



February 8, 2018
Testimony of Daniel A. Nigro, Commissioner
Diversity in the FDNY

Good morning Chairman Borelli and all of the Council Members present. My name is Daniel Nigro and I am the Commissioner of the Fire Department. I am joined this morning by First Deputy Commissioner Laura Kavanagh, Deputy Commissioner Cecilia Loving, who is the Department's Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Assistant Commissioner Nafeesah Noonan, who oversees the Bureau of Recruitment and Retention, and Assistant Commissioner Don Nguyen, who oversees our Bureau of Equal Employment and Opportunity. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about Diversity in the FDNY.

As I have stated before this Council and in many venues across the city, it is a top priority of my administration to create a more diverse, more inclusive, and more equitable FDNY. Diversity and inclusion are key values of this Department. We know that these values enhance our strength and fortitude as an institution. We strive to create a Department that reflects the people of the city that we serve.

This commitment starts at the top. For virtually the entirety of its history, the New York City Fire Department has been led by men, but we've made great strides in a short period of time.

We were honored to have you, Chairman Borelli, present for a promotions ceremony last week during which I swore in the second ever female First Deputy Commissioner and the first female Chief of Staff in the history of the Fire Department. During my administration, I've also appointed the first black female deputy chief, the first female Fire Department Chaplain, and the first two Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officers, both of whom were women of color. Never in its history has the department been run by a leadership team as rich in diversity, including women and people of color, and our team has produced dramatic advances in this mission.

Diversifying our ranks means an evolution of the way we recruit candidates. The vision statement of our Office of Diversity and Inclusion holds that, "the excellence of the New York City Fire Department is enhanced by the ability to recruit, hire, retain, and promote highly skilled, talented, and motivated members from diverse backgrounds. FDNY prides itself in attracting candidates of diverse gender, age, culture, race, religious preference, and sexual orientation because the expression of unique ideas provides for better productivity, efficiency, and service to a diverse and multi-faceted community."

Our most recent firefighter exam was given last fall, and the recruiting campaign leading up to it was an unprecedented effort to expand and diversify the applicant pool by attracting more women and people of color than ever before. This 10 million dollar effort developed aggressive goals for recruiting black, Latino, Asian, and female candidates. We also focused on amplifying our recruitment of LGBTQ candidates and military veterans. We conducted more than 10,000 recruitment events and collected approximately 200,000 Expressions of Interest. We trained and employed a team of over 1,000 recruiters - including active duty firefighters - to reach underrepresented communities. Our members recruited at high schools, colleges, community celebrations, subway stations, cultural events, youth gatherings, and career fairs.



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We also held a large number of our own dedicated recruiting events, including hosting Summer Block Parties in every borough and events for potential candidates at the FDNY Training Academy. We created the Mobile Academy, which allowed our recruiters to conduct training exercises out in the community. Potential applicants were also able to participate in activities from the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT), which is required of candidates to become firefighters. Our Recruitment team worked in tandem with our Community Affairs Unit, broadening the reach of our recruitment efforts and strengthening relationships with community boards and groups with shared missions.

We realized the challenge of reaching underrepresented communities on our own, so we also partnered with outside groups to help us reach potential applicants. We worked with organizations such as the New York Urban League, Make the Road New York, the LGBTQ Center, the Dominican Women's Development Center, 100 Black Men, Nontraditional Employment for Women, the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park, and many others. We looked at what was working with military entities and other domestic fire departments. We consulted with recruiting experts, and employed marketing and media specialists to design a targeted communications strategy that involved social media, focus-group message testing with our target audience, and modern print and video ads in subway stations, bus stops, billboards, fire houses, and any location we determined would be effective for attracting candidates. We implemented significant innovation in our use of technology and data analytics, and the effect was significant:

- We sent more than 1.7 million email communications to potential candidates.
- We conducted more than 150,000 phone calls to interested recruits.
- 14,771 applicants attended an FDNY in-person tutorial session.
- 8,600 applicants downloaded online tutorial material to help them prepare for the exam.

When it came time for applicants to take the exam, our recruitment efforts produced record-breaking results. We succeeded in drawing interest in a firefighting career from more young men and women than ever before. A record-setting 46,300 people took the exam. For the first time ever, a majority of test takers were people of color, a total of 26,000. More women than ever before took the exam, at 4,181, which is more than twice as many as took the prior exam in 2012.

Looking at individual ethnicities, improvements from the prior exam were dramatic. The number of Asian test takers increased by 55%; black test takers increased by 39%; Latino test takers increased by 29%; Native American test takers increased by 35%; and the number of female test takers who took the exam improved by 115%.

Our recruitment efforts are also bolstered by the Department's association with the Captain Vernon A. Richards High School for Fire and Life Safety. We work in collaboration with the school to introduce the high school population to the benefits of a career with the Fire Department and many of these New York City students go on to become FDNY EMTs and firefighters.



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I also want to update the Committee on our efforts to recruit military veterans to the ranks of the FDNY. The Department has a long history of involvement with the United States armed forces, and we've found that former members of the military often make extraordinary firefighters, EMTs, officers, and civilian staff. Our members share a number of characteristics with members of the military, including a commitment to public service, possessing responsibility and discipline, maintaining physical fitness, and a willingness to make sacrifices for the benefit of others.

Currently, there are 1200 uniformed FDNY members in the fire ranks who are military reservists or veterans. 431 have been hired since 2013. When combined with members in EMS and civilians, that number increases to 1443, or just over 8% of the department, and we are proud of every one of them. We also take great pride in the 44 FDNY personnel who are currently on extended military orders, including Firefighter Rory Allen of Ladder 165. Firefighter Allen is returning home next week for a short leave from his current deployment to Afghanistan, which is his fourth tour in the region.

