

# TIMES Ledger

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## A community comes to grips with an officer's death

By Prem Calvin Prashad

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The killing of an NYPD officer in East Harlem sent shock waves across the Guyanese community in Brooklyn and Queens, as its members struggled to come to grips with the loss of Officer Randolph Holder, an immigrant from Guyana, whose family settled in Queens. Prior to joining the NYPD in July 2010, Holder served with the NYPD Auxiliary with the 101st Precinct in Far Rockaway. He was third generation law enforcement, as his father, Randolph Holder Sr., and grandfather served as police officers in Guyana.

Holder and his partner were patrolling in plainclothes near the Wagner Houses in East Harlem Oct. 20, when he was shot pursuing Tyrone Howard, drug dealer and addict, who had been in and out of prison over the last decade. A repeat drug offender, Howard had been spared prison through a drug diversion program, but had been a suspect in at least two shootings, officials said.

An advocate of community policing, Holder was assigned to Service Area 5, an area designated by the Housing Bureau of the NYPD where officers work with public housing residents on safety and crime prevention.

Brooklyn Assemblywoman Roxanne Persaud (D-Canarsie) praised Holder for his commitment to "keeping our communities safe" and called for reform and a review of the criminal justice system, decrying "policies that allows criminal to be out in the streets instead of in a criminal justice facility." Persaud also backed stronger gun control legislation and emphasized the need to "close the back doors on guns that are being brought into our city."

Persaud, who won the 59th Assembly District seat in November 2014, is the first Guyanese elected official in New York City and represents a heavily Afro-Guyanese population in Brooklyn. Persaud said Holder was a resident of her district.

Little Guyana, in Richmond Hill, mourned Saturday night with a vigil at the intersection of 103rd Avenue and Liberty Avenue, near Sybil's Bakery. With the neighborhood sign draped in purple ribbons, the Indo-Caribbean community expressed their condolences and called for greater unity. Organizers coordinated with the office of state Sen. James Sanders Jr. (D-Jamaica) to invite Rudolph Holder Sr. and his family, who arrived with a police escort. Kenrick Ross, executive director of the Richmond Hill-based Indo-Caribbean Alliance, expressed "profound gratitude for [Officer Holder's] courage and heroism in making our city safer and stronger."

Richard David, of Community Board 9, noted "this tragic crime reminds us of the hundreds of thousands of Guyanese Americans who call Queens home and are committed to keeping our city the greatest place on earth." David also railed against "rising crime" in the city. "We can see it, we can feel it," he said.

On Sunday night, organizers held a "Wake Night" for the slain officer at the St. Stephens Church Hall, on Newkirk Avenue, in Brooklyn. The theme, "parting is gathering," was in line with Guyanese tradition and was a celebration of life with "food, drinks and games."

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Since the shooting, Mayor Bill de Blasio and other elected officials have walked a fine line, balancing campaign promises to reform New York City's notorious bail and sentencing system with preventing the release of potentially dangerous offenders. Howard was suspected but never convicted in a 2009 shooting in East Harlem and was put into a drug diversion program after a drug arrest last year, officials said. Prosecutors detailed his suspected involvement in a 2011 sentencing, but as the charges were dropped, the shooting did not factor in the current judge's decision to set bail at \$35,000 and send Howard to drug diversion.

In a joint statement with the mayor's office, Councilman Rory Lancman (D-Hillside) slammed the current bail system as "dysfunctional and dangerous," sending low level offenders to Rikers, but precluding judges from considering the potential danger a defendant might pose when setting bail. Bail is currently assessed based on "flight risk," but 47 other states formalize considerations for possible violent behavior.

Holder was scheduled to be buried in Guyana Saturday after his funeral Wednesday at the Greater Allen AME Cathedral in Jamaica.

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