

## Ryan Bing Testimony

Councilmembers and members of the public, thank you for reading my testimony regarding the events on and around 52nd Street on May 31, 2020.

My name is Ryan Bing. I am an English professor at Community College of Philadelphia, although I should say I am giving this testimony as an individual and not as a spokesperson for the college, and I live in West Philadelphia only a few blocks from 52nd Street.

When I decided to join the protests on Sunday, May 31, it was to stand in solidarity with my neighbors against racism, injustice, and police brutality. What happened that day was a massive police overresponse of indiscriminate and excessive force against my neighbors and me.

I left my house around 4:30pm that day. Just a few minutes later, I smelled tear gas for the first time that day and encountered several people coming from 52nd Street who were clearly suffering, presumably from having been tear-gassed by the police. Some of their eyes were red. Some of them had mucous streaming from their noses down and off their faces. Some were coughing and wincing, and at least one person called out in pain.

A short while later, I reached 52nd and Chestnut, where there was a police line across 52nd Street and a large number of people in the streets and on the sidewalks. Some people were protesting, and some people seemed to be merely observing everything that was going on. Some people were apparently looting the Foot Locker there and damaging an unoccupied police vehicle. However, I observed no violence against people and did not feel unsafe. I joined a group of protestors and was nonviolently protesting and observing the police.

About ten to fifteen minutes after I joined this group of protesters, at least two police officers in riot gear, without giving any warning or order to disperse, threw tear gas canisters into the crowd I was a part of. This crowd was predominantly people who appeared to be Black and included several people who appeared to be teenage children. As I and everyone in the area, except for the police, began moving quickly west on Chestnut away from the police, I was struck by what I believe to be a less-lethal munition, which caused me bruising and discomfort for two to three weeks afterwards. I also suffered the effects of the tear gas, and I saw several people in the crowd experience the painful effects of the tear gas.

As the group I was a part of attempted to flee the tear gas and less-lethal munitions, the police deployed a second volley of tear gas, even though the crowd was already moving west away from the police, the Foot Locker, and 52nd Street. In addition to the tear gas and less-lethal munitions used by police, social distancing due to Covid-19, which many people had maintained before the police became violent, broke down in the confusion and quick movement of the crowd after the police violence began. I also noticed that several police officers were not wearing masks or were not wearing them properly before and during this incident.

I now know what I experienced and witnessed was only one example of the police violence that occurred in my neighborhood that day. I am disappointed the police used violence

against me and violated my civil rights. But more than that, I am angry at the way the city and the police treated my neighbors that day. I am also angry at the way the city and the police have historically treated my neighbors.

As you know, the 52nd Street neighborhood is a historically Black neighborhood. And West Philadelphia has been the site of repeated police violence and abuse for decades, including the notorious MOVE bombing by police and the subsequent fire that destroyed 65 houses, as well as many, many other smaller-scale but still unacceptable instances of police abuse and brutality against Black people, people of color, and members of other marginalized groups.

The racist police violence and over-policing needs to end. The city needs to address this immediately before anyone else is killed or injured. Organizations such as the NAACP, The Movement For Black Lives, Black Philly Radical Collective, Amistad Law Project, The Marshall Project, the ACLU, and others offer significant resources and information regarding police reform, criminal justice reform, or police abolition that I believe could serve as a valuable foundation as we decide as a city how to end police brutality and racism and invest in the things that make a city safer: health, education, community, shared prosperity, and justice.

Thank you.