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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Social Justice Committee
Monday, June 22nd, 2026 - 6:30 PM
This meeting was conducted via Zoom

Minutes:

Committee Members Present: Sarah Chu, Saundrea I. Coleman, and Wendy Machever*

**Public Member*

Approximate Number of Public Attendees: 3

1) Rosemary Rivera on behalf of the End Prison Violence Campaign

The meeting opened with an introduction of guest presenter Rosemary Rivera. Ms. Rivera noted that she came to social justice work through a nontraditional path, sharing her experience as a formerly incarcerated person and reflecting on how the movement has evolved to allow people to speak openly about that experience without being defined by it.

Ms. Rivera described EPV as a campaign for safety, humanity, and accountability in New York State prisons, led by formerly incarcerated people and families alongside legal experts, clergy, and community advocates. Named collaborators include New Hour for Women and Children, the Perlmutter Center for Legal Justice, and former New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman. Ms. Rivera noted that a statewide poll found low public awareness of the campaign's origins in responding to the murder of Robert Brooks at Marcy prison in New York and the underlying conditions it addresses. EPV is "Borne from tragedy but built for change."

Ms. Rivera presented a timeline situating current conditions within a longer history, including the exception clause of the 13th Amendment; an 1871 Virginia Supreme Court ruling characterizing incarcerated people as "state slaves"; the 1929 Auburn and Clinton uprisings; the 1970 Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act; the 1971 Attica uprising; the 1973 Rockefeller drug laws; and the 1994 crime bill. She cited a New York State prison population increase from roughly 36,000 in 1985 to 73,000 in 1989, tying the expansion to economic conditions and racial disparity. She noted that Senator Zellnor Myrie has introduced legislation to unseal still-redacted records from the Attica uprising.

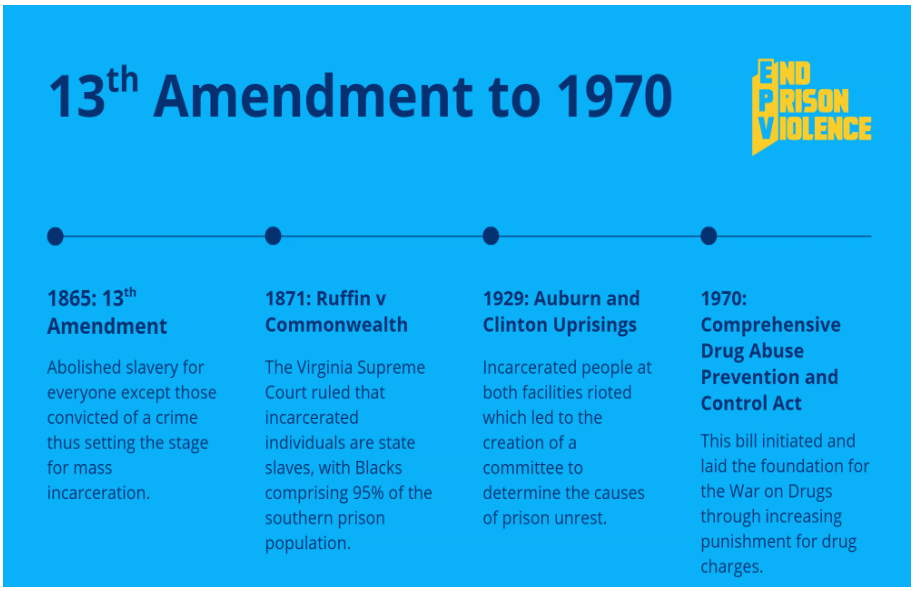
Ms. Rivera reported that EPV helped pass a prison omnibus package at the end of 2025 establishing what she characterized as basic, common-sense protections, including:

i) Full camera coverage requirements in correctional facilities
ii) Mandatory next-of-kin notification when a person dies in custody
iii) Public notice of in-custody deaths
iv) A comprehensive death study
v) Detailed autopsy reports
vi) Expanded State Commission on Corrections membership, including a formerly incarcerated member

EPV organizes its work around three areas: accountability and transparency; healthcare and corrections; and preparation for liberation. Ms. Rivera distinguished among systemic, structural, and what she termed "slow violence," the gradual erosion of dignity within the system. She raised concerns about structural conflicts of interest, noting that leadership of the department and of the Office of Special Investigations had a familial relationship that she viewed as incompatible with independent oversight. EPV is pursuing the creation of a special prosecutor's office and expanded Inspector General involvement in investigating egregious incidents. She also reported a new requirement that judges visit the prisons to which they sentence people once per year.

EPV's 2026 legislative focus includes bills affecting pregnant and postpartum incarcerated people:

i) CARE Act — regular, proactive reproductive medical attention for pregnant and postpartum people
ii) Anti-Shackling Bill — ending the use of restraints during pregnancy and the postpartum period
iii) Breast Pump Act — access to breast pumps for nursing parents



We work to dismantle a legacy of violence—the historically dehumanizing and racially disparate treatment of people of color in New York's prisons. By transforming this culture of fear and control into one of care and respect, we can move to a prison system that upholds the safety and dignity of everyone.
We do this work by centering the voices of those most affected and by advancing policies and practices that restore safety and trust for everyone in the prison community—residents, staff, and families alike

END PRISON VIOLENCE

How we solve violence

Accountability and Transparency

Healthcare in Corrections

Preparation and Liberation

Different forms of violence

- Systemic Violence
- Structural Violence
- Slow Violence

"Violence: The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation." -World Health Organization (WHO)



Q&A

(Summarized for brevity)

Conditions for incarcerated women. In response to a question about access to sanitary supplies, Ms. Rivera described deteriorating conditions and a letter EPV sent to commissioners regarding women's conditions. She referenced a correction officer with multiple lawsuits who was removed following EPV advocacy, and noted deaths of women in custody, including a suicide following harassment.

Sexual abuse allegations. Ms. Rivera reported extensive sexual abuse allegations, particularly at Albion Correctional Facility, noting that a single law office is handling roughly 1,600 cases, with additional offices also involved. She contrasted slower state-level resolution with progress at the New York City level.

Judicial prison visits. The new judicial visitation requirement has only just taken effect. Ms. Rivera noted that Assemblymember Demond Meeks, who has statutory authority to enter facilities unannounced, was recently blocked from a prison visit in the Rochester area.

Camera installation. Ms. Rivera reported that cameras are installed in only about one-seventh of facilities, with an unexplained and slow rollout. Committee members raised questions about where footage is stored, who controls it, and whether active monitoring might serve as a deterrent to violence before incidents occur.

Rehabilitation and staffing. Ms. Rivera stated that rehabilitative programming is effectively unavailable, citing a correction officer strike following the Brooks case and staffing shortages that have suspended programs, job training, and even religious services. She reported that healthcare has deteriorated and described a culture of violence that she argued cannot be addressed through legislation alone, including concerns about the lowered minimum age for correction officers and inadequate training. She noted that prison chaplains have reported fear and intimidation.

ICE detention. In response to a question about parallels with immigration detention, Ms. Rivera noted that ICE detainees are increasingly held in county jails, referenced a detainee death on Long Island, and identified several counties reportedly accepting detainees (including Niagara, Erie, Broome, and Oneida). She encouraged residents to monitor their counties and contact legislators to oppose such arrangements, and emphasized solidarity across Black and Brown communities.

2) **Old Business**
   a) No items of Old Business were discussed.
3) **New Business**
   a) No items of New Business were discussed.

This meeting ended at approximately 7:34 pm.

Sarah Chu, and Saundrea I. Coleman, Co-Chairs