



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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Delores Rubin
Chair

Jesse R. Bodine
District Manager

April 13, 2017

Cyrus R. Vance, Jr.
NYC District Attorney
One Hogan Place
New York, NY 10013

James O'Neill
Commissioner
New York City Police Department
One Police Plaza
New York, NY 10007

Re White Supremacist Assassination of Timothy Caughman
March 20, 2017 — 36th Street and Ninth Avenue, Manhattan

Dear District Attorney Vance and Commissioner O'Neill:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) is profoundly grateful to the District Attorney and the New York Police Commissioner for the seriousness with which your offices have addressed the assassination two weeks ago of a resident of our community, Mr. Timothy Caughman, and for the swift arrest and indictment of the alleged perpetrator, James Harris Jackson.

Mr. Caughman was stabbed in his chest with a 26-inch sword with an 18-inch blade at 11:15 p.m. on March 20th at the corner of West 36th Street and Ninth Avenue allegedly by Mr. Jackson, an admitted white supremacist. Mr. Jackson had traveled from Baltimore, Maryland, specifically, according to reports, "to kill black people in a place where he thought the act would get greater media attention."

Mr. Jackson "acted on his plan," according to District Attorney Vance, "randomly selecting a beloved New Yorker solely on the basis of his skin color, and stabbing him repeatedly and publicly on a midtown street corner."

In the wake of this heinous murder, MCB4 needs to know what strategies are in place or will be implemented to prevent future acts of terror in our community.

Murder As An Act of Terror

Mr. Caughman managed to stagger to the Midtown South Precinct House and was rushed to Bellevue Hospital, where he died from his wounds. Mr. Jackson, who was videoed running from the scene with the weapon, turned himself in two days later to the same precinct house where a uniformed station officer recognized him from a wanted flyer.

After Mr. Jackson's arrest, a grand jury upgraded the charges against him to murder as an act of terror in the first- and second-degree and second-degree murder as a hate crime. At his indictment, District Attorney Vance stated: "James Jackson prowled the streets of New York for three days in search of a black person to assassinate in order to launch a campaign of terrorism against our Manhattan community."

Mayor DeBlasio characterized the murder as, "More than an unspeakable human tragedy, this is an assault on what makes this the greatest city in the world: our inclusiveness and our diversity."

It was indeed an assault on our values of inclusiveness and diversity. But we must not lose sight of the fact that it was an attack on an innocent individual. *Mr Caughman was assassinated because he was black. He was executed on a public sidewalk by a self-avowed white supremacist who came to our community not to attack values, but to kill black men.*

Terror Watch List for Avowed White Supremacists?

According to press reports, Mr. Jackson told police he was a member of a white supremacist group in Maryland. Reportedly, he subscribed to a number of neo-Nazi, anti-feminist, anti-semitic, white nationalist and far-right conspiracy theory channels on YouTube and was a visitor to the website Daily Stormer — a website frequently visited by the white supremacist Dylann Roof, convicted of murdering nine black parishioners in Charleston, South Carolina, in hopes of starting a "race war."¹

Apparently, Mr. Jackson said he carried out the attack to "send a message" and claims he has written a racist manifesto. (Dylann Roof said in his manifesto that he was radicalized by far-right white supremacist websites.)

In light of Mr. Jackson's alleged affiliation, subscriptions, claims, the Board would like to know: are white supremacists on the Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB)² or other terrorist watch lists?

¹ According to one online report (which we do not claim to verify), Mr. Jackson subscribed to the channel for the National Policy Institute and *Radix*. The former is the white supremacist organization founded by neo-Nazi Richard Spencer (who led a "Hail Trump" chant at a white supremacist conference last year). *Radix* is the fascist journal Spencer publishes. Openly neo-Nazi channels Jackson subscribed to include Cybernazi, Politically Incorrect and Esoteric Truths. Mr. Jackson did not upload any videos onto his channel, but he did recently favorite racist videos, including two titled, "Is It Time For Whites To Start Voicing Their Displeasure With Black On White Crimes?" and "Blacks Know That Blacks Are Violent So Why Does The White Media Pretend They Are Not?"

