation of the convicted person and their counsel for all cases involving any other NYPD officer who has been deemed incredible, including those on any Brady/Giglio/"Do Not Call" list.

The candidates who [signed](#) this pledge include: Eliza Orlins, Diana Florence, Lucy Lang, Alvin Bragg, Tahanie Aboushi and Dan Quart.

Tali Farhadian Weinstein instead responded with the following letter: <https://tinyurl.com/8aa7drfd>

Liz Crotty did not respond.

The letter states:

As candidates seeking the office of the Manhattan District Attorney, you have committed to increasing transparency about and accountability for police officers who break the law, engage in misconduct, or otherwise abuse the public trust. Many of you have detailed initiatives that you will institute, if elected, to address police misconduct and abuse. In advance of the upcoming primary election, we write to ask you to make specific commitments about how you will handle criminal cases and convictions obtained by police officers who have been convicted of crimes relating to their duties, are found to have committed serious misconduct, or who have otherwise been deemed not credible (including those on Brady, Giglio, or “Do Not Call” lists).

The public has made clear that transparency about and accountability for police misconduct and abuse is of the utmost importance. Voters deserve to know prior to June 22, 2021 exactly how the next Manhattan District Attorney will handle convictions obtained by police officers who commit crimes in connection with their duties, engage in serious misconduct or abuse, or are otherwise incredible. We invite you to sign this pledge in order to give voters this important information.

“Voters care deeply about how the next Manhattan District Attorney will deal with police officers who break the law or otherwise commit serious misconduct - and how they will treat the victims of such corrupt officers. This pledge provides voters with the clarity they need to make informed decisions at the ballot, and to hold the next Manhattan District Attorney accountable once elected,” said **Karen Newirth, Director of the Mass Exoneration Initiative at the Exoneration Project.**

“Manhattan’s next District Attorney must hold police officers accountable when they commit egregious acts of misconduct that upend our clients’ lives,” said **Tina Luongo, Attorney-In-Charge of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society.** “This is not only right and just, but it will help to shatter the culture of impunity that has thrived within the NYPD for decades. Manhattan residents deserve a DA who will no longer turn a blind eye to officers who abuse their power for personal gain.”

“Historically, officers that brutalize people, lie about an incident, falsify documents, or plant evidence have been protected by prosecutors. The next Manhattan DA has the opportunity to rectify these habitual injustices and repair public trust,” said **Rigodis Appling with The People’s Coalition for Manhattan DA Accountability.**

“The next Manhattan District Attorney has a responsibility to confront the reality of a police force that lies under oath with impunity. The same callousness and racism that allowed Officer Pantaleo to kill Eric Garner also enables Officer Franco’s lies to secure unjust convictions that destroy hundreds of New Yorkers’ lives,” said **Alice Fontier, Managing Director of Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem.** “Voters demand that their next DA root out the culture that enables both, which is why we call on all candidates to pledge their commitment to hold corrupt officers to account.”

“The next Manhattan District Attorney will inherit a litany of both current cases and prior convictions built on the word of officers who cannot be trusted,” said **Lisa Schreibersdorf, Executive Director of Brooklyn Defender Services.** “It is critical that any candidate for the office commit to ending the practice of protecting abusive members of the NYPD, and a critical step in this process is vacating convictions that have haunted the victims of discredited officers for far too long.”

“Make no mistake: Detective Franco is not just ‘one bad apple.’ Rather, as NYCDS and our clients have known for years, corruption, lies and abuse are not an anomaly within the NYPD,” said **Stan Germán, Executive Director of New York County Defender Services**. “The next Manhattan District Attorney must commit to taking a serious look at all the ‘Detective Francos’ within the ranks of the NYPD as well as the officers and detectives who turned a blind eye to criminal conduct. The District Attorney can start with the 22 officers we have identified and reevaluate each and every case that may have been tainted by police misconduct. This needs to be more than a campaign promise but an unwavering commitment to hold NYPD accountable if we have any chance at restoring integrity to the criminal legal system.”

Lori Zeno, Executive Director & Founder of Queens Defenders stated, “Queens Defenders stands with our city’s Defender organizations to demand Manhattan’s next District Attorney steadfastly commit to ensuring discredited officers are held accountable, the cases their testimony influenced are thoroughly and transparently investigated, and New Yorkers whose lives have been destroyed by wrongful convictions are expeditiously exonerated.”

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