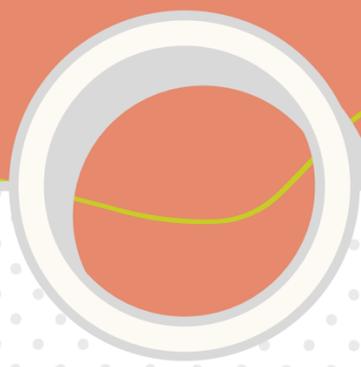


**SOME THOUGHTS ON PUBLIC SAFETY  
FROM A YOUNG BLACK WOMAN –  
NOT OF A PERSON OF COLOR OR A  
YOUNG GIRL, A YOUNG BLACK  
WOMAN.**



**Created by: Faith Anderson  
Public Safety Organizer**





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# Community Observations

Location 1: Standing on Lorraine Street.  
Across from Otsego Deli.

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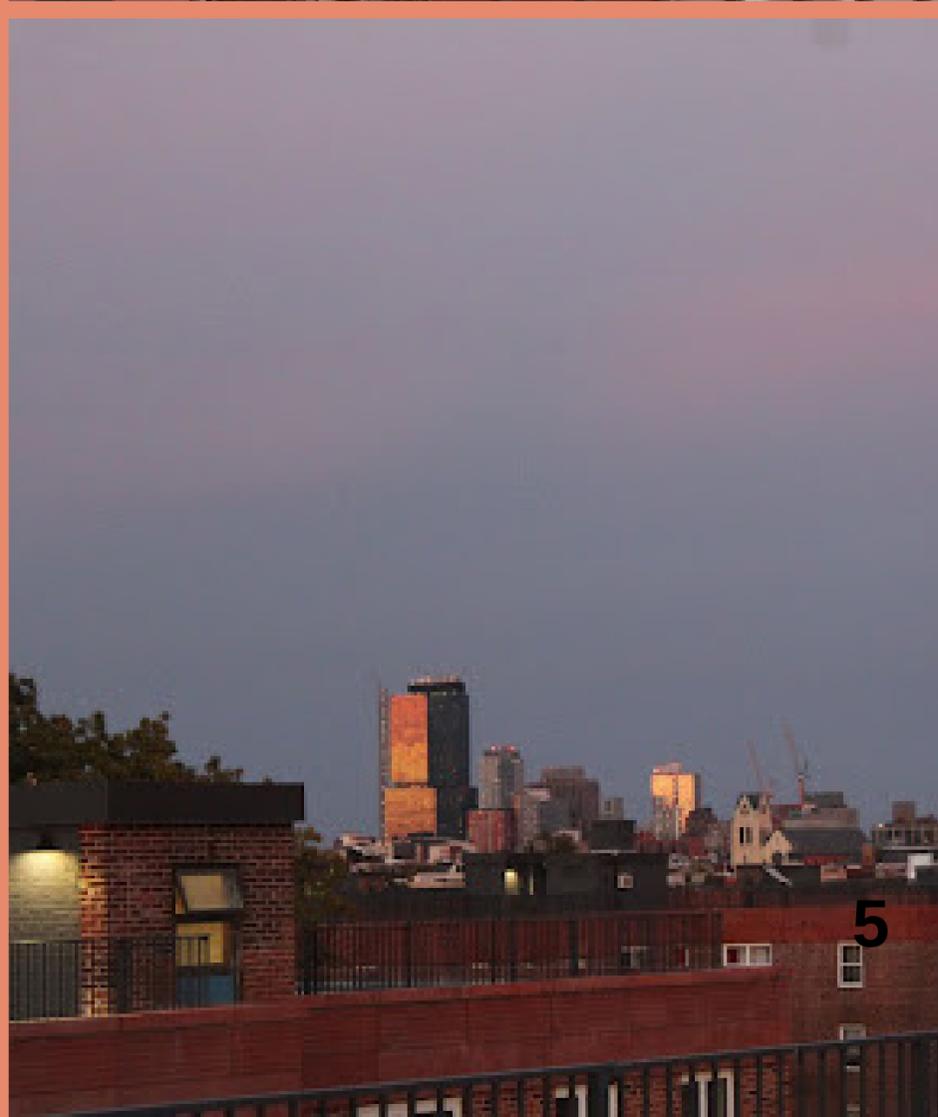
- First of all its cold,
- The sunset is really pretty omg.
- The colors of the sky
- I need a new phone case.
- So this is typically where a lot of people hang out.
- Why is this lady yelling so loud?
- A couple of guys just pulled up to the spot
- Who is this lady calling for ...oh she needs something to be unclicked.
- This sunset is beautiful
- Like two buses just passed by
- A lady with a pink outfit just left the chicken spot
- Her outfit cute.
- A guy in his scooter left the barbershop.
- I think it passed I think it's the 57. Its the good bus too
- Pink lady just went to the store
- Scooter guy wet the the chicken spot
- The barber shop got some got just about 5-7 ppl in there just an estimate.
- Its cold
- The sunset is really pretty
- A couple just passed the store