In 2015, the department created a military outreach coordinator position to focus specifically on increasing the representation of veterans within our ranks. We strive to accomplish this by maximizing recruitment opportunities for veterans and raising awareness of an FDNY career among active duty members of the armed forces.

In the most recent firefighter recruitment campaign, we held 112 veteran-specific recruitment events. This included participating in three large scale events conducted via the "Hiring Our Heroes" program, which is run by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. At these programs – two at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst and one at the 69th Regiment Armory – our military outreach coordinator and recruiters met with potential candidates at events that were attended by more than 1300 active duty members who were transitioning out of the military. While the number is not final and could increase, we know that almost 2200 of the individuals who took the firefighter exam last fall have identified as having military veteran status.

Our military outreach team has been escalating efforts on multiple fronts to reach potential candidates in the military. We think that there's real value in building relationships with members of the armed services before they are looking to transition out of the military and we like to engage them even as early as at the point where they enter military service. We are negotiating and expecting to complete within the next 60 days a Memo of Understanding with the U.S. Army's Partnership for Youth Success program, which will give us the ability to work with new soldiers over the course of their time in the Army and prepare them to apply to the FDNY upon completion of honorable service. We are working on a similar program with the United States Marine Corps that will enable us to connect with new Marines prior to them attending boot camp.

Perhaps the best examples of ways in which we reach out to members of the military as early as possible in their career are the Department's partnerships with CUNY ROTC and Francis Lewis High School Junior ROTC. We work with individual members to develop a plan to apply to the FDNY when they exit the military. We have also entered into a partnership with NYC Fleet Week that



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enables us to set up recruiting stations at multiple locations during the week to speak with current sailors and veterans about joining the FDNY. We've hosted many events for Fleet Week military visitors in our firehouses. Our military outreach team has engaged with more than 15 military units, 8 military installations, more than 20 veterans groups at educational institutions, and more than a dozen veterans' service organizations and we will continue to expand our efforts as we identify successful avenues for recruiting veterans to join the department. Chairman Borelli, I know that you have a particular interest in this area, and I look forward to working with you to grow our outreach to members of the military.

Finally, we have made extensive advancements in recent years in addressing diversity and inclusion issues within the department. During my time as commissioner, we created the position of Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, appointed a new Diversity Advocate, and convened the Fire Commissioner's Diversity and Inclusion Committee. We launched a vision, mission, and goal statement for diversity and inclusion which is now displayed in Department facilities.

We have designed and published 8 issues of a new quarterly newsletter on Diversity and Inclusion, and we host multi-cultural events on an almost monthly basis, including a Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration, a variety of Black History Month events, a Women's Empowerment Summit, PRIDE Celebration Events, and many others. I was pleased last year to host the first ever Seder at FDNY Headquarters, which was attended by numerous rabbis and faith and community leaders from across the city, as well as department employees of all backgrounds. We make sure that probationary firefighters understand our diversity and inclusion values in several ways, including on their first day at the Academy and through meetings with affinity groups. The CDIO also meets with the trainers and instructors before each new class.

The department also developed a new Diversity and Inclusion Training Unit with over twenty members of the department serving as trainers. This new unit has been very active. We created an E-Platform so that we could make trainings, information, and resources widely available, and we designed LGBTQ and Unconscious Bias training modules. Over 13,000 members of the Department have now received EEO and Unconscious Bias Training, and supervisors and frontline staff have received LGBTQ training. We've put an increased emphasis on mentoring, and we held a Speed Mentoring event and plan to hold more in the coming year.

It is not a simple task to drive cultural evolution in an organization that is as large and carries as much history as the New York City Fire Department. We know that we face and will continue to face challenges in these areas, but I have made a personal commitment to improve the diversity of this department. As I have said since the moment I arrived as commissioner, we serve a diverse city and if our department doesn't reflect that city, we are not doing our job. We strive every day to further that goal, and I am proud of the progress we've attained during my administration.

I thank the Council for its attention to these important issues and for its ongoing support of our mission.

FDNY Diversity Presentation

Dr. Darrin Porcher

Criminal Justice Professor Pace University

Retired Army Officer

Retired NYPD Lieutenant

National Criminal Justice Expert

On May 31, 2017, the City of New York introduced a notice of examination for Firefighter Exam No. 7001. Which is a computer based test (CBT). Veterans Preference Credits were permitted under the New York State Civil Service Law which allows that additional points can be added to the final score of a candidate who is, or by the date of appointment expects to be, an honorably discharged veteran or disabled veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States who has served during a time of war, as specified in New York State law. To be eligible for Veterans' Preference Credits, a candidate must achieve a passing score on the examination. Claims for Veterans' Preference Credits cannot be made once the eligible list is established.

Eligible Veterans

Eligible Veterans are New York State residents discharged under honorable conditions from the U.S. Armed forces and who are:

- Vietnam Veterans who served in Indochina between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975.
- Persian Gulf Veterans who served in the Persian Gulf on or after August 2, 1990.
- Afghanistan Veterans who served in Afghanistan during hostilities on or after September 11, 2001.
- Veterans of the armed forces of the United States who served in hostilities that occurred after February 28, 1961 as evidenced by receipt of an Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Navy Expeditionary Medal or a Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal.

The scope of veteran's credits is specific as listed

The NYPD for years up til 2011-2012 visited military bases nationally and administered the open competitive examination for employment as a police officer. This was a proactive method in assisting the diversity process.

