

Video of questionable arrest of on-duty letter carrier sparks outrage, concern

On March 17, Brooklyn letter carrier Glen Grays Jr. had parked his postal vehicle and was preparing to deliver a package when he had a troubling encounter with police that led to his arrest. Smartphone video of that arrest sparked outrage and led many, including the mayor of New York and the city's police commissioner, to raise questions about the police officers' behavior in the incident.

Grays, a Brooklyn Branch 41 member, was exiting his vehicle when he noticed a car making a sharp, dangerous turn near him. Grays had to climb back into his vehicle to avoid getting hit. He allegedly shouted at the driver of the car. According to Grays, the car came tearing back and the driver said, "I have the right of way because I'm law enforcement."

An image from the smartphone video of Grays' arrest



Grays continued his attempt to deliver the package when the four plain-clothes officers from the unmarked police car got out and approached him. An observer recorded a video of the arrest. In the video, the officers demanded Grays' identification.

"My ID's right there on the side of the truck," the carrier said.

"Let's go get your ID," one of the officers said.

Grays told the officer that he had mail to deliver, and the officers then handcuffed and frisked him. They told Grays to stop resisting, though the video doesn't appear to show evidence of resistance. The carrier said that the officers put him in the back of their car with his hands still cuffed and without a seatbelt, leaving the mail truck unattended. According to Grays, the driver turned around to taunt him and hit the vehicle in front of them, causing the letter carrier to bang his shoulder against the front seat.

He was taken to the 71st Precinct Station, detained for a few hours, and issued a summons for disorderly conduct, a summons that will require him to appear in court. It's the first time he's ever been arrested and he has no criminal record.

"I was extremely terrified," Grays told "CBS This Morning." "The only thing that saved me, I think, is because I was on videotape. I was afraid if I didn't comply, something was going to happen to me.

"I don't hate cops. I'm marrying one," he said, pointing out that his fiancée is a New York City police officer.



Dave Sanders for The New York Times

Grays and his mother, Sonya Sapp, spoke at a press conference after the arrest.

"It's sad," Grays added. "I thought that when I put on that uniform, that I would be treated a little different. But it's no difference. I'm just another brother with a uniform."

"NALC is troubled by this incident," NALC President Fredric Rolando told *The Washington Post*. "We trust that the police department will investigate this matter thoroughly and expeditiously, and that any necessary actions will be taken."

The video of the incident was released by Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, a former police officer, who expressed outrage over the alleged civil rights violation of a young black man, a uniformed employee of the federal government. Adams called for an investigation into the matter.

New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton also questioned the police behavior, noting that the officers are part of the Conditions Unit, a neighborhood-based troubleshooting division that Bratton said required officers to be in uniform. He also said

Hold management accountable with ‘Dignity and Respect’ booklet

he had “strong concerns” about the charges against Grays after viewing additional video of the arrest.

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio’s press secretary said the mayor would be “in close touch with Commissioner Bratton over this incident’s investigations and findings.”

The USPS Office of Inspector General has announced that it is investigating the incident, raising questions about a possible violation of federal law by interrupting mail delivery and leaving mail unsecured.

The three officers were removed from their assignments and put on patrol duty pending a finding by NYPD’s Internal Affairs Bureau, Bratton said. The lieutenant has been stripped of his badge and gun and placed on administrative duty while the investigation continues. According to *The New York Times*, in the last six years at least three of the four involved have been named in federal civil rights suits alleging false arrest, among other claims, with at least one case settled out of court.

“I have been to more funerals than graduations,” Grays said. He said that he often remembers a quote from his grandmother: “The best way for a black man to become successful is to stay away from the cops, to keep a clean record.”

Grays is the oldest of six boys. His mother, Sonya Sapp, told *The Times*, “I worry about them every day, every minute, every second of every day. I’m short on words; I’m just hurt.”

“I would like to believe the majority of our fellow brothers and sisters in law enforcement, who serve the same communities we do, would be appalled and embarrassed by the lack of respect shown to Brother Grays and all letter carriers in uniform,” President Rolando said. **PR**

At the 1996 National Convention in Orlando, FL, delegates passed a resolution with the intent of sending a clear message that NALC is resolute in our commitment to hold management accountable for hostility and mistreatment of letter carriers. As such, local branch representatives must remain diligent in holding management accountable every day to preserve letter carriers’ rights to be treated with dignity and respect.

Over the years, NALC has worked with the Postal Service to highlight management’s obligation as well as both parties’ intent to ensure a working environment free of threats, intimidation, harassment and violence. There still exist far too many instances of managers who refuse to take their obligation seriously and ignore mutually agreed-upon commitments.

“The parties have agreed on a number of memorandums of understanding and contract provisions to protect carriers, but time and again we have seen that individual managers are not on board,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “We’d like to believe that management at every level is committed to that responsibility for upholding dignity and respect. We will continue to pursue that goal, but it is not yet the case.”

Because of that, the NALC has developed the *NALC Shop Steward’s Guide to Preserving the Right of Letter Carriers to be Treated with Dignity and Respect*. The booklet, previewed at the 2015 Rap Session in Houston, brings the various tools, documents and guidance related to dignity, respect and violence prevention together providing a resource to assist branch

representatives in the enforcement of management’s responsibilities.

The guide takes a shop steward through the five key elements necessary for successful grievance handling. The booklet also addresses how to keep track of important events on the workroom floor to preserve necessary observations and records that may later be used in support of grievances. The booklet

contains a copy of the Joint Statement on Violence in the Workplace (M-01242), with guidance on which sections should be cited for different types of violations.

“At every opportunity, NALC will work to improve on the joint effort to ensure that everyone who works for the Postal Service is treated with dignity and respect,” Rolando said, “and that all feel safe

from violence in the workplace.” The NALC president called on stewards and other activists to take advantage of the *Dignity and Respect* booklet’s resources whenever the need arises, and for all letter carriers to do their part.

“Unfortunately, there are still far too many instances of managerial mistreatment,” Rolando said. “It was the parties’ intent that every postal employee would be able to work in a safe environment where they would receive the respect they deserved.

“Until we fully achieve the intent of the parties, we cannot tolerate members being mistreated and will continue to pursue all avenues to put a stop to it. The more we make progress toward the intent of the parties, the less we will need these tools.

“We welcome the day we will no longer need a book such as this, for that will be the day the parties have achieved their commitments.” **PR**