# Community Observations

Location 1: Standing on Lorraine Street.  
Across from Otsego Deli.

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- There been like to guys that's been in front of the store for a hot minute
- The boys who pulled up earlier look like they about to leave
- A 57 Bus just passed
- The guys left
- I see a lady with really nice burgundy coat in front of the chicken spot
- A grey car passed
- Not a lot of people are here



# Location 2: Valentino Pier

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- There's a lot of people despite the cold
- It's peaceful here
- All the benches are full with people having peaceful convo's
- One pair even has their legs up
- Sun looks beautiful
- The blocks one losing the "Red Hook" lettering
- There's a man swimming
- A family photoshoot is occurring rn
- Cold



# **Interview with Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet and Ms. Tina**

**Date: 12/2/2021**

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**  
Just in case this isn't, keep it right here.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**  
Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Faith Anderson, public Safety Organizer:**  
Okay. Thank you for your time today. My name is Faith, I'm with Public Safety. Thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule to have a quick chat with me.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**  
Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**  
This is being recorded for the sake of the project, for the public safety organizers and yeah, do we have your consent to publish?

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**  
Yes.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Uh, my name is Jesse Fields.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

Okay. Can you tell me a bit about where you grew up and how you find yourself in the service?

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Oh yeah, well, you know, growing up in, uh, my time, in the early 60's or 50's, like 50's, the Browns was a very tough place to grow up. And, uh, that's one's choice of how they wanna grow or take their education, which mine was pretty good. I went from boxing to martial arts and went on into, uh, high school track across a little bit of cross country, I did and then as I grew up, just leaning to my adulthood, I got further and further into martial arts and, uh, I went into the military at the age of, uh, 18.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

And, I took their training, taking their training and went to Vietnam at the end of my training, but they required some people that went to paratroop schools to stay longer which I did as well.

in the service, it's Special Forces training, training, and then, uh, you know, any other curricular activities to better your position and stuff you could take at the end of military.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

I had very good discipline, I liked it all because I come from a disciplined family.

So it wasn't nothing for me. Even the physical activities wasn't nothing for me because we all played when we were kids, jumping from one building to another, climbing the backyards, having dogs and police chases. So it wasn't nothing to us as far as coming up in that setting. It helped me out very much, but I had a very educated and disciplined family. They were very educated and, uh, that helped me to develop and grow into a lot of job opportunities that I have taken when I went out, came out the service and what not.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

And, uh, it wasn't a beautiful thing, it was a harsh thing when you go to reality to find out that the people are pretty much like you on the other side. There's really no difference, uh, you know, and it's a thing of, uh, getting to know people so people break and pray, sleeping with them, learn their language.

