

Nassau Police Hired 17 Former NYPD Officers Accused of Misconduct, Reports Say

BY TIMOTHY BOLGER - JULY 30, 2021



Members of the Nassau County police in Wantagh in 2011. (REUTERS/Shannon Stapleton)



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The Nassau County Police Department reportedly hired 17 former New York Police Department (NYPD) officers who were accused of misconduct over a 5-year period, sparking outrage among critics calling for police reform.

The 17 officers were the subject of substantiated New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board complaints or named as defendants in federal civil rights lawsuits, according to an investigative report jointly published last month by The Intercept and [New York Focus](#). The only one that the report named was Matthew Castellano, an ex-NYPD cop who joined the city police force in 2011.

“In 2015, Castellano was one of two officers to stop Sheena Stewart, a Black social worker who was seven months pregnant, on her commute to work. Castellano pulled her from the driver’s seat, threw her to the ground, and called her a ‘fat bastard,’ according to a lawsuit filed by Stewart, who sued the officers and the department for abusive policing and racial discrimination,” the outlets reported. “Stewart was suspended from her job at a residential rehabilitation center after being charged with disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, and obstructing governmental administration; the charges against her were later dropped.”

“It is disturbing but unsurprising that the Nassau County Police Department hired a former NYPD officer accused of assaulting a pregnant Black woman, and then gave him a pay raise,” said Nia Adams.

Castellano reportedly resigned later that year and the case was settled for \$75,000 before the Nassau County Police Department hired him at a higher salary.

“It is disturbing but unsurprising that the Nassau County Police Department hired a former NYPD officer accused of assaulting a pregnant Black woman, and then gave him a pay raise,” said Nia Adams, a community organizer with the Long Island Progressive Coalition. “Not only should Matthew Castellano be fired immediately, the county should also release information regarding the other 16 NYPD officers it hired who have been accused of misconduct, as well as all the disciplinary records related to repeal of section 50-a of New York Civil Rights Law. If Nassau County Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder knew about Castellano’s past and still kept him on the department’s payroll, it would only further demonstrate that Ryder is unfit to lead the police department and should resign.”

Nassau police said that Castellano is not on the force anymore.

“All Nassau County police applicants must undergo an extensive background investigation which they must pass to be appointed by Civil Service as a Nassau County Police recruit at the time of swearing in,” Detective Lt. Richard LeBrun, chief spokesman for the department, told the *Press*. “Officer Mathew Castellano was hired in 2016 under another administration and as of March 2021, while under Commissioner Ryder’s tenure, Officer Castellano is no longer employed by the Nassau County Police Department.”

LeBrun did not address the status of the other 16 officers or the calls for Ryder to resign. The commissioner previously rebuffed earlier calls for him to resign following comments he made to *Newsday* suggesting that more Black police applicants aren't hired because many minority applicants weren't raised by both parents under one roof.

"Mr. Ryder, you're out, and we're calling for you to resign, because you, through your actions, have proven that you cannot address the issues of race when it comes to policing in Nassau County," civil rights attorney and Long Island Advocates for Police Accountability (LIAFPA) member Fred Brewington said in June during a news conference outside his office in Hempstead. During a police academy graduation ceremony the next day, Ryder said he's not stepping down.