



BILL DE BLASIO
MAYOR

CIVILIAN COMPLAINT REVIEW BOARD
100 CHURCH STREET 10th FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10007 ♦ TELEPHONE (212) 912-7235
www.nyc.gov/ccrb



FREDERICK DAVIE
CHAIR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 13, 2020

MEDIA CONTACT

Ethan Teicher
press@ccrb.nyc.gov
917-224-0422

**CCRB Announces Re-Appointment of Chair, Designation of
Inaugural Public Advocate Appointee to Board**

*In Addition to Changes Stemming from November Election, Agency Also Welcomes New Police
Commissioner Designee*

New York, NY – The New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), the nation’s largest independent police oversight entity, announced on Wednesday that Mayor Bill de Blasio and City Council Speaker Corey Johnson jointly appointed Rev. Fred Davie chair of the Board. Davie, who de Blasio independently appointed to lead the Agency in 2018, is the first CCRB chair to be jointly selected by the Mayor and Speaker under the terms of a recent amendment to the New York City Charter. Previously, the Mayor had sole discretion over appointments for the role.

The Charter change also authorized the Public Advocate to name an appointee. Public Advocate Jumaane Williams selected Esmeralda Simmons, former executive director of the Medgar Evers College Center for Law and Social Justice, as the CCRB’s first Public Advocate appointee.

Per the terms of the Charter, the 15-member Board also must include three individuals with prior law enforcement experience. Retired New York City Police Department Lt. Willie Freeman is the CCRB’s newest Police Commissioner designee.

About Fred Davie

Rev. Fred Davie was appointed as chair of the CCRB by Mayor Bill de Blasio in April 2018. Davie also is a member of the Mayor’s Clergy Advisory Council (CAC) and is co-convener of the CAC’s public safety committee. He is Executive Vice President of the Union Theological Seminary (UTS) in the City of New York, a position he has held since August 15, 2011.

Prior to his role at UTS, Davie served as Interim Executive Director and Senior Director of the Social Justice and LGBT programs at the Arcus Foundation. Davie also served on President Barack Obama’s transition team, and later accepted an appointment by President Obama to the White House Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

His prior leadership roles in public administration for the City of New York include: Deputy Borough President of Manhattan, Chief of Staff to the Deputy Mayor for Community and Public Affairs, and Chief of Staff to the President of the NYC Board of Education. He is a graduate of Greensboro College and Yale Divinity School.

Statement from Mayor Bill de Blasio:

“Fred Davie and Willie Freeman are both dedicated public servants with a deep commitment to justice. In their respective roles as Chair and Board member, Fred and Willie will work tirelessly to deepen the trust between police and communities they serve. I want to congratulate them and all the new Board members on their appointments.”

Statement from Council Speaker Corey Johnson:

“From serving as Deputy President of the Borough of Manhattan to being a member of President Obama’s transition team, Rev. Fred Davie has dedicated his life to public service. As chair of the CCRB, he has strengthened civilian oversight of the NYPD, including the investigation of allegations of sexual misconduct by police officers. He has also supported the repeal of 50-a to end the secrecy of officers' disciplinary records. Under his leadership, the CCRB played a critical role in the investigation that led to the firing of officer Daniel Pantaleo in the tragic death of Eric Garner. Rev. Davie is deeply committed to social justice and making our city a more fair place. I am happy to reappoint, along with the Mayor, Rev. Davie as chair of the CCRB so he can continue his work and build on community-police relations.”

Statement from CCRB Chair Fred Davie:

“Serving as chair of the CCRB has been a great honor, and I am pleased to have the confidence of both the Mayor and the Speaker in my capabilities as head of the Board. I look forward to continued cooperation with my colleagues at the CCRB and leaders throughout the City as we work together in the pursuit of accountability in law enforcement.”

New Additions to the Board

In addition to announcing Davie’s appointment as Chair, the CCRB announced two new members of its Board. Per the terms of a Charter amendment that took effect on May 6, the Public Advocate must appoint a Board member. Esmeralda Simmons, former executive director of the Medgar Evers College Center for Law and Social Justice, will be the Agency’s inaugural Public Advocate appointment. Retired NYPD Lt. Willie Freeman will serve as one of the Agency’s three Police Commissioner designees. As is delineated in the Charter, Simmons will begin her tenure as a Board member on July 6. Freeman began his term in January, filling a vacancy on the Board.