Um, sometimes, there's things that you got to do that you don't wanna do in the service. And, uh, of course, the consequences are very, very high that you, uh, pay for mentally and physically. But you must go on. So, uh, you know, and that's on both sides, whether it's your enemies, but you come to find out, the enemies are not your enemies as you thought it was told to you, but you serve your country and you serve your country well because that's where you're from. And, uh, that's what you do. And you be good at what you do.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

And, uh, many of my friends were very good at what they did, and some, well, a lot of them didn't make it home. So I've been truly blessed, and once they passed, they are truly blessed too because they continued what they were taught to do to serve, and they serve well.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

Wow, that's a lot. Can you tell me about jumping off buildings when you were a little bit younger.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Yeah, that was like, um... Well, the way New York is now is different from the way it was back in the days of the 50s. So they had a lot of backyards, they had clothes lines. When they say clothes lines, for the young people, that's what people used to go out there and hang their clothes, to air their clothes right after they washed them. And, uh, they put pins in the rope, tie from one pole to the other, and, uh, they would hang their undershirts and all that kinda clothes, pants and stuff, so that the air would blow through 'em, keep them nice, crisp and cool. With the, uh, backyards were full of dogs, vicious, ferocious dogs.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

Oh.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

And we used to jump off of seven feet, seven-story buildings and jump from one building to another, that maybe sometimes stretched as far as six, seven feet a piece and God forbid if you miss, you know, no need to add to that story, wondering how you wind up, you know? But that was part of our curricular activities, it was fun.

We saw it as having the cops chase up and down the block or whatever, it was all fun, you know? We had, um, gangs that we belong to and, uh, you know, quite naturally, we were committed to our gangs, and, uh, we looked after one another because it was family, uh.

Even the guys that we grew up with went to school, and even some of the girls, we all are family, we looked out for one another. And we took care of one another. Some things our parents didn't know and they shouldn't know.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

But we were safe in our community. You know, your parents were safe, you knew that because your brother, your cousin or whatever, uh, was in a gang and you knew them and you knew them well. You know, and your family came through from another neighborhood, of course, they would be challenged, like anybody else. And they would look out for you. If your mother had bags or your grandmother had bags, they would say, "Mrs. Perry, would you like me to take you in the house and let me pick these bags up for you? And what, how is your day? Ms. Perry, you want me to go to the store?" You know, and, uh, it went on and on. That's just an example of many, many names that we looked out for one another, helping cross the street, to make sure that they were safe.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**  
And we have respect. You know, we watched the mouths of cuss words that we used. And you know, that was a funny thing too because a lot of the older people back in the days, when we were younger, were church-going people. And the church-going people were the ones that held the community together.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**  
So apparently, you returned from the service, how did you get connected to Red Hook?

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**  
Well, uh, actually what it was, I was connected to my wife's cousin, which I moved from Brownsville to Williamsburg, and South side I met him, and through him, I started visiting this place called Red Hook. I had no idea what it looked like the way it was on the map, didn't care. I was just hanging out, guys hanging out. I met her cousin and, uh, he told me about it, where he was going, so we went out, he invited me. He went out the Red Hook, and I started hanging around and then, I met his cousin, which is Tina, my wife now. Then I married, it went on pretty good from there, you know. We all grew up together, on 22, 21.  
And we hung out.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

I was still gang-affiliated then too. I never left the gang till I got older and we all got older, but... Then I went to college. And, um, I was in law enforcement. And I started becoming interested in going to a particular college

**Ms.Tina(Jesse's Wife):**

Medgar Evers

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Huh?

**Ms.Tina(Jesse's Wife):**

Medgar Evers

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Yeah ,Medgar Evers 'cause I like politics. And, uh, from there, I went into security. From security, I got deeper into law enforcement, and got a little graduation certificate from law enforcement. And, uh, I wanna become the manager, supervisor. From there, became captain of the security team. I was part of the veterans administration as far as homeless veterans. Vietnam veterans, big shout out to all my brothers and all those from Afghanistan and Kuwait.