² The TSDB database is a consolidated database of information about people known or "reasonably suspected" of being involved in terrorist activity. Maintained by the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center, the list is a counterterrorism tool that helps government agencies identify known or suspected terrorists who are trying to get visas, enter the

MCB4 fully understands, and strongly supports the stricture that people are not added to the TSDB based solely on ethnicity, national origin, race, religious affiliation or civilities related to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which protects freedom of speech.

At the same time, however, we know that white supremacists who visit racist websites are carrying out racist murder and terrorist acts in this country, and now in our community. Should they qualify for inclusion on the TSDB or one the subset lists?³ •3 And, if so, can they be monitored?

MCB4 is second to none in its praise and gratitude to the men and women of the NYPD and the DA's office for their extraordinary efforts to keep the City and our midtown community safe from terrorist attack since 9/11. While we fully understand that counterterrorism strategies often cannot be discussed in public, the nature of this crime, the background of the alleged killer, and the charge of terrorism in the first degree raises deep concerns for the safety of the citizens of our district.

Apparently Mr. Jackson traveled by Bolt Bus from Baltimore to New York with the stated purpose, according to the the District Attorney's office, to kill as many black men as possible.

Manhattan Community District 4, in midtown Manhattan, is easily accessible by car through the Lincoln Tunnel, by train to Penn Station, by bus to the Port Authority Bus Terminal, and by bus companies such as Bolt which unload passengers on our streets.

What strategies are in place to prevent further terrorist attacks by white supremacists targeting midtown Manhattan?

Trump Administration Must Respond

Clearly, the assassination of Mr. Caughman was a politically motivated act performed to advertise an ideology, through both the media and a manifesto, and to send a message of terror. Had Mr. Jackson been a Muslim terrorist who assassinated a man on the sidewalk at 36th Street and Ninth Avenue, we have no doubt there would have been a swift reaction from Washington.

But when the racist murder of Mr. Caughman was brought up at a White House press conference, Sean Spicer, the White House spokesman, refused to address it specifically, instead saying there had been "a rush to judgment in a lot of other cases," specifically anti-semitic attacks, where people had demanded that President Trump condemn the violence. And later, according to Mr. Spicer, people had learned that the attacks were not perpetrated by "people on the right."

United States, board aircraft or engage in other suspicious activity. It connects law enforcement agencies, homeland security, intelligence communities and select international partners.

³ The TDSB is a consolidation of multiple smaller subsets of the watchlist, including the Department of Homeland Security's No Fly and Selectee list, which allows the selection of passengers for additional inspection at airports. Other lists are the Department of Justice's Violent Gang and Terrorist Organization File and the Interpol Terrorism Watchlist.

As of yet, the White House has not publicly characterized and condemned the murder of Mr. Caughman as a white supremacist hate crime and terrorist act. This lack of condemnation sends the wrong message. And may, we fear, embolden others.

We are grateful for the strong condemnation from the DA's office and from the NYPD for calling the crime for what it was: a terrorist act and a hate crime. We urge you to use your good offices to try to convince the current administration to do likewise.

We are also grateful for District Attorney Vance's moving statement about the alleged killer:

"He chose Midtown as his crime scene because Manhattan is the media capital of the world, and a place where people of different races live together and love one another. We must never take for granted New York's remarkable diversity. We must celebrate it, protect it, and refuse to let violence and hate undermine the progress we have made as a city, a state, and a nation."

We must also find ways to prevent assassinations of innocent people on the sidewalks of our midtown community by violent extremists of all stripes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Delores Rubin", is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Delores Rubin
Chair

cc: U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator Chuck Shumer
Congressman Jerrold Nadler
Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
State Senator Brad Hoylman
State Representative Linda Rosenthal
State Representative Richard Gottfried
NYC Councilmember Corey Johnson