The Mayor's office of veteran's affairs provides online assistance and lists Tom Walsh as the FDNY liaison to assist veterans. This is a reactive mechanism and not proactive.

The Mayor's office of appointments is a great avenue that looks to greater diversify the hiring of New York City employees; however, this is a reactive mechanism as opposed to being proactive.

A systemic culture exists within the hiring practices of the FDNY. A panacea to this would be outreach to individuals returning from military service coupled with commissioning test taking sites at military bases to allow easier access for veterans to participate in the CBT. The FDNY currently has a recruitment unit that aggressively visits multicultural communities in New York City; however, its outcomes pale in comparison to other city agencies such as the NYC Department of Correction and Traffic Enforcement Agents.

Military members anticipating an honorable discharge are physically fit individuals who in many cases meet the age requirements. Additionally, diversity within the Armed Services is wide and deep. In December of 2016 then Secretary of Defense Ash Carter allowed women to join combat units. This resulted in several female officers successfully completing the Army's prestigious Ranger school. Women are large contributors to military service; therefore, to target this population would greatly enhance the FDNY firefighter's diversity among women.

Currently, the Department of Defense trains all military firefighters of the Army, Navy, Air-Force and Marines at DOD Fire Academy located at Goodfellow Air-Force Base in San Angelo Texas. All firefighters that graduate from the DOD Academy are certified as Firefighter 1 & 2 by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) which is the standard bearer for firefighters. Additionally, graduates are also certified in hazardous materials awareness and hazmat operators.

The FDNY is a paramilitary organization; therefore, this would be a great place to recruit firefighters to gain access to women capable of becoming firefighters in the FDNY. Additionally, this can also be a reservoir of talent to assist in the department's racial diversity as well.

Firefighters among the ranks of the FDNY do not reflect the diversity of the 3 ½ million residents residing in New York City. Women represent a significant demographic within the fabric of NYC; therefore, it's necessary that we proactively create a population of female firefighters reflective of the population.

Several strategies have since been implemented in attempt to diversify the population of firefighters in the FDNY; however, the quantitative statistics reflect a lack of female diversity. Approximately 11,050 active uniformed firefighters are employed by the FDNY. In 2016 only 8 female fighters graduated from probationary firefighter school.

In closing, a multifaceted approach to incorporating more women into the FDNY as firefighters is necessary. A panel consisting of the Mayor's Office of Appointments, Mayors office of Veterans Affairs and the FDNY should collaborate on a recruitment strategy that targets the Department of Defense Fire Academy at Goodfellow AFB in San Angelo TX. Additionally, FDNY firefighter recruiters should target military Reserve and National Guard units because these are military members who also function in a civilian environment with a robust content of capable women. Fires are gender neutral; therefore, I'm not suggesting to relax standards but to proactively target military women because they're fit for the challenge.

Professionally

Dr. Darrin Porcher

Dporch7@aol.com

(347)678-2916



NYC Veterans Alliance

www.nycveteransalliance.org

www.ourveterans.nyc

Testimony by

Kristen L. Rouse
Founding Director
NYC Veterans Alliance

**Committee on Fire and Emergency Management
Hearing on Oversight of Diversity in the FDNY**

February 8, 2018

My name is Kristen Rouse. I served for more than 23 years of combined service in the United States Army, Army Reserve, and the New York National Guard, which included three tours of duty in Afghanistan. I am here today to testify on behalf of the NYC Veterans Alliance, a member-supported, grassroots policy advocacy and community-building organization that advances veterans and families as civic leaders in the NYC Metropolitan area.

New York City government is the largest employer of veterans and military reservists in the city, and many of these service-driven individuals have chosen the FDNY as an impactful way to serve here at home. Men and women who have matured through their military training and leadership roles—many of them seasoned by service in our recent wars and our military's global response to natural disasters—should be seen as potentially some of the best recruits for the greatest firefighting force in the country. NYC's veteran and military community is incredibly diverse, with members drawn from every neighborhood and borough across our city, and we've found that the men and women who've served in the post-9/11 era in particular come home looking for ways to continue serving and making our nation and our communities better, stronger, and safer. Yet too often we find that bureaucratic barriers and lack of clear opportunities have prevented ready recruits from joining the FDNY.

The FDNY should harness the diversity and readiness of NYC's military and veteran community to serve our city. Our recommendations for expanding recruitment of military reservists and veterans include:

- 1. Provide direct credits for military education and experience.** Federal dollars have been spent to train men and women as team leaders, medics, engineers, military police and firefighters, and a host of leadership skills and job competencies that are direct assets for today's FDNY. Training transcripts, leadership evaluations, and awards are well-documented in individual military records, and these official government documents can easily be evaluated for merit in the same way college transcripts currently are. This can provide a valuable incentive for veterans and military veterans to apply for the FDNY, and to know that their military experience truly matters.
- 2. Incentives for disabled veterans must not be used against veteran applicants.** Civil service points are awarded for veterans, and more for veterans with a disability rating from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Disability is personal, and protected by the ADA and HIPAA. It must never be assumed that if a veteran is receiving treatment

for a condition incurred in her military service that she cannot fully perform every duty required as a firefighter.