Big shout out to you, love you all 'cause we always won, my brothers. Don't ever forget that. And, uh, I had the opportunity of meeting several people. I went into, uh... Forgot right now, another university and I started becoming a little bit of a so-called writer.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

And I met Mayor Dinkins. He came down to visit us in Long Island City for veterans, homeless veterans. And he was looking for veterans that had a good background. Mine is Special Forces. You know, to all my Special Forces brothers and non-Special Forces brothers, keep up the good work. You know, God is with us all now matter what we think. He's with us all. We all have our problems, but they soon dissipate, trust that.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

However, um, I was selected to be a personal security. I went to cover with them. And right after that, inauguration, that was the inauguration a matter of fact there was yet. Oh, I met other people and they liked my background, and out of 600 people, I was the one that they chose to be a part of their team, special security agent. It all went good for me, it really did. It all went good for me.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Then I did the Boy Scouts and, uh, I worked with the Boy Scouts for a couple, I had my own team, which got my clothes in the closet there.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Yes, the Red Hook Boy Scouts. You can pull it out in the closet there, you'll see it there if you want to, so... I'm the first Boy Scout that was in the division, and I did that for awhile, and I loved it because I was a part of my lifestyle as far as teaching children. A matter of fact, I must state when I was in the service, that was really my whole background. It was really teaching people how to survive and live life. And to better educate yourself. So Boy Scouts was a easy thing for me. I became a Boy Scoutmaster, and I love that very much.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

I remember a kid, young adult, he says, he says, "Do we have to wear the uniforms?" And I looked at him and I said, "Why wouldn't you wear the uniform?" He's with his parents. He says, "Because they all laugh at me." I said, "Who laugh at you?" He said, "People in the street."

I said, "You know, let me tell you something. When you put on a uniform or anything, whether it's your civic clothes that you wear going to church, there's something that means something that you got to stand for, and stand into." I says, "Never let someone else tell you what you're wearing and representing, especially something as the American Boy Scouts, that you are, that you look funny." I said, "If I can wear it, you can wear it." And I said, "I have mine." I said, "What the beginning of all things, stand by what you feel. The reason why you joined the Boy Scouts 'cause you know it was a good thing. Nobody makes you do anything." And I said, "And the uniform goes along with it. So hold your head up proudly when you put this uniform on. Be proud. Let no one change your mind about who you are, what you are. You stand by that." And I said, "You'll get through today."

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

And when he wore it, (laughs) a few days, he didn't even know he had it on. He was so happy to represent American Boy Scouts. He was so pleased. His mother and father were pleased. And it was a proud thing 'cause people were looking at him with dignity when he walked the street as a Boy Scout.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

So, um to further elaborate on your experience being a master.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Mm.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

A master scout and you know, for Boy Scouts of Red Hook, what did you teach them, and why did you choose to teach them those things? And what type of skills did you teach them and why?

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Well number one, what's missing in most neighborhoods, their parents either don't have the time because they're working two and three jobs to teach their kids the most important principle on Earth. And that thing is called dignity. Dignity means a whole lotta respect, have respect for people, have respect for yourself. The other thing was that it taught the children, not children, young adults how to be self-reliant instead of on someone else they relied on themselves.

It taught them teamwork, how to put things together to become a functional team without, you know, having arguments and, and how to resolve things quicker and, uh, better, how to listen, uh, things like that. Uh, it also taught them cleanliness. It taught them neatness. It taught them how to honor their mother, their father and also people that are their seniors, to respect.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

Yeah, why did you choose to teach them those things?

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Choose to teach them because as a child, myself, and when I say a child, from, uh, my parents, it made me feel important, it made me feel good inside that you care enough for what they had done for you, the things that, you know, your grandparents have done. It made you appreciate, uh, it made you feel really good inside that you can show this to others in different ways, like being courteous, being respectful, being resourceful and being honest. Those were the great things as, when you grow up, to see a person's face change because of the honesty and the courtesy that you have today.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

What do you remember most about your scouts and about Red Hook at that time in the 50's and the 60's?

