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In Response to Recent Report on NYPD Gang Database, G.A.N.G.S. Coalition Rallies to Abolish Harmful Policing Tool

Groups Call for City Council Passage of Intro. 798 to Eliminate the Database

(NEW YORK, NY) — The G.A.N.G.S. Coalition — alongside advocates, legal experts, elected officials, and directly impacted New Yorkers — held a press conference outside New York City Police Department (NYPD) headquarters to call for City Council passage of Intro. 798, which would abolish the Department’s Criminal Group Database, also known as the gang database. The rally follows a recent report issued by the New York City Department of Investigation’s Office of the Inspector General for the NYPD (OIG-NYPD), which reveals that the database continues to perpetuate racial profiling, lacks transparency, and operates without meaningful oversight or accountability.

The report found that while the NYPD has made only limited reforms since the OIG-NYPD 2023 review, the database still overwhelmingly targets Black and Latinx New Yorkers between the ages of 18 and 34.

As a result, young people of color continue to face disproportionate police surveillance and an increased risk of criminal legal system involvement.

As of this month, 8,563 people remain listed as “active,” and the database’s racially skewed demographics persist. The report found that the NYPD failed to notify any parents of minors added to the database, despite a policy requiring notification within 60 days; continues to allow officers partial access to sealed arrest records; and has yet to establish the mandated multilevel review process to verify or renew database entries.

The OIG-NYPD’s findings reveal widespread delays in review cycles, boilerplate justifications for labeling individuals as “gang-affiliated,” and programming errors that kept minors in the database years past required review dates. Even after the NYPD’s so-called reforms, 98% of listed individuals remain Black or Latino.

The report also issued 13 new recommendations, including enhanced training, routine audits, and documentation of all renewals — further evidence that the NYPD’s prior assurances of compliance were premature and incomplete.

Intro. 798, legislation currently pending before the New York City Council’s Committee on Public Safety, offers a concrete path toward ending the harms of gang policing. The bill would abolish the NYPD’s gang database and

prohibit the creation of any similar tracking system; require that individuals previously included be notified and granted access to their records; and mandate a public awareness campaign to ensure all New Yorkers understand their rights.

“At a time when ICE’s potential access to law enforcement data raises the risk levels for vulnerable communities, the Office of the Inspector General found that the NYPD’s gang database continues to inflict serious harm: relying on sealed, off-limits arrest information, failing to notify parents when adding minors despite a 2023 policy, allowing some people to remain in the database for years beyond their required review dates, and keeping minors listed because they turned eighteen before review,” **said Comptroller Brad Lander**. “These practices overwhelmingly affect Black and Latine New Yorkers and undermine fairness and public trust. A database that violates people’s legal rights and perpetuates systemic racial bias should be replaced with a more transparent and accountable approach once and for all.”

“New York's Gang Database is just the latest way our police system has figured out how to racially profile young Black and Brown men,” **said Assemblymember Emily Gallagher**. Inclusion on the database has nothing to do with crimes committed or even suspected.” You also do not see members of our state's white supremacist gangs on the database, which is 99% made up of Black and/or Latino men. Rather, inclusion is determined by a series of meaningless markers, including tattoos, colors worn, or neighborhoods frequented. In a moment when data from the database is being shared with ICE for detention and deportation without any due process, it is imperative that our city and state do away with these racist databases once and for all.”

“This report confirms what the clients we serve have long known: the NYPD’s gang database is a discriminatory dragnet that targets New Yorkers of color,” **said Anthony Posada, Supervising Attorney with the Community Justice Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “Black and Brown New Yorkers remain disproportionately surveilled and catalogued, proving the system is still broken and unconstitutional despite minor reforms. That’s why we’re calling on the City Council to pass Intro. 798 and permanently abolish this harmful database. True public safety cannot rely on tools that violate the rights and dignity of the very communities they claim to protect.”

“Members of Freedom Agenda know fully well how the Gang Database masquerades as a system for justice, but operates as a tool for criminalization,” **said Darren Mack, Co-Director at Freedom Agenda**. “Instead of surveilling, labeling, and targeting Black and Brown youth, we should be investing in them. End the Gang Database and redistribute those resources into the communities directly impacted by that system.”

“NDS calls on the City Council to pass Intro. 798 and abolish the NYPD’s Gang Database,” **said Piyali Basak, Managing Director of the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem**. “For far too long, the NYPD has used this database to justify the discriminatory surveillance of Black and Brown New Yorkers. That must end, now. The OIG report makes clear what has been true all along: no amount of internal oversight or reform can justify the database's continued existence. Council must pass legislation to abolish it for good.”

“The NYPD uses its ‘Criminal Group Database’ to racially profile and surveil young Black and Latine New Yorkers and justify aggressive and unlawful stops, frisks, and searches,” **said Talia Kamran, Attorney with Brooklyn Defenders’ Seizure and Surveillance Defense Project**. “Reforming the database will not make it less harmful: we urge the City Council to abolish the NYPD’s Gang Database by passing Intro. 798 immediately.”

“This report reaffirms that the NYPD has no interest in ending the racialized surveillance of thousands of Black and Brown New Yorkers. Today, just like yesterday and the past decade, the gang database contains deep racial disparities that encourage dangerous policing,” **said David Moss, JPP Counsel at the Legal Defense Fund’s Justice in Public Safety Project**. “The NYPD has repeatedly pretended to engage in piecemeal reforms that do nothing to address the numerous harms arising out of this surveillance and policing. We urge city council to pass Intro. 798 to finally abolish this database.”

“A database that is used to surveil 98% Black and Latinx youth without any evidence of any crime can only be understood as a tool of racial discrimination,” **said Jason Taper, Legal Fellow at the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (S.T.O.P.).** “Only the abolition of the NYPD Gang Database through passing Intro 798 will end the harms this racist surveillance causes.”

The G.A.N.G.S. Coalition includes Black Attorneys of Legal Aid, Brooklyn Defenders, Bronx Connect, Center for Justice Innovation, El Puente, Freedom Agenda, LatinoJustice PRLDEF, The Legal Aid Society, the Legal Defense Fund, Policing and Social Justice Project, Neighborhood Defender Services, Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (S.T.O.P.), We Build the Block, and Youth Represents.

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