3. **Build a troops-to-firefighters pipeline.** We have thousands of National Guard and reserve troops who live here in the five boroughs, many of them young and committed to finding ways to serve others while also earning an honorable living. They attend drills and battle assemblies at armories across the NYC Metro area each month, yet they also face illegal discrimination from employers who don't respect their military commitment by either not hiring them or by making it difficult for them to attend their military training. Unit commanders may be very welcoming of opportunities for stable, meaningful employment for young reservists who too often have to struggle to balance their military commitments with a civilian society that doesn't understand or appreciate them. FDNY has an opportunity to build a recruitment pipeline with units residing in armories that may be just steps away from the nearest firehouse. FDNY and other New York City agencies have strong relationships with the NY State Division of Military and Naval Affairs, and the Joint Forces Headquarters that oversees JTF Empire Shield and other National Guard entities in the NYC Metro area. This relationship can surely be broadened and leveraged to foster recruitment and diversity on the FDNY.

On behalf of the NYC Veterans Alliance, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Pending your questions, this concludes my testimony.



Good morning to all the Council members in attendance here today, all interested parties and guest. Thank you for allowing me to speak today to the issue of diversity in the FDNY. My name is Regina Wilson and I am the President on the Vulcan Society of the FDNY. Through out the history of the FDNY diversity and inclusion has always been a issues which the Fire Department of New York always seem to have a hard time getting resolved. If you simple look at the very visible percentage of people of color and women throughout the fire service and it's 150 plus years, it tells the story of the true commitment to diversifying the Fire Service. African American represent only 8% of the suppression side of the FDNY, women represent less than 1%, Hispanics 10%, Asian and Native Americans are also less than 1%. Unfortunately, all changes to diversifying the FDNY did not come with the willingness, views of the future to make the FDNY the best Fire Department in the world due to a diverse workforce on the suppression side of the department or possible opportunities for the community, it was due to several lawsuits from the Vulcan Society fighting for people of color and women and the lawsuit from Captain Brenda Berkman for equality and fair hiring for women to join the fire service. The path of resistance has been met for many years, and I believe we are still being met with that resistance today. The FDNY has just completed a Recruitment drive for the position of Firefighter. Although we have recruited a large amount of women and people of color, this is still not enough and the department still has not reach the court settlement number of outreach to people of color and test takers.

In the recruiting process, there were poor training of recruiters and little to non retraining for recruiters who have poor performance skills. I believe this inability to consistently monitor the recruiters and their work performance and ethics, cause critical errors in our recruitment drive. These error of addresses may have yield the number were needed to have the critical numbers given to the city that would represent the percentage of African American in the city.

Although the FDNY has yielded high numbers from the latest recruitment campaign, if the department in any way does not continue to commit to a high level of diversifying the suppression side of the department in the on going years, and fix some of its critical errors, this department will never reach it full potential greatness nor will it every truly represent the city that it serves.

The other alarming issue regarding diversifying the department is the FDNY lack of preparedness of the increase numbers of women and people of color entering the department and the firehouse. The message of inclusiveness and the department true vision and support of diversity and inclusion is not done on a consistent bases. The FDNY historically has done everything in it power to opposed the inclusion of Women and people of color by the means of harassment, segregation, violence and unfair hiring practices. The traditions and culture of the department which in some firehouse are still practiced today is that anyone who is non-white male is not welcomed. It is more critical than ever before that on all levels of the department to understand that diversity, inclusion and equal treatment are the core values of the department. Without this messaging not only begin said in the form of electronic and print messaging, you have to hold people accountable when they do not commit to the values of the department or the Officers of the FDNY do not provided the atmosphere in the firehouse that holds those value as well.

Because of the seriousness of this matter is not addressed or upheld properly by the department, now more than ever members of my organization and other people of color are being harassed and treated unfairly in the firehouses by Fire Officers as well as firefighters. Firefighters have been subjected to discrimination of race and religion, gender biases, disabilities and consistent abuse. I have attached some example of such actions. When these actions are performed, the department at times have a delayed or non reaction to these cases and they do not give the message that the bad actor does not represent the department in anyway and that these actions will never be tolerated in the department. This is never a consistent message from the department and because it is not expressed to the members on a consistent bases, the message is viewed as a passing phase. More often when the department is dealing with a problem or has taken some sort of action, the issue in the firehouse are not addressed to the firehouse directly of the wrong committed or why the action taken by the department, it any were necessary.

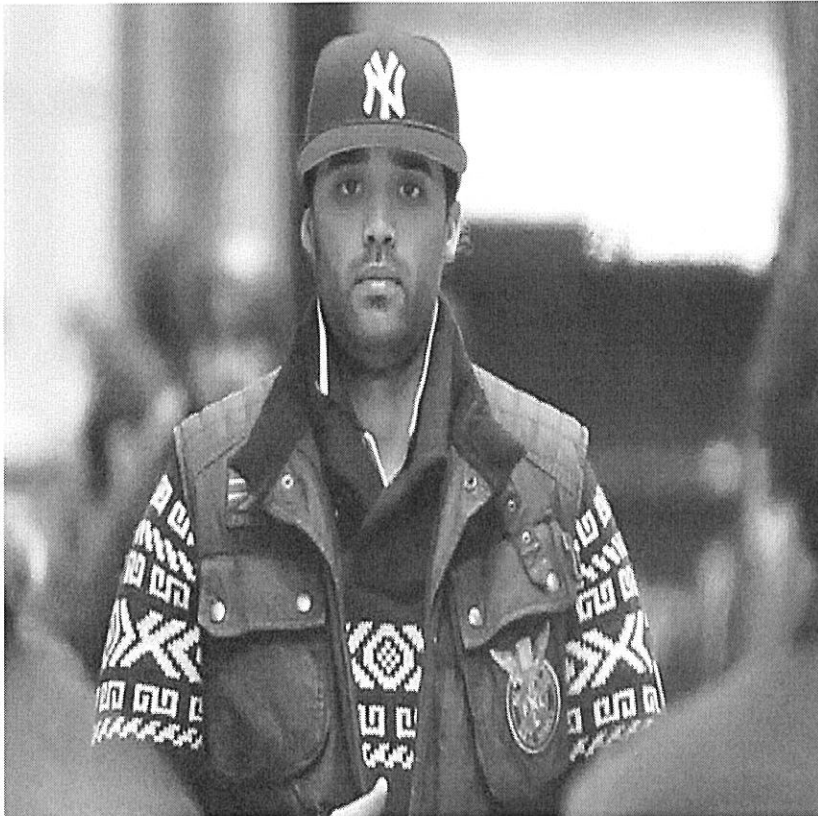
If the FDNY does not take a more deliberate action in truly valuing the greatness that a diverse workforce can bring to the department and the citizens in which they serve, we will never be the greatest Fire Department in the world. Every citizen applying should not fear not being accepted because of the color of there skin, gender, religious believes or disabilities. The FDNY still has a lot of work to do and we don't have time to wait.¹