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Well, the thing I remember is when we went camping. (laughs) And they were up for their rewards. We used to go camping and for those who don't know, the rewards come with what you're learning why you're in the Boy Scouts. First thing you got to know, the Boy Scout Code of Honor. That's the first thing you learn is the Code of Honor. The second thing you learn through the Code of Honor, you have classes on how to tie something as simple as you think it is not so simple at all. How to tie a certain knot in a rope or string. And it can become very complicated, but if you learn the story behind the knot, of how to tie the knot and whatnot. You're able to present this to the tester that you are able to tie a specific knot in a certain way you pass. And then you move on to eagle, which is the highest reward a Boy Scout member could get is the eagle.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

You learn how to cook, provide. You learn how to start your fires. You know, set up your own tents, read maps, learn about plants. You learn about frogs, different insects and animals, why they're important. You learn about nature, and you respect nature too once you really, really get into it, you respect it. Even a rock. You know what a rock is about? Something you think, there's no better rock. That's what makes you think.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

Um, so what do you remember about Red Hook, uh, back in the day around, you know, just-

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Jesse. (laughs) Well, Red Hook is like any other place really, um. And I mean, uh, you can look around you and, uh, remember where you come from. You know, maybe not the time that I came from, but a lot of things are going on and surrounding you. A lot of things that's changing, uh, developing from what it was maybe, uh, it depends on your age what it was 10, 15 years ago. There are certain things you remember and certain things change, you know. Uh, I remember when we had the horses running through the street and all over.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

New York had cows run in the street. Like they did in the West. Oh yeah, they had buildings where they milk the cows and you get the milk in the little jars for like 10 cents, 25 cents a bottle of milk and stuff like that. Oh yeah. Vegetable man came in the horse and, uh, buggy and had all the fruits and vegetables, I think. So things change tremendously. The bridges that you see today, they didn't stretch that long. Some of them were wooden bridges.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

Mm.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Yeah. Well, so, you know, uh, everything was quite different then than it is now. Now, the younger ones are looking at modernization, uh... What do they call the young now? Millen-  
millen-

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

Millennial.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

I'm not a millennial, I'm Gen, Gen X, Gen Z or something.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Uh-huh (affirmative). Uh, you know, if you, if you look at where you are, how things have changed back in the days like you're asking me questions, you're all gonna one day say the same thing. This here is gonna look like, uh, like antique, you know? The computers, the phones you have, you know, and all of that, is gonna be outdated, it's gonna be obsolete. Even so why, I remember back in the days and your kids and your kids' kids are gonna say, "Well-

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**  
(laughs)

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

... what is that dumb looking thing over there? What did that do? What..." You know, that's if this world lasts that long. As if it lasts that long.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Mm, cars are gonna be flying, it's not gonna be called cars no more. And pretty soon, people aint gonna have money no more, it's gonna be a different system all together. For the bad or for the good, it's gonna be whatever.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

So what was your, what would your vision of a safe Red Hook look like?

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Well, a safe Red Hook is always when somebody can wake up and honestly go to work or go to school, or get from one place to another without being raped, mugged or shot and get home, that would be a safe Red Hook. That'll be a safe life.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

Uh, what, what resources would the community need in order to achieve that vision?

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Hmm. Well, I think the community would need, ..it would need better centers for kids, young adults, something that would hold their interests, but instead of that, the individuals are putting out all of these nice little centers thinking of themselves. They need to get down and truly, truly look at what these young adults are saying, what they need. Young adults now, they're babies having babies you know, they have a lot of promises, heard a lot of promises, some unkept unfortunately.

