

Dear Representative Torres,

I trust this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. My name is Kimisha Washington, a resident of the South Bronx, and I am reaching out to you as a concerned citizen with a heavy heart. As an active member of our community, I believe it is crucial to address a pressing issue that demands immediate attention — the alarming instances of police abuse within our great city.

In recent times, the United States has witnessed various human rights violations, with police abuse emerging as a grave concern. According to reputable sources, misconduct, excessive force, and corruption have tarnished the reputation of police departments nationwide, including the New York Police Department (NYPD). Notably, in 2021 alone, 65 NYPD officers faced misconduct charges stemming from their actions during the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020.

Allow me to share my perspective on this matter, as it deeply affects individuals like myself who call the South Bronx home. While police officers are tasked with ensuring the safety of our neighborhoods, a troubling pattern has emerged, painting the NYPD as the city's largest gang. Instances of officers resorting to firearms or unjustly harassing innocent Black individuals have become disturbingly common, raising serious questions about the role of law enforcement in our community.

The tragic deaths of individuals like Trayvon Martin, George Floyd, Kalief Browder, and, closer to home, Eric Garner in 2014, have left a lasting impact on our community. As a young person, I vividly remember witnessing Eric Garner's final moments on a viral video, sparking a wave of fear and distrust in the police force. This incident, occurring just miles from my home, made me question the very essence of safety and protection that the police are supposed to provide.

Moreover, the repercussions of police brutality extend beyond physical harm. Studies indicate a direct link between police violence and mental health problems in Black communities. The constant fear and anxiety resulting from the anticipation of discrimination contribute to heightened vigilance, adversely affecting both mental and physical well-being.

Election time is approaching, and as you prepare for re-election, I implore you to dedicate time to review the sources I have provided. These sources shed light on the prevalence of police brutality in New York City, an issue that has been raised repeatedly without significant resolution.

To effect meaningful change, police officers must acknowledge the association between violence against minorities and the deeply rooted racism in our history. Accountability must be prioritized at all levels, and I advocate for reallocating resources from the police force to invest more in our community. Drastic reductions in police and jail budgets, cessation of police-military weapon exchanges, and increased funding for public services such as schools, housing, mental health, addiction treatment, public transportation, and job-training programs are essential steps toward a safer and more just society.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I trust that you will take this matter seriously and work towards fostering positive change for New York's 15th Congressional District residents.

Sincerely yours,

Kimisha Washington

## Reflection

I had a hard time writing my letter for the unit 1 project because I procrastinated. I struggled with finding the right way to address my audience, who are not part of my community, in a way that makes them empathize with me. They might not be aware of the issue I am addressing, or I might not have explained it well enough. At first, I chose to write a letter to the president, but my professor suggested that I address an audience closer to home. So I decided to write to Ritchie Torres, the representative for the South Bronx district area. This helped strengthen my argument and made it easier for people like Torres and the New York City law enforcement to understand. It was challenging to express my thoughts through a letter as opposed to a traditional academic essay because I had trouble choosing the right words. I am used to citing and explaining quotes to support my claim and not using the word "you." To overcome this challenge, I researched how Frederick Douglass used his writing strategies to properly address his audience and appeal with emotion while being straightforward.