METRO EXCLUSIVE

Black FDNY rookie sues after 'sexual hazing' by nude firefighters

By Dean Balsamini and Susan Edelman

January 22, 2017 | 6:02am | Updated



Firefighter Gordon Springs, 27, has faced racist hazing attacks at Ladder Co. 35/Engine Co. 40 since joining the FDNY in 2015, according to his lawsuit. Angel Chevré

They were naked, he was afraid.

A black FDNY rookie expecting a warm welcome at his new firehouse was instead sexually hazed and humiliated by a band of naked firefighters, according to a shocking federal discrimination lawsuit.

It was the beginning of a series of horrific incidents meant to make the rookie's life so miserable he would quit, the suit alleges. The disturbing case is now being probed by the US Department of Justice, a source close to the matter has said.

On May 4, 2015, the day before his graduation from the Fire Academy, probationary firefighter Gordon Springs, 27, and three fellow probies went to their new firehouse, Ladder Co. 35/Engine Co. 40 near Lincoln Center, known as The Cavemen.

Longstanding FDNY custom dictates that probies, bearing desserts, visit their new units for a welcome tour. Springs brought a cake.

"This was about visiting the firehouse, meeting the firefighters and meeting the new family," the source said.

As the probies entered the Amsterdam Avenue firehouse, firefighter Peter Grillo whispered to Springs, "Our house is really gay," according to the lawsuit.

Springs claims the probies were led to the gym, where four naked smoke-eaters — two identified in the complaint as Charles Swift and Pedro Aristy — were waiting.

Aristy ordered Springs to lie down on a workout bench, the suit says. The rookie, shaken, tried to leave, but the door was "forcibly held shut" by firefighters.

"Frozen stiff" with fear, Springs did as he was told. Aristy stood over the prone probie and "moved his penis and testicles close" to his face, then plopped them onto his forehead, according to court papers.

The legal papers do not say if the other probies — two white, one black — were sexually assaulted.

Ladder Co. 35/Engine 40 in Manhattan
John Roca

In the months that followed, Springs would be "singled out time and time again" because he was African-American, the suit claims.

SEE ALSO

Aristy allegedly told Springs, "I don't like you . . . blacks getting on the job this way. You don't have good work ethic."

The comments were a reference to the priority hiring of minorities following a federal court order that the FDNY diversify its ranks. The FDNY remains under a federal monitor.

The diatribe continued, Springs alleges, with Aristy screaming, "I could punch you in the face and there's nothing you can do about it. If you called [the FDNY's Equal Employment Opportunity office], everyone in the firehouse would keep their mouth shut and EEO wouldn't find anything. Then, after everyone realized you called EEO, the real fun would begin."

**FDNY firefighters
disciplined for hazing
African-American member**

Springs was too "scared" to call the police, his lawyer said.

The alleged abuse continued:

- On June 3, 2015, Aristy clocked Springs over the head with a loaf of bread, calling him a "s-tbag" for missing a Medal Day ceremony, the suit alleges. He was forced to sweep the firehouse for his entire shift.
- On June 29, 2015, Springs was ordered to climb up the brass fire pole as firefighters identified as "Rix and Sanchez" threw buckets of water and breadcrumbs on him, the complaint says. He fell and injured his back.
- In February 2016, Springs returned to the firehouse to gather his belongings ahead of a five-day retraining assignment. He found his gear stomped on and the chest area of his uniform "stabbed," the suit says. When he reported the incident to bosses, he was "punished" with 22 added days of retraining, the suit says.

The suit alleges the "desecrated" uniform was in retaliation for Springs filing complaints with the FDNY's EEO office and the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in October 2015.

Springs was transferred twice by the FDNY. But, branded a rat, a "Scarlet Letter" . . . follows him around like a shadow" to each new firehouse, the lawsuit says.

In October, The Post learned that five firefighters and two officers had been disciplined for violating the FDNY's "zero tolerance" hazing policy at Ladder 35/Engine 40. The seven lost pay and vacation days, and by accepting the punishments avoided administrative trials and public attention.

The FDNY at the time refused to name the firefighters, specify what they did or comment on any racial motivations.

Firefighters at Springs' current unidentified firehouse posted a clipping of that Post story on the bulletin board.

In November, the federal EEOC determined there was "reasonable cause" to believe Springs was the victim of sexual harassment and racial discrimination.

One FDNY officer brushed it off as harmless horseplay.

"There's a culture in the firehouse when you're a new guy. Somebody's feelings get hurt and all of a sudden it's hazing," the officer said. "It's bulls—t."

But Springs' lawyer, Paul Liggieri, disagreed.