They need to stay and keep their word. They need to show some of these young adults that you're really out there to put in more than 50%, take them there and get them there too, where they can achieve their goals, let their hands go. Show them the way and let them learn how to get there, to finish what they want to finish.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Um, I'm for higher education and I'm for good learning facilities, you know, things like that. And then, I'm for helping the parents because everybody in life makes some mistake and it's not a mistake, it helps you to learn how to do things better. It's not really a mistake. Because if you said it was a mistake then why were you born, hmm?

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

You know? So what- I mean, it helps you and it helps a lot of parents. I don't wanna hear, I wouldn't wanna hear that stuff. And I must add this being that you didn't ask that, I hate to hear an adult or your young person say, "Well, look where I came from." It has nothing to do with where you come from. It has every bit to do with how you think, how you accept life, how you, you, uh, take things to make your life more better than what it is.

There are people less fortunate out here, and there are fine stories, and that, I slept in the park for months and months and ate out the garbage. They let their pride die and you know they had doctors, they wanted to be a doctor all their life. Their stories, of many stories if you really sit and listen, there's achievers that had way less than a person that had a whole lot of money, all the opportunities and whatnot and achieved their dreams.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

So, don't blame it on your mother or your father or your cousin, brother or sister. What it is, it's all on you. And stop feeling sorry for yourself 'cause you'll get nowhere in life, Alright? You're getting nowhere in life. So therefore, I think the people should understand, those are the basics, one of the basic rules in life, stop feeling sorry for yourself and get up off your knees and stop pointing your fingers at somebody else when it's you all your life that is your own destruction and whatnot.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

What do you believe the role of the police should be in terms of your vision of safety in Red Hook?

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Well, I think the police department should be reeducated. The old school police need to be, uh, history because they have old principles back to slavery, and they still hold on to it. Their great, great grandfathers pass on the old slavery tradition. They pick it up way before they become police officers, and they have the slave mentality. And so, when they become a cop like their grandfathers and great grandfather, they take that dirty laundry with them, and they pollute the other cops that wanna be good cops.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Uh, I'm not saying that if you're a good cop, nothing's gonna contaminate you, you're just gonna continue to be a good cop. But when you have certain racism and prejudices in a society of, of, uh, which is law enforcer ain't carry, uh, a life and death, uh, evaluation at somebody, it can become most resentful and hateful, and it destroys, enables, it destroys our country, and it grows and grows and grows.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

What I think is that the new cops that are in, that have whatever kind of friends,

brown skin and don't even think about it, they just got friends and whatnot, they all hangout together, brother, sister, whatever, I think those are the right cops because they don't have time thinking about that antiquated sudden racism. Dumb people are brain dead. They shouldn't exist, they're brain dead.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

The last question would be, how can we bridge the gap between different generations within our community?

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

So I think that most of the children should sit down. Not children. Young adults should basically just have a day out of a week and say, "You know what, I like Mrs. Hill over there. I like the family, I would like to see what it was like for them." Sit down, talk to them, go to church with them. Say, "You know what Ms. Hill..." do you go to church and if not, then, you know, they don't, but just I like to hear your story, and keep your mouth shut and listen to what they say. Listen to what older people say. They can save your life because what you think is so old is still new. You just don't get it yet. Nobody applied it. They're so busy thinking about what's old and what is old is not as old 'cause they never heard before and never saying it.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

So therefore, these older people can save your life like they can save the world. So they've gotten older, they have become more refined. You have to stop thinking, younger people have to stop thinking like I stopped thinking that I'm gonna be young all my life and I'm gonna be able to jump a fence 10 feet high. And then, they never gonna end. No, no, no, no, no, no. We all think like that. But appreciate your elders 'cause that's the only thing you have young people, the only thing that you have in this world today that can teach you something and show you something is them elders. If you just open your eyes, your heart and your mind, they have a whole lot to tell you. And then, some of them make you laugh 'cause they were drunk anyway. (laughs)

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

They can be funny too. But you know the real ones from the false ones.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

Thank you for your time today. I really appreciate it.