“As our Board welcomes two new colleagues, I am reminded that much of this Agency’s strength lies in the diversity of its leadership,” said Davie. “Esmeralda Simmons brings unmatched legal expertise that is the product of service at the municipal, state, and federal levels.

Willie Freeman comes to us with valuable insight derived from more than two decades of service with the NYPD. Both Esmeralda and Willie clearly have a heart to make a difference in the City of New York, and I look forward to working with them.”

About Esmeralda Simmons, Esq.

Esmeralda Simmons is an accomplished lawyer and public servant who has spent decades fighting for human and civil rights on the municipal, state, and federal levels. Simmons founded, and served as executive director of, the Medgar Evers College Center for Law and Social Justice, a community-based racial justice advocacy center that focuses on legal work and research. Through the Center, she provided community organizations with legal counsel and research assistance.

Before founding and directing the Center for Law and Social Justice, Simmons served as First Deputy Commissioner at the New York State Division of Human Rights, where she developed and led the implementation of policy in support of New Yorkers’ human and civil rights, and as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of New York.

Simmons has served as counsel or co-counsel on numerous major federal Voting Rights Act cases and has secured victories before the United States Supreme Court. She is a member of the Metropolitan Black Bar and American Bar associations, Ile Ase, Inc., and the New York Voting Rights Consortium. Simmons is a graduate of Hunter College and Brooklyn Law School.

Statement from Public Advocate Jumaane Williams:

“Esmeralda Simmons has decades of experience in working for truth, no matter who tells it, justice, no matter who it is for or against, and I’m proud to name her as the first-ever appointee to the Civilian Complaint Review Board by the Office of Public Advocate. Like this office, the CCRB is a watchdog, holding people and systems to account, and Esmeralda Simmons knows the systemic injustices in our law enforcement, seen today in the disparity in COVID-19 enforcement and seen for decades in cases that have come before the CCRB. I know she will be a powerful, fair voice for oversight.”

Statement from Esmeralda Simmons:

“By working to hold members of the New York City Police Department accountable, the Civilian Complaint Review Board plays an incomparable role in the relationship between the police and civilians. I am honored to have been appointed to serve in this capacity and look forward to drawing on my skills and experiences to advance justice in the City of New York.”

About Willie Freeman

Willie Freeman began his 22-year law enforcement career in 1974 as a Patrol Officer in the New York City Police Department. Before retiring in the rank of lieutenant, Freeman worked in myriad divisions in Brooklyn and Manhattan, including Narcotics and the Internal Affairs Bureau. During his tenure with the NYPD, Freeman also was assigned to the Police Academy, where he taught physical education and police science and performed administrative duties as a

Squad Commander. The Department recognized his service with Excellent Police Duty and Meritorious Police Duty medals.

After retiring from the Department, Freeman spent 17 years as the Director of Security Services/Chief Investigator for the Newark Public School District, where he managed security personnel and served as the primary liaison between the police, the community and the schools. He has since worked as a public school security consultant for Newark, Hempstead, and New York State. Freeman is a graduate of Long Island University, Saint John's University, and the Federal Bureau of Investigations National Academy.

Statement from NYPD Commissioner Dermot Shea:

“Willie Freeman’s life of public service began in the NYPD, where he served our city’s communities as a frontline officer and ascended as a leader among his colleagues. I’m proud to see him accept this important position on the CCRB’s Board, where his talent, background, and integrity in matters of fairness and justice will be an asset for all.”

Statement from Willie Freeman:

“I consider it a high honor to have been tapped to serve my city in this capacity. Having been a member of the NYPD for more than 20 years, I have the utmost respect for our Department and wholeheartedly believe that the Civilian Complaint Review Board plays an invaluable role in making it the best police department in the world.

“Today—as was the case when I was part of the Department—the vast majority of those who serve with the NYPD do so honorably. I know first-hand, however, that those who fail to act with courtesy, professionalism, and respect tarnish the reputation of the Department as a whole. In stepping into this role at the CCRB, my objective is to address misconduct head-on and ensure that only those worthy of wearing the uniform are part of New York’s Finest.”

###

The New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) is the largest police oversight entity in the nation and is empowered to investigate, mediate, prosecute, and recommend disciplinary action for complaints alleging misconduct by NYPD officers. See NYC Charter § 440(c)(1). The agency's jurisdiction includes excessive and unnecessary force, abuse of authority, discourtesy, and use of offensive language. To further this mission, CCRB issues monthly, biannual, and special statistical and qualitative reports analyzing trends and recurring issues arising from the many thousands of civilian complaints it receives each year.