"The department can style this case as a hazing incident, but what happened to my client . . . was a sexual assault," he said.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages. It names Lt. Edward Vreeland, Grillo, Swift, Aristy, the city and FDNY Commissioner Daniel Nigro as defendants. The defendants did not comment or would not return messages seeking comment.

Attorney Paul Liggieri
Angel Chevrestt

The FDNY referred inquiries to the city Law Department, which said it was reviewing the complaints.

FILED UNDER **FDNY**, **HARASSMENT**, **HAZING**, **LAWSUITS**, **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Recommended by

METRO EXCLUSIVE

Son of convicted terrorist joins FDNY

By Susan Edelman and Dean Balsamini

November 4, 2017 | 6:26pm | Updated



Omar Ahmed Sattar

The 279 firefighters who graduated from the FDNY Academy last month include the son of a firefighter killed on 9/11 — and the son of a terrorist.

Rookie firefighter Omar Ahmed Sattar, 30, is the eldest son of Ahmed Abdel Sattar, who was convicted in 2005 of “soliciting crimes of violence” and conspiracy to murder Jews.

The elder Sattar, now 58, was a seemingly mild-mannered postal-service worker raising his family in Staten Island. Behind his peaceful facade, the court found, he was an Islamist extremist who used his home as a communications hub to further the schemes of Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the blind Muslim cleric who masterminded the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, which killed six, as well as failed plots to blow up other New York City buildings and tunnels.

Ahmed Sattar, a k a Abu Omar and Dr. Ahmed, was tried along with Rahman’s radical defense lawyer, Lynne Stewart, and another accused terrorist, Mohammed Yousry.

According to federal charges, he and a co-conspirator in 2000 published a fatwa, or Islamic ruling, in Rahman's name, calling for the killing of Jewish civilians.

He and cohorts also tried to use the Oct. 12, 2000, al Qaeda bombing of the USS Cole, which killed 17 US sailors, to extort the US into freeing Rahman from prison, court papers say.

A Web site set up in Ahmed Sattar's defense, ahmedabdelstarr.org, says that the Egyptian immigrant had "deep roots in America" and that he studied the Quran and "became an opponent of the murderous Hosni Mubarak regime in Egypt."

It says Ahmed Sattar "lived a clean life" and blames the charges against him on "a witch hunt" by New York "Zionists."

In a letter to the sentencing judge, Omar, then an 18-year-old student at the College of Staten Island, begged for leniency.

"I know that he did not commit any crimes or plan to. I feel that an injustice has been done. My father is a man of honesty and kindness, he wouldn't attempt to hurt any one or even think about it," Omar wrote.

"Yes, he has views, like so many people, but his views were just that and nothing more."

Omar, who has two younger brothers and a sister, said his father raised his kids well.

"Most importantly, he wanted us to be good children and then grow up to be better adults," he wrote. "I will forever hold his lessons in my heart, and I thank god every day for the father I have."

Manhattan federal Judge John Koeltl sentenced Ahmed Sattar to 24 years in prison. He is serving time in the federal penitentiary in Marion, Ill., which once held Mafia godfather John Gotti.

In a statement to The Post, the young fireman did not mention his father, but described how his new job is a dream come true.

"This is what I have always wanted to do. This is who I have always wanted to be. I have always admired firefighters," he said.

He recalled when, as an 8-year-old, he came home from school to find his family standing outside their charred apartment, heartbroken over the fate of their missing cat, Tootsie.

"One of the firefighters standing in the street overheard, walked over and asked who was missing," Sattar recalled.

"My mother replied, 'Our cat,' and he went up and found her hiding under a bed and brought her down," he said.

"I remember being impressed and in awe of what just happened. ... I respect FDNY members, and I am humbled to have this opportunity to be a part of this incredible Department. The FDNY is a family that always supports each other, and now I am living it. It means the world to me to be here. When I look back on my career as a firefighter, I want to know that I did the best I could with the opportunity I was given."

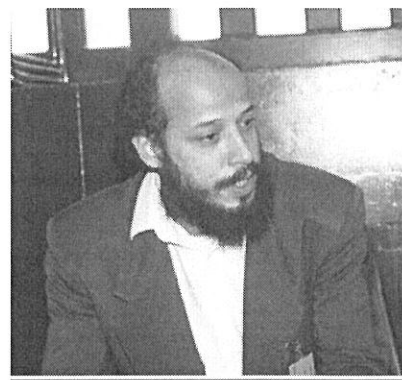
Omar's mother, Lisa, defended her husband online as "a man with morals and values." She also complained that Omar and a brother were victims of illegal discrimination when the owner of a local restaurant fired them as busboys in July 2004.

"My son Omar decided to go straight to the boss and ask him to his face why they were fired," she wrote. "Well, the truth came out in front of customers and other employees: 'My wife died on 9-11, every time I look at you I think of my wife and I don't want you working here!'"

Lisa Sattar, along with her three other adult children, attended "family day" at the FDNY Academy on Randalls Island last month. She posted a Facebook photo of Omar in his FDNY jacket marked "SATTAR."

On graduation day, she posted photos of Omar accepting his probationary firefighter certificate from Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro and holding it up.

"I am so proud of you my son. May Allah bless you and keep you safe," she wrote.



Ahmed Abdel Sattar
Said Elatab/Middle East Photo

Also graduating that day was John Palombo, whose firefighter dad, Frank, was killed in the World Trade Center terror attacks that claimed 343 Bravest on Sept. 11, 2001. Last year, John's brother Thomas also joined the FDNY.

Lisa Sattar in 2002. Her son, Omar, is seen standing behind her.
Robert Miller

The department assigned Sattar to Engine Co. 282 in Borough Park, a heavily Orthodox Jewish neighborhood.

