

# CCRB co-founder decries 'bias' at office where NYPD cops face civilian accusations

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Allegations that NYPD officers are being put in a Civilian Complaint Review Board office with framed newspaper clippings about crooked cops has drawn the ire of one of the police watchdog agency's founders.

Civil rights attorney Norman Siegel, the former head of the New York Civil Liberties Union who helped create the CCRB nearly three decades ago, said any framed articles about police misconduct should be removed from the agency's offices immediately.

"Those pictures should be taken away," Siegel, 77, told the Daily News. "You can't create a climate in which the complainant or the cop defending themselves feels bias."

CCRB officials insisted the agency doesn't dabble in either bias or intimidation tactics.

On Wednesday, the Daily News exclusively reported claims that NYPD detectives being questioned for misconduct at CCRB's office had to sit in a room with framed articles about cops being accused of excessive force. Those include former Officer Daniel Pantaleo, who was fired in 2019 for killing Eric Garner with a banned chokehold.



CCRB Executive Director Jonathan Darche said the office in question is the agency's press office, adding it's not usually used for police interviews.

“Our office has no propaganda and the room the [Detectives Endowment Association] is referring to is our press office, which, naturally, has press clippings in it,” Darche said Friday. “The CCRB is conducting on-site, remote interviews with officers and their representatives in one office and CCRB investigators in a separate office to follow city guidelines. If we were not in a pandemic, we would not put officers in our press room, but we are all making adjustments to maximize safety.”

“The CCRB answers to the people of New York, and we look at the facts of each case in a fair, unbiased manner,” Darche added.

In a letter to the CCRB acquired by the News, DEA President Paul DiGiacomo said the framed press clippings were “disrespectful to all members of the department.”

“CCRB is statutorily charged with conducting unbiased investigations in a manner in which both the public and the police can have confidence,” he continued. “This makes a mockery of that mandate and furthers our members’ belief that CCRB investigators are anything but fair and impartial.”

Before the CCRB took on its current form, the city sent people complaining about police misconduct to a Downtown Manhattan office with “pictures of police chiefs on the walls,”

Siegel recalled hearing from complainants.



“It’s full circle,” said Siegel, who plans to discuss his concerns with both the CCRB and the DEA next week in the hopes of finding a quick resolution.

“There should be no pictures on the wall that are either pro- or anti- any parties,” he added. “There should be pictures, but they should be neutral.”

Darche said all CCRB investigators “look at the facts of each case in a fair, unbiased manner.”

“We are also the only police oversight agency in the country with a prosecution unit, which means when we substantiate misconduct, and determine the officer needs to be disciplined, we pursue that result for the people of New York,” he said. “That is not bias, that is a pursuit of justice. The firing of a bad actor as a result of a trial presided over by an NYPD judge should be seen as justice served for the whole city.”

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“We would assume the DEA also holds justice and accountability above all and would not see it as a personal attack or offense,” he said.

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