**Jesse, Red Hook Resident, Retired Vet:**

Thank you.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

You did a really good job, Uncle Jesse.

**Faith Anderson, Public Safety Organizer:**

Did a lot of important things.

**Ms.Tina (Jesse's Wife):**

That was excellent.

# **SOME THOUGHTS ON PUBLIC SAFETY FROM A YOUNG BLACK WOMAN – NOT OF A PERSON OF COLOR OR A YOUNG GIRL, A YOUNG BLACK WOMAN.**

*An Auto-Ethnography of a young person of color from/working in Red Hook*

Research Question: What does public safety mean to me?

As a young black woman, I feel indifferent about public safety because the public safety system doesn't necessarily do much for someone like me. In fact, black femicide is rampant in the U.S, and we have the highest mortality rate in childbirth. I especially feel indifferent about public safety because Black women get killed every six hours. It also has its benefits in certain aspects. I lied; there aren't any benefits. The only thing I can depend on is being able to put someone in jail. I can only protect myself and arm myself. This is something that me and many other black women have come to realize. The thought of public safety is like a facade, a dream that will never apply to someone like me. Because if we are being honest, who is protecting black women? Black men are killing us left and right in domestic disputes, along with the police killing us for being black. Black mothers are coddling their sons. But those sons are the same ones that will kill us. It makes me ask myself again: why does public safety matter to me? Who can I depend on? What can I say for sure will always work in my favor to protect me? Nothing. Time and time again, the public safety systems have failed me and many other black women. The men we march for end up being our demise. So, what does public safety mean to me? The idea of public safety through protection from black men and the police is a sick joke that repeats itself over and over again. Sometimes, it's painfully funny.



I suppose the police can help black women get an order of protection against people who harass them. The police are narcissistic – helpful when they want to be – but they consistently remind me that they are a form of oppression. Hence, I have an indifferent attitude towards them as a form of public safety. Public safety is the community's cleanliness, such as consistent garbage disposal, which would help decrease the number of rodents in the community. I mean, I've seen a raccoon attempt to enter someone's apartment through the window. It was appalling. To see this woman swat it away from her window. I know it would not have had access to her window had the scaffolding not been so close to her home. I've heard that there were even possums around the homes that we live in. I doubt the rodent issue would be an issue if the rampant construction wasn't here. I've personally seen rats viscously, savagely ravage through the garbage that's been left in a dumpster for less than an hour.

Ever since the construction of the Red Hook Coastal Resilience projects, it has changed the community. I now live on a construction site. Red Hook was once a vibrant, lush, and green community. It is now barren and filled with metal bridges to walk throughout the neighborhood, with what seems like endless piles of contaminated soil. Growing up here, we didn't have much. We had enough to get us by. After Hurricane Sandy, things really hit the fan. The construction blindsided Red Hook like an unexpected death of a close family member or a wasp biting me while walking to the store to get ice cream during the hot summer days. It was the most harrowing feeling to see the trees & parks that I've touched and played in. The nature around me was severed, torn down, and shredded to pieces.



There was no warning or signs put up to warn the residents of Red Hook that the hurricane was going to happen. Now the place that I've held so deep in my heart, a part of me was gone and barren, leaving me and many others with nothing. There is nowhere for me to sit anymore and read my books. There is nowhere for the neighborhood men to play cards, for the children frolic and play amongst themselves. I don't want to take a walk in my own neighborhood because where can I even go? I used to look at the park in front of my apartment building as a place to find a small piece of mind when my house gets too much to be in. Now I have nothing. This loss has felt like an empty and hollow feeling that I couldn't put my finger on at first. Perhaps there was a warning or two that they passed along in secret. Not enough to warn the general public.