An FDNY spokesman would not say whether the department knew of the elder Sattar's criminal record when it hired the son.

"All individuals — prior to appointment as a firefighter — must pass a comprehensive background check," said the spokesman, Frank Dwyer.

Officials noted that Omar Sattar worked for the city Sanitation Department for three years before joining the FDNY.

Several FDNY employees who learned of Sattar's family history are concerned, saying uniformed firefighters have virtually free access to hospitals, crime scenes and other official areas.

Facebook

Others were incredulous.

"They should hire Osama bin Laden's son and put him in the same firehouse," one cracked.

Another recalled Kevin Shea, a firefighter with Manhattan's Rescue Co. 1, who raced to the 1993 WTC bombing. While trying to reach a victim, Shea fell 45 feet into a pile of rubble, breaking bones. His leather helmet was credited with saving his life. Shea later searched for survivors at Ground Zero.

But Joseph Giacalone, a retired NYPD sergeant and adjunct professor at CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice, said sons or daughters of criminals can, and do, serve with distinction.

"This will probably be the first time we've hired someone with a family history of terrorism," Giacalone said.

Facebook

But he added, "If he passed the background check, we can't hold him accountable for the sins of the father. You gotta give this kid a fair shot."

Said FDNY spokesman Jim Long, "Omar Sattar will be judged on the merits of Omar Sattar."

FILED UNDER **FDNY, TERRORISM, TERRORISTS**

Recommended by

Testimony to NYC Council Fire and Emergency Management Committee 2/8/18

Paul Washington Vulcan Society

I am a Past President of the Vulcan Society and an almost 30 year FDNY veteran. I strongly feel that despite improving numbers of firefighters who are Black or People of Color, this administration receives a failing grade when it comes to it's relationship with Black firefighters. The following three issues that I am personally involved in illustrate my point: Commissioner Nigro's Memorial Day speech attacking me; FDNY creating obstacles to prevent Black firefighters from being assigned to my firehouse; and FDNY's total lack of being pro-active in dealing with racial issues.

- Commissioner Nigro took the last FDNY Memorial service, October 2017, as an opportunity to bond with thousands of White firefighters by denigrating me (a well-known figure in FDNY for fighting for increased diversity) for a front page article deriding me for a quote taken out of context. It was clearly a dog whistle, received by thousands of firefighters on our most solemn day. Many White firefighters approved of an uppity Black man being put in his place while many Black firefighters saw what Black Americans have seen for centuries; a White leader bonding with his White subordinates at the expense of the truth and their dignity.
- My fire company has been understaffed for more than a year despite Black firefighters requesting to transfer into it, be detailed into it or requesting to be placed there upon graduation from proby school. At a meeting with the Vulcan Society, Chief of Department James Leonard openly stated that he did not want to create a majority Black company. He wrongly stated that this had been done before and it didn't work and that it would make the White firefighters uncomfortable! This from the highest ranking uniformed member on the job. Since that meeting two years ago more acceptable sounding excuses have been given but Black firefighters still find it inordinately difficult to get into my firehouse. This, in a job where well connected firefighters literally get assigned to whatever firehouse they want.
- Finally, this administration deals with racial issues the same way I have seen every administration since Commissioner Safer deal with them. Almost nothing proactive is done and when the Vulcan Society proposes changes, those requests are largely ignored. The only difference is that FDNY must now answer to a Federal Judge (because of the same inactions from previous administrations).

Testimony of Oren Barzilay, President

Uniformed EMTs, Paramedics & Fire Inspectors, AFSCME Local 2507

Committee on Fire and Emergency Management

Oversight – Diversity in FDNY, New York City Council

February 8, 2018

Good morning, chairperson Borelli and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today with regards to the issue of diversity within the FDNY.

Diversity is not just about numbers, it is about ensuring respect, recognition, and equal treatment within the ranks. The bias that hinders diversity on the fire side of the Department also adversely impacts our members who serve on the EMS side of the Department.

While the Department, and Commissioner Nigro specifically, has made strides to improve diversity, our members are predominately minorities, and we have a significant number of women. While this may seem like an improvement, unfortunately despite this, or maybe because of this, EMS workers are severely underpaid, earning a fraction of what other emergency workers earn, are often over disciplined at a higher ratio compared to the fire side causing penalties being levied on them that include withholding pay. For employees who are already significantly underpaid, this can be devastating. On top of this, the EMS side of the Department is not always given the resources, attention or recognition it deserves.

EMS workers handle a good majority of the calls that come into the Fire Department. They put their lives on the line protecting New Yorkers in the most dangerous situations that face this City, from responding to hazardous materials, active shooters and terrorist attacks. Yet too often the Department forgets to recognize these contributions and the sacrifices we make.

I hope the work of this Committee will result in encouraging the Department to see the value of the EMS side of the Department, so that the work can begin in ensuring that not only is the FDNY diverse, but that diversity is embraced with the same dignity and respect as all other members of the FDNY, and given the same equal opportunity, which they have earned and deserve, to thrive within the Department.

I look forward to the chance to work with this Committee and the Department to remedy these problems and build the strongest possible FDNY for New Yorkers.

Testimony of Vincent Variale, President

Uniformed EMS Officers Union, Local 3621, DC 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO

Committee on Fire and Emergency Management

Oversight – Diversity in FDNY, New York City Council

February 8, 2018

Dear Chairperson Borelli and committee members of the Fire and Emergency Management Committee:

Thank you for holding this hearing and for helping to bring attention to the challenges the FDNY faces with regards to diversity.

