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Criminal Justice and the Urban community

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“The Issues Within My Neighborhood”

The city of New York has always served as a place with great views, Unique aspect of life with tourists coming from all different sides of the world. The five boroughs that make up New York are Manhattan, Queens, Bronx, Brooklyn, and Staten Island. From the outside perspective a tourist would see nothing wrong with the five boroughs of New York. But if you were to ask a resident of one of these boroughs their answer would be completely different. As with most neighborhoods over time they tend to have issues that could be difficult to deal with. My neighborhood of Jamaica, Queens unfortunately falls into one of those neighborhoods in that category. Before explaining the issues within my neighborhood let me explain its history.

Originally named for the Jameco, they were Indians who resided on the northern shore of Jamaica Bay, close to Beaver Stream and Beaver Pond, and who belonged to the Algonquin tribe. In 1655 It would then be resettled by Hempstead-based English families who moved there and took up residence on a tract after receiving a grant from Governor Stuyvesant. At this time Jamaica had a predominantly white population which was mostly made up of Irish immigrants. When Queens was established as one of the counties in New York State in 1683, Jamaica was designated as the county seat. It would then be used from 1776-1783 by the British troops for huts during the

Revolutionary war. Jamaica, Queens would then experience a boom in population and development following the Civil War which eventually led to electric trolley services. As of today there are at least 600,000 people that currently reside in Jamaica's downtown area where 70% of the population is nonwhite.

Now that you understand the history within my neighborhood of Jamaica, Queens, I will explain some of the issues within that from an outside point of view wouldn't understand. Having lived in Jamaica, Queens most of my life I've heard and seen situations of crime everywhere. Crime has gotten so out of control that people in my neighborhood have downloaded an app called the "citizens app" which detects where crime is happening throughout your neighborhood. The crime rate in Jamaica, Queens is narrowly below the average in U.S cities with only being 39% safer than most. In Jamaica, your likelihood of becoming a victim of crime can range from 1 in 75 in the southwest neighborhoods to 1 in 19 in the southeast neighborhoods. These are just some of the issues with crime in my neighborhood. In my opinion a solution for this issue is that police need to be patrolling the neighborhood more often because in most situations they don't come on time or can't catch the thief in time. An example of crime in my neighborhood was when a couple of thieves went inside my friend's garage and stole his bicycle along with his electric scooter. As soon as he found out he immediately called the police to make a report of stolen items. When he called all they did was make a report about the stolen bike. Nobody came to look for the stolen bikes or consult him on the issue. Had the police been in the area or closeby patrolling maybe his bike would have been found. Another situation of crime happening in my neighborhood which was on "ABC news" , Three people were hospitalized after a shooting in Queens. "A

29-year-old man was shot in the buttocks, a 24-year-old man was shot in the stomach, and a 21-year-old woman was shot in the lower back. All three were taken to Jamaica Hospital in serious, but stable condition. Fortunately those people are in good condition now but they still haven't found the shooter. Had one of the victims been killed there would have been a killer in my neighborhood on the loose which nobody wants. In that same story there was another shooting less than a mile from an intersection in Jamaica. A 16 year old was shot in the stomach and was taken to North Shore Long Island Jewish Children's Hospital in critical condition. In both these stories the shooter has not been found. A situation I've experienced involving crime was when during middle school a kid brought a weapon to school and was flexing it to kids. A teacher would eventually see it and report it to the security where the kid would run out the building. The kid was eventually found and brought in for possession of a weapon. This crime fortunately did not end like the other two examples but was a scary experience to say the least. A solution I would present to avoid these crime's would be to try and tighten gun control here in my neighborhood. This is something that will not happen overnight but there are way too many instances where guns are being pulled out when they shouldn't be.

Another issue in my neighborhood that someone outside of New York wouldnt understand is the issue with homeless people. My neighborhood has one of the highest rates of family homelessness throughout New York City. Jamaica has a higher per-1,000 rate of families using homeless shelters than the average for New York City. It also has one of the highest rates of 1-4 family foreclosure notices in the city, at 23.7 per 1,000. Nearly 15 % of families eligible for shelter homes come from within my neighborhood. All of this information is sad to hear but unfortunately true. When you

walk to the train all you see are homeless people living under the stairs because they have nowhere else to go. The problem is not that homeless people are dirty but that some of them are dangerous to be around. If you ask anyone who takes the train on a daily basis why they stay away from homeless people they would say the same thing. You hear it all the time on the news about another homeless person attacking someone for no reason. Even though I have never been in a situation where a homeless person tried to attack me I have heard stories from friends who have. In their story, "because he didn't let the homeless guy use his lighter, the homeless guy followed him outside the station and started running after him. After chasing him for a while the homeless man ran back to the station. In this situation my cousin didn't even mean to make the homeless guy angry but because of the drugs the homeless guy was on it made him think that. Another situation in my neighborhood where a homeless person made someone feel unsafe was outside in my cousin's backyard. My cousin had just let his daughter out there to play for a little. Once she got done playing and went inside, a homeless guy went to the backyard to try and collect some cans and bottles from the recycle bin. Good thing my cousin's daughter just came in when she did but we can't imagine what would have happened had she stayed out there. How could we have known a homeless person would just walk up to my cousin's backyard without permission. Another situation from the "New York Post" talks about a homeless man named Ortiz attacking four people in two days. All the people who he had attacked had no idea he was going to hurt them. First Ortiz allegedly slugged a 35-year-old man who was walking, he also allegedly slapped a 26-year-old woman across her lips, Ortiz also allegedly struck a 32-year-old man in the face, causing bleeding to his nose, Ortiz also

pummeled a 23-year-old man waiting for a train. Even though all the injuries caused by Ortiz were small this is a problem that will continue to happen unless we do something about it. One solution that I have for this issue is to have a strict rule on homeless people riding the train. There should be police officers on the train following homeless people around to make sure they are not committing any crimes. I also believe if police follow homeless people around it could prevent them from purchasing drugs that will harm them.

Another issue in my neighborhood is the lack of police presence anytime a crime happens. In most of the examples shown above, I can almost guarantee that there were no police near the areas where the crime happened. If a crime continues to happen at a certain place then that place should be a priority for police to be near. An example of a lack of police presence was when I used to work an overnight shift at the white castle next to a bowling alley. Almost every week late at night after the bowling alley closed there was either a fight or shootings happening. And every time the police would come 30 minutes after it had already happened. It got so bad that my job had to close the dine-in because problems would happen every day and they didn't want the people to come next door after it had happened. This issue is not as major as the other two that I pointed out but people in my neighborhood must have trust in the police officers that if something goes wrong they would have our back. But if they continue to take 30 minutes to respond to situations why would anyone put their trust in them? A solution for this problem would be to train police officers to always be moving around in neighborhoods that they usually don't because if police only patrol certain areas the

criminals will just go to areas where they know police presence is never there. It would help the police officers do their job while also protecting Jamaica Queens better.

In conclusion, the three main issues with Jamaica Queens are crime, homeless people, and the lack of police presence. These issues would not be present to an outsider just visiting Jamaica Queens but normal to the average resident. I also explained solutions for these issues that I hope one day could be used to change the negative parts of Jamaica, Queens.

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