

Call for Justice

A Response to New York Shootings

Background

Saturday, November 25, 2006, NY Police shot three men. Sean Bell, was killed. Joseph Guzman, 31, clings to life with eleven gun shot wounds. Trent Benefield, 23, was shot three times. Twenty-three year old Bell was to be married the same day. Instead of attending a wedding the devastated family attended his funeral.

The circumstances of the shootings are still under investigation. Undercover police at the scene claim Bell “grazed” one of the officers with his car, which constituted a deadly threat. Of the seven at the scene five of the officers responded with a barrage of fifty shots. One officer emptied two full magazines for a total of 31 shots. The two remaining officers did not shoot at all. Official New York police policy does not support this shooting, even if Bell’s car did graze the officer.

Many sectors of the community are calling for an independent investigation and the ouster of Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly. Mayor Bloomberg said that this incident appears to be excessive force by police, but will wait for the results of any investigation before passing judgment. A police officers’ group, One Hundred Blacks In Law Enforcement Who Care, said it would issue a vote of no confidence in commissioner Kelly following the shooting.

The community is devastated at the treatment of these unarmed men. Bell’s two daughters who were due to take part in their father’s wedding have now attended his funeral along with Bell’s fiancée, who is shaken beyond words.

Ways to get involved

- **Donate funds**—The families of these victims will need counseling and rehabilitation. Donations for an assistance fund can be sent to MCC East Coast: New York City Council of Mennonite Churches Peace-Building Fund, c/o MCC East Coast, 21 S. 12th Street, P.O. Box500, Akron, PA, 17501-0500 or donate on line at www.mcc.org/donate.

- **Sign a letter**—We can stand in solidarity with the victim’s families and the New York City Council of Mennonite Churches by signing and sending a letter originally sent to Mayor Bloomberg by the New York City Council of Mennonite Churches calling for an independent investigation. To download a cover letter and the letter to Mayor Bloomberg: Go to www.mennoniteusa.org/peace
- **Send sympathy cards**—Cards expressing sympathy to Sean Bell’s family and get well wishes for Trent Benefield and Joseph Guzman can be sent. Cards for Sean Bell can be sent to Community Church of Christ, 167-04 108th Avenue, Jamaica, NY, 11433. Cards for Trent Benefield and for Joseph Guzman can be sent to New York City Council of Mennonite Churches (address above). Also, cards and letters of encouragement can be sent to the police officers: Seventh Precinct, Club Enforcement Initiative, 19 ½ Pitt Street, N.Y. N.Y. 10002.

For further information, contact:

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