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# The New York Times

## Queens Shooting Case Exposes Rifts in Black Officers' Groups



Chang W. Lee/The New York Times

Detective Marc Cooper, center, after his acquittal in the killing of Sean Bell. Some black officers have criticized the verdict.

By UMAR CHEEMA

Published: May 10, 2008

Detective [Marc Cooper](#) spared no gratitude after his acquittal in the [Sean Bell](#) shooting, using a news conference to thank the Lord, his lawyers, his family, his union and Victor Swinton, the president of the Guardians Association, a fraternal organization for black police officers formed more than 60 years ago.

But Detective Cooper's lawyer added that others had not been so kind. Detective Cooper "felt betrayed by the African-American community," the lawyer, Paul P. Martin, said in an interview later, adding that "several African-American police organizations did not support him."

The fatal shooting of Mr. Bell by undercover detectives in Queens, and the trial that resulted, exposed deep divisions in the city, perhaps nowhere more than in the groups that speak for black police officers. While the two men who were wounded in the shooting are black, as was Mr. Bell, so are Detective Cooper and one of the two other indicted detectives.

Detective Cooper was acquitted of reckless endangerment, and the others, [Gescard F. Isnora](#) and [Michael Oliver](#), were found not guilty of manslaughter after a State Supreme Court judge ruled that the prosecution had not proved the men were unjustified in shooting.

While the head of the Guardians Association supported Detective Cooper, the Grand Council of Guardians, an umbrella group for black officers working in several law enforcement departments, including correction and parole officers, denounced the outcome.

“The Grand Council of Guardians believes that the Queens district attorney’s office presented a weak case,” said Charles B. Billups, the president of the Grand Council, adding that the state should create a special prosecutor’s office for cases like this.

Another group, 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care, was repeatedly critical of the shooting and the outcome of the trial. “The judgment is wrong,” said Marq Claxton, the chief spokesman for the group. “I reject it.”

The shooting, in which Mr. Bell was killed and two of his friends were wounded by detectives who said they believed the men had a gun, was a complicated issue for these groups. Besides speaking out for black law enforcement officers, they also have historically acted as civil rights organizations for the larger minority population.

A group of black New York Police Department officers founded the Guardians Association in 1942. Besides pressing for, and occasionally winning, better assignments and quicker promotions for black officers, it also has served in tense moments as a bridge between the community and the police, and spoken out against the latter.

In 1970, for example, the organization criticized what it called a “shoot first and ask questions later” attitude on the police force after a black plainclothes detective was killed by a white officer. Six years later, it threatened to withdraw from the [Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association](#), the major police union, for its strong support of a white policeman charged with murder in the shooting of an unarmed black teenager in Brooklyn. And in 1994, the Guardians Association spoke out against the shooting of a black undercover transit officer by a white officer, saying that he was shot because of his skin color.

The Guardians also have endorsed political candidates; in 2005, the group supported [Fernando Ferrer](#) in his challenge to Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#).

Inspector Swinton says the group has 2,000 black officers as members; the Police Department has almost 6,000 black officers among its roughly 36,000 members. The group meets on the third Tuesday of every month.

“There was no special meeting on the Sean Bell shooting case,” Inspector Swinton said. “There was just slight discussion.”

Even within the Guardians, there were those who did not agree with Inspector Swinton, who attended the trial to show his support for Detective Cooper. (Detective Cooper is a member of the association; Detective Isnora, the other black officer who faced trial, is not, Inspector Swinton said.)

“Some members say we should support Cooper, some say we should stay neutral,” Inspector Swinton said. Others said that they were tired of hearing of black citizens’ being shot by the police and that “we should have supported the family,” he said, referring to the Bells.

In the past, the Guardians have been criticized by some black officers, including its own members, for not standing up enough to the police hierarchy. State Senator Eric Adams, a former police officer and Guardians official who is a founder of 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care, said of the Guardians, “Even if they believe the officers did not do anything wrong, they should have demanded some reforms.”

While Detective Cooper's lawyer did not name the police organizations he felt had betrayed his client, the 100 Blacks group was among the most vocal in protesting the shooting and the verdict. Shortly after the shooting, leaders of the group issued a vote of no confidence in the police commissioner, [Raymond W. Kelly](#), and charged that the detectives had not undergone proper gun training.

Formed in 1995, the group considers itself a civil rights organization. It is not recognized by the Police Department as a fraternal organization, and its membership is unclear.

"We speak on behalf of everybody whose rights are violated," said Mr. Claxton, the spokesman. He said the Bell verdict was predictable "but still very offensive to us."

"It's very painful," he said. "There is no justice for the family."

Last year, members of the Grand Council of Guardians marched with Mr. Bell's family, and also issued recommendations to reduce the likelihood of similar shootings. While the council is made up of representatives of Guardians chapters for correction officers, parole officers and others, Inspector Swinton maintained that his organization was no longer affiliated with it. "We parted ways before the Sean Bell shooting," he said, but did not elaborate.

Mr. Billups, the Grand Council president, disputed Inspector Swinton's characterization, calling the police Guardians "one of our chapters."

Regardless of how others felt about the case, Inspector Swinton said, his position concerning Detective Cooper was clear. "I would have given him support even if he was found guilty by the court," he said.

# The New York Times

## A Commute From Rockaway, Now With a Harbor View



Joshua Lott for The New York Times

A view from the deck of a ferry that began carrying passengers on Monday from the tip of the Rockaways to Lower Manhattan. The new service is provided by New York Water Taxi.

By UMAR CHEEMA

Published: May 13, 2008

Amid whipping wind and rain and beneath gloomy gray skies, a new ferry service was born yesterday, setting sail from Breezy Point, at the tip of the Rockaways, to Lower Manhattan, with a stop in Brooklyn along the way. A total of 51 commuters were aboard for the first two trips, putting on brave faces and rain-slicked coats, and carrying umbrellas.