We are committed to eliminating the bias which can lead to issues with diverse representation within the Department, but also, we are committed to working with the Department to ensure that there is a fair promotional process and equal employment for all members within the Department.

We must improve the Department's message to minorities and women. We can begin by improving the message to the Emergency Medical Service members. The EMS is the most diverse group within the FDNY. We need to have these members feeling respected, so then they will bring back a message to their respective communities that others who join the Department will also be treated as equals. In the absence of this commitment to recognizing and respecting EMS workers on equal footing with the rest of the Department, we will just perpetuate a perception that the FDNY is not welcoming to diverse members. The Department must send a better message that it is truly interested in engaging and respecting diversity.

This can begin by providing a civil service career ladder that helps eliminate the implicit and explicit bias that occurs in the promotional process now. This will be a step towards ensuring equal and fair treatment to the EMS workforce so that they are treated the same as other uniformed emergency service members.

As long as there is a negative image of the Fire Department and as long as there is unfair treatment within its ranks, we will continue to diminish the Department and hurt the New Yorkers who rely on us.

I very much look forward to providing this Committee and the Department with extensive examples and constructive paths forward to help remedy these challenges. Thank you for your time.

February 8th, 2018

Testimony re: Oversight; Diversity in the FDNY

My name is Sarinya Srisakul and I am the president of the United Women Firefighters. We represent the women firefighters and officers of the FDNY in New York City. Currently there are 67 of us serving in the department, which is a historic high, however the force is nearly 11,000 members large, making our percentage 0.6% and the worst gender disparity out of all major departments in the United States. By comparison, the national average is around 4% women and cities such as Minneapolis, San Francisco and Seattle are in the double digits. Although changes in the firefighter recruitment and hiring process has helped increase our numbers (41 of the 67 women have been hired since 2013), more major changes need to occur to achieve gender parity within the FDNY.

1. One of our organization's main tenets is to fill in the gaps left behind by the fire department in recruiting efforts as it relates to young women. For last year's campaign we helped create two commercials featuring women firefighters and aimed at young women. The FDNY did not help show the media we created and even met us with hostility when creating the portions where women firefighters wore uniforms. We also created our own women's focused events and have been consistently met with animosity and roadblocks by the FDNY. Last year's campaign was the first time in recent recruitment campaigns where there was very little collaboration between the FDNY and the United Women Firefighters.
2. There needs to be a comprehensive study on the higher attrition rates of women firefighter candidates. Women self select out of the firefighter process at much higher rates than any other under represented group and there has not been a comprehensive study to examine why this is the case. This data

needs to be used to better plan recruitment and retention strategies specifically for women.

3. The age maximum for non-military vet applicants for the FDNY test is 28 years old. No other major fire department has such a low age cap— most departments have no age limit and when they do, it is usually 35 years old. Since this low age limit coincides with child bearing years and women entering non-traditional fields at older ages, we believe this rule is gender discriminatory. Additionally the hiring tempo of once every 4 years severely limits the chances an individual gets to take this exam in their lifetime.
4. The workplace in firehouses severely needs to improve to be at a place of professionalism and equality. There are too many instances of women firefighters and other firefighters of diverse backgrounds getting hazed and bullied just because they are different. News stories of horrible instances consistently crop up and deter well meaning women and forward thinking New Yorkers from joining the force.

These issues outlined are but the tip of the iceberg. Many other cities in the United States and abroad have been able to successfully increase their numbers of women firefighters and we hope that a city as progressive as New York can one day do the same.

Sarinya Srisakul
President
United Women Firefighters
[\(917\) 559-1351](tel:9175591351)
www.unitedwomenfirefighters.org

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DR DARRIN BORCHER

Address: B.

I represent: SELF

Address: _____

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Date: 8 FEB 2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kristen Rouse

Address: 180 S. Oxford #2 Brooklyn 11217

I represent: NYC Veterans Alliance

Address: P.O. Box 532 NY NY 10159

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Appearance Card

2/8/18
I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

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Date: 2/8/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JOSEFINA SANFELIU

Address: 229 13th ST Brooklyn

I represent: LATINAS AGAINST EDNY CUTS

Address: same

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Date: 2/8/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PAUL Washington

Address: 582A Macdon St BK NY 11233

I represent: Vulcan Society

Address: 739 E PKwy BK NY 11213

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KHALID BAYLOD

Address: 739 Eastern PKwy BKlyn. NY

I represent: Vulcan Society of the FDNY

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: REGINA Wilson

Address: 739 Eastern Parkway

I represent: The Vulcan Society President

Address: _____

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Date: _____

2 of 2
Name: Yetta Kurland (PLEASE PRINT) W/ Owen Barzman

Address: 160 Broadway

I represent: 100 3621 EMS women

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

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Date: _____

1 of 2
Name: OREN BARZAN (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 150-39 14 AVE WHITESTONE NY 11387

I represent: FDNY EMS LOCAL 2507 EMS

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Commissioner Daniel Nigro (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 9 Metrotech Center

I represent: FDNY

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deputy Commissioner Laura Kavanagh

Address: 9 Metrotech Center

I represent: FDNY

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deputy Commissioner Cecilia Loving

Address: 9 Metrotech Center

I represent: FDNY

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Assistant Commissioner Nafecah Noonan

Address: 9 Metrotech Center

I represent: FDNY

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Assistant Commissioner Don Nguyen

Address: 9 Metrotech Center

I represent: FDNY

Address: _____

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THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Greco

Address: 1217 Little Whalcneck RD

I represent: Local 2507

Address: 150-39 14 AVE

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