When I walk to the Valentino Pier, it is like walking from the barren part of town to the flourishing side. This is why I find solace in the back end of Red Hook. It's a place where I can just be myself. I know the chance of a familiar face coming up to speak to me is slim. I know I can just walk around endlessly, taking in the scene of everything because it is aesthetically pleasing. It reminds me of any white, mainstream, or coming of age movie. In these kinds of movies, the main characters walk home happily. Or take any scene from Sex and the City, where Carrie walks through Washington Square Park. It looks peaceful, safe, and pleasing to the soul – simply enjoyable.

There is one experience walking to Valentino pier that I will never forget. That day, I woke up early; it had to be around six or in the morning. The feeling of dread took over my body. I didn't want to get up so early on a Saturday. After contemplating my life decisions, I proceeded to get dressed. I walked to Baked and grabbed a cup of coffee. Even though I know nothing about coffee, I ordered it anyway, iced, with a blueberry muffin. Then I walked to the deli and got an omelet. I walked to the pier with my coffee and food, and I remember remaining at the dock for hours just continuously throwing rocks in the water and not one person saying a word to me and being at complete peace. When I'm here, in the back of Red Hook, I feel like an invisible woman. It's exhilarating to know that I won't have to speak to anyone. No subtle "hey, how you doing," or stopping to have small talk. Most of all, I don't have to worry about men as much. Because I am invisible, no one is studying me and my every move.

I can compare that experience to a walk to the one laundromat in Red Hook. The difference is jarring. I say hi to people as I walk, and sometimes I have the chance to see someone I know and have a conversation about nothing. The men make me uncomfortable walking past them. They would stare and sometimes come up and talk to me, Even though I am not interested..

Next, I can't tell you how enraging it is to see the endless garbage and the rats running across my feet from time to time. Public health is also a public safety issue. The smell of the trash is nauseating. As I run my errands throughout the neighborhood, his question always comes to my head: if the roles were reversed, would the people in the back of Red Hook accept these living conditions that we have to live in? Would these conditions occur in the first place? The answer is always no. No matter how many times I constantly rationalize it. The answer is always no. The next question that I always have is: Are we neglected like this because we are black? Yes. The answer is always yes. I try to reason with the conclusion I've come up with in my head. It's for the greater good... Okay, but this more significant reality that we are speaking of isn't until three years later 2023. So what good does that do for the many other people who live with this and me? No, actually, it just makes me mad that all reasonable thought is gone.



Why should I live in the fucking middle of a construction project that should've started years ago? Why choose now to do this? We have to breathe in this toxic air from the trucks coming in and out of Red Hook. Not the CB-6 board, not anyone. There isn't any sense of urgency because they don't have to live in this reality every damn day. They don't have to hear the loud drilling, which wakes me up at the crack of dawn.

This isn't the reality that the people who give the "okay" to these projects are forced to live in. As stated previously, the speed of completion for this project isn't something Red Hook residents agreed to. I understand that some of the delay in finishing construction is caused by Hurricane Sandy's damage, but a lot of what you see in the pictures can be avoided.

With all the shifting and adjustments in Red Hook, what I hope to see is a permanent change for the better. I don't wish to see the inequality of life between the front and back of the Red Hook. I want to see a better relationship with the police in the community. For me, they feel invisible, and I am not sure if that's a good or bad thing. I wish for had access to them. I want to see better communication surrounding the plans in store for improving Red Hook. For example, it shouldn't take nearly three months for the posters to explain what is happening in Red Hook. Or, it shouldn't be that the community only has 48 hours to decide whether they want to have the recreation center open anymore. It's like those people in power who planned this project are setting Red Hook up for failure. I wish to see the same standard of cleanliness set for the back of Red Hook and with NYCHA housing. Lastly, I would like to see more investment made in the people of Red Hook This would mean a bigger space for RHI, fixing the recreational center, and getting the senior center back up and running.

**Definition, for Faith (a young black woman)**

- Not feeling like I have to go somewhere else outside of my own area, to feel at peace.
- “Okay, nobody will talk to me and leave me at peace.”
- Peace of mind
- No garbage, no rats, no constant construction

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