“Ferry service will make the very difficult commute between the Rockaways and Manhattan much easier and less expensive,” said [Christine C. Quinn](#), the City Council speaker. The service leaves from Riis Landing, in Queens, and is being provided by New York Water Taxi. Also along for the maiden

voyage were Joseph P. Addabbo Jr., a council member from Queens, and [Anthony D. Weiner](#), a congressman serving Brooklyn and Queens.

But this first journey was, in fact, the end of a long planning process: New York Water Taxi made a test run, for example, seven months ago. And discussions about introducing a ferry line started long before that. Mr. Addabbo persuaded the Council to set aside \$300,000 a year for each of six years as he argued for the Rockaway run. Of that \$1.8 million, \$1.1 million will subsidize the operation, and the remaining \$700,000 has been given to the Department of Transportation in case the subsidy falls short.

Mr. Weiner also helped direct federal money toward the project. “I’ve contributed \$3 million for the ferry landing,” he said.

“I am very excited, very happy,” said Deirdre Rossi, a commuter on the second morning run. Ms. Rossi, a resident of Rockaway Park, works as an administrative assistant at Goldman Sachs. The ferry, which docks at Pier 11 in downtown Manhattan, shortened her commute by about 20 to 30 minutes.

Tom Fox, the president of New York Water Taxi, said the company’s initial target is 300 commuters a day. “It will take a while to get this number,” he said, noting that even 300 daily riders would still not be enough for the run to become profitable, especially with fuel costs increasing. Profitability, he said, would require 700 passengers a day.

Most of the first-day riders were commuters who said they usually took the bus or drove their own cars to reach Brooklyn subway stations, where they hopped on the subway to Manhattan.

Among them were Mary Brady, who works on Wall Street and previously used the car-subway combination to get to work, and Paula Reich, who relied on the bus-subway relay.

They are *almost* the commuters that New York Water Taxi is seeking.

“The real target is not getting people off the subway or express bus, but to get them off the car,” Mr. Fox said.

There are two trips in the morning, at 5:45 and 7:45, and two later in the day, at 3:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. The journey takes an hour, with a stop at the Brooklyn Army Terminal, in Sunset Park, about 20 minutes from Manhattan.

“I can’t make it for the 5:30 ferry,” said Jack Flanagan, a lawyer working in Midtown who was aboard the 7:45 trip. He said many people who had jobs there might not be able to reach Pier 11 in time for the evening sailing.

It is commuters in the western part of the Rockaways, more than those in Far Rockaway, who are expected to benefit the most.

According to the Department of Transportation, about 565 residents of the western Rockaways work in downtown Manhattan. “Of these, 33 percent drive alone, 12 percent carpool, and the rest take the subway and/or bus,” according to a study by the department.

“Potential riders will be from Breezy Point, Roxbury, Belle Harbor and Neponsit — the neighborhood of Rockaway,” Mr. Fox said.

There was little potential benefit seen for those who live farther away. “Sixty percent of the population lives in Far Rockaway,” said Jonathan L. Gaska, the district manager for Community Board 14 in Far Rockaway. He was not optimistic that people from his area would drive 15 to 20 minutes to Riis Landing for the ferry. But, he said, he remained open to the possibility: “I am curious to see what happens.”

For his part, Mr. Gaska said he rode the subway.

While Mr. Gaska said that he thought many working-class residents would balk at the \$12 round-trip cost of the ferry and stick with the subway, Mr. Addabbo, who represents the western Rockaways, said he believed the ferry was cost-efficient when other commuting expenses, like parking and gas, were added in.

# The New York Times

## New Ferry Service Will Begin Next Week

By UMAR CHEEMA  
Published: May 6, 2008

### **Correction Appended**

A subsidized ferry route between southern Queens and Lower Manhattan, via Brooklyn, will begin next week to give commuters another option, the mayor and the City Council announced on Monday.

The two-year pilot Rockaway Service, which will be run by New York Water Taxi, will be financed using \$1.1 million allocated by the City Council.

The new route, which begins on May 12, will run from Riis Landing in Breezy Point, Queens, to the Brooklyn Army Terminal to Pier 11 at Wall Street. It will run twice a day in each direction: 5:45 a.m. and 7:45 a.m. from Breezy Point, and 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. from Lower Manhattan. The trip will take about one hour each way. The cost will be \$6 per trip.

Separately, New York Water Taxi will restart East River ferry service next month from Pier 11 and 34th Street to Long Island City, Queens, which it suspended in January because of lack of passengers and rising fuel costs. Service to South Williamsburg, Brooklyn, will be restored when a new \$1.25 million city-financed launch center being built at Schaefer Landing is completed, Water Taxi officials said in a statement.

Expanded East River ferry service is expected to begin in two years, city officials said.

“As our waterfront becomes even more dynamic with new housing and open space in communities like Greenpoint, Williamsburg and Hunters

Point, ferries are going to become an even bigger part of our city's transportation network," Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#) said on Monday during a news conference at Brooklyn Army Terminal.

Besides expanding ferry service, the Department of Transportation will also be building a docking operation at 34th Street, where it will inaugurate faster bus service to get commuters quickly from the dock to their desks, said Janette Sadik-Khan, the transportation commissioner.

*This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:*

***Correction: May 13, 2008***

*An article in some editions last Tuesday about the announcement of a new commuter ferry service between southern Queens and Lower Manhattan misidentified the Rockaways neighborhood where Riis Landing, the launching point, is located. It is Breezy Point, not Far Rockaway.*