

## Newton Police Reform Task Force Bios

7/14/2020

**Sonja Spears**, of Newton, will Chair the Newton Police Reform Task Force. An attorney and former elected judge in the First City Court of New Orleans, Sonja is currently the Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer at the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP). Prior to joining BHCHP, she was a Civil Rights Investigator in the Office of Diversity and Civil Rights at the MBTA. In this role, she evaluated and investigated system-wide civil rights complaints. In addition, she has more than fifteen years' experience as an educator and is an instructor at Tufts University and adjunct professor at Harvard Law School. At Tufts, she has developed a course entitled *Accused: The Gap Between Law and Justice* which in part gives an account of her personal experience as a judge when she experienced the abuses of the legal system. Over the course of her career, she has developed a deep expertise in negotiation, mediation and facilitation. She serves on several boards, including as Trustee Board Chair at Myrtle Baptist Church.



**Derege B. Demissie**, of Newton, is a criminal defense lawyer. Over the past 22 years, he has served as a public defender and in private practice specializing in criminal defense and immigration law. He has been involved in legal reform advocacy for over fifteen years, including reform of police practices. As the current Co-Chair of Suffolk Lawyers for Justice, he provides leadership to an organization that oversees the selection, qualification and training of legal advocates to indigent defendants in the Boston area. He is also a member of the Committee for Public Counsel Services and past President of the Massachusetts Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. He is the parent of two children in the Newton Public Schools.



**Jadeque Douglas**, of Newton, is an Assistant Court Service Coordinator for the Massachusetts Trial Court where she works with non-profit organizations to find meaningful jobs for people completing their community service obligations. Jadeque grew up in Detroit. From an early age, she wanted to be part of the justice and reform process so she studied criminal justice and worked for the Michigan Department of Corrections as a corrections officer. Jadeque and her family moved to Newton a few years ago and she is a parent of children in the Newton Public Schools.



**Malick Ghachem**, of Newton, is a historian, professor and lawyer. Since 2013, Malick has been teaching history full-time as an Associate Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This includes a course entitled *Race, Crime, and Citizenship in American Law* that deals extensively with questions of racial justice and policing. Prior to this, he practiced law as a criminal defense attorney in Boston and taught criminal law at the University of Maine Law School. He is the father of two children.



**Brian Henderson**, of Southborough, is a recent retiree with the rank of Sergeant in the Newton Police Department (NPD), having served the City of Newton for 38 years from 1981 to 2019. He spent much of his career in the Patrol Bureau and also was a member of the Drug Task Force and Newton's Emergency Management Working Group. Brian's most recent assignment in the NPD was as the supervisor of the Community Services Bureau where he oversaw Juvenile Services, Domestic Violence, Elder Exploitation, Hate Crimes, Community Outreach and Internet Crimes Against Children investigations. He holds many professional certifications in policing, including as an instructor of "Assisting Individuals in Crisis and Group Crisis Intervention." Brian also served in the United States Army/US Army Reserve from 1974 to 2012. His ties to Newton remain strong as he serves on the Board of Directors at the John M. Barry Boys & Girls Club.



**Bill Hoch**, of Newton, is a Pastor at Woburn United Methodist Church. Previously, he served as an attorney specializing in employment and compliance matters. He is an experienced trainer and investigator who developed training programs designed to prevent misconduct and has investigated allegations of misconduct. He has extensive experience working with police in areas of hiring, recruiting, use of force policies and training as senior employment counsel with the Massachusetts Port Authority and with the City of Boston as counsel to the Boston Police Department. Part of his work with Boston included representing the City before the Civil Service Commission in the BPD's steps to diversify. He also prosecuted discipline cases against officers who had been investigated by Internal Affairs and defended these cases before the Civil Service Commission and state courts. His experience also includes expertise in the State's employment, ethics and open meeting laws.



**Randy Johnson**, of Newton, grew up here and graduated from the Newton Public Schools before attending Morehouse College, a historically Black college in Atlanta. Randy is a business development, sales and marketing professional. He is a member of the Myrtle Baptist Church and has been deeply involved in the community. An Eagle Scout, he served as Scout Master for Troop 333 in Newton and most recently as the Cub Master for Pack 355 at Our Lady's. He has coached in Newton Little League, YMCA basketball and is league commissioner and a board member currently with NAA Basketball. He also volunteers for the Newton Bluefish, a team he swam for as a youngster and a team that his son swims for currently.



**Hattie Kerwin Derrick**, of Newton, is a longtime member and current Chair of the Newton Human Rights Commission (HRC). As a member of the HRC, Hattie collaborates with residents and city staff to promote mutual understanding and respect by combating discrimination and embracing diversity. Working with her fellow commissioners and the city's Civil Rights Officer from the Newton Police Department, she has a deep understanding of the range of bias incidents and hate crimes occurring in Newton, and experience in how they are handled. Professionally, she is Director of Admissions at Lawrence Memorial/Regis College Nursing and Radiography Programs. She is also deeply engaged in the community, active with FamilyACCESS, Newton Girls Lacrosse, and the First Unitarian Universalist Society in Newton. Hattie is a member of the LGBTQ+ community.



**Josh Levy**, of Newton, is an attorney whose life has been marked by a sustained commitment to social justice and the pursuit of equity. He spent one year with the Middlesex County District Attorney's Office and seven with the US Attorney's Office in Massachusetts. Currently at a Boston law firm, Ropes & Gray, Josh is lead counsel on numerous civil and criminal cases involving corruption and fraud. Since 2007, he has been a member of the Criminal Justice Act panel selected by the Federal Court and has represented numerous indigent defendants in charges alleging criminal activity. He is the founder of Ropes & Gray's seven-year legal partnership with The Steppingstone Foundation which provides immigration representation to Steppingstone scholars.





**Rob Lowe**, of Billerica, is Deputy Superintendent of the Cambridge Police Department (CPD). Rob is currently the commanding officer of the Family and Social Justice Section, formed in 2018. The Section provides services to members of the community with a social justice approach, including juveniles, the homeless, individuals experiencing mental illness and substance abuse, older residents and survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault. This Section brings together professional staff and clinical support specialists rather than using the conventional criminal justice system approach. The Section includes the Family Justice Unit, the Social Justice Unit, and the Clinical Support Unit. Rob has spent the majority of his over 19-year career with the CPD in Operations with several years as a Criminal Investigations Unit Detective. A Cambridge native, Rob is also an attorney.



**Alison Tarmy**, of Newton and a lifelong Newton resident, is a licensed social worker with a Master's Degree in Public Health. For the past 16 years, Alison has served as the Director of Client Services for the Domestic Violence Services Network (DVSN). In this role, she partners with 12 police departments in Central Middlesex County and her office is located within the Bedford Police Department. In addition to expertise in domestic violence, she has an extensive background with mental health and substance abuse issues. She has previously worked as the Director of the Violence Prevention Program in Cambridge and as a Family Violence Coordinator with the District Attorney's Office in Austin, Texas. Her children attend Newton Public Schools.



**Achille Vann Ricca**, a 2019 graduate of Newton North High School, is a rising sophomore at Ithaca College. Achille is studying theater, education and religious studies. He attended K-12 in the Newton Public Schools and is a 14-year active member of the Myrtle Baptist Church. He has led anti-bias trainings and presentations and has held leadership positions in Defund NPD, Newton North's Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA), Newton North's Black Leadership Advisory Club (BLAC), and the Dover Legacy Scholars, a community within Newton North High School of Black and Latinx scholars.

