

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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Contact:

Redmond Haskins
The Legal Aid Society
rhaskins@legal-aid.org
(929) 441-2384

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

Statement on District Attorney Melinda Katz Vacating Convictions in 60 Cases Where Corrupt NYPD Officers Played an “Essential Role”

Vacatur Come After Legal Aid, The Exoneration Project and Others Called on Local DAs to Take Immediate Action on These Problematic Convictions

(NEW YORK, NY) - Elizabeth Felber, Director of the Wrongful Conviction Unit at The Legal Aid Society, released the following statement on Queens County District Attorney Melinda Katz’s decision to vacate convictions in 60 cases where the purported evidence of guilt was obtained or produced by corrupt former and active New York City Police Department (NYPD) officers:

“Criminal convictions largely based on the work of corrupt former or active NYPD officers who engaged in misconduct while executing their duties flies in the face of the oaths officers take to protect and serve New Yorkers. This unconscionable and inexcusable behavior corrodes the public’s trust in law enforcement. It has also caused harm and hardship to real New Yorkers - several of whom were incarcerated based on the word of these corrupt officers.

The Legal Aid Society thanks District Attorney Melinda Katz and Bryce Benjet, Director of DA Katz’s Conviction Integrity Unit, for this decisive action today.

However, these reviews must be conducted with full transparency whenever District Attorneys become aware of egregious police misconduct, and all prosecutors must be willing to investigate these issues of misconduct within law enforcement, even in the absence of headlines or public pressure.

Lastly, we call on all of New York City’s District Attorneys to examine and consider for vacatur the cases where each of these officers played a major part.”

Background:

This past spring, Legal Aid - along with The Exoneration Project and other defender and civil rights organizations - [called](#) on local prosecutors to vacate convictions in cases where the purported evidence of guilt was obtained or produced by [22 corrupt former and active New York City Police Department \(NYPD\) officers](#).

Many of the same organizations also [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.

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For 145 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. www.legalaidnyc.org