

Hello, My name is Djuan Wash. I work for Sunflower Community Action a grassroots organizing group based out of Wichita, KS. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. It is truly an honor to be able to speak on behalf of the individuals and families that we represent on this important issue.

I come today with hopes that my testimony and others that you will hear from today in convincing you that Body worn cameras by law enforcement are a necessity and not an option. Before I go any further I'd like to do a little test. By a show of hands, how many of you present have told a lie? Thank you for that; there's a point to this exercise and we'll get into that later in my testimony.

As a police reform advocate, I'm often faced with the idea that I am anti-police. Nothing could be further from the truth. Police are a part of our communities and I want them to be treated as such, even so there are problems in some communities that go unseen in others. The level of trust amongst law enforcement in low-income communities of color is constantly strained by the images we see and hear about on news and for many, from their own experiences.

The Racial Profiling Board of Wichita, of which I'm a member, have had over 100 cases of people who have claimed abuse by the Wichita Police Department only to have none of those cases sustained by the department. This is problematic. As many of you demonstrated with raising your hands, people lie. While officers have a sworn duty to be truthful, they are people like you and I and they too have the capacity to do be dishonest. While the benefit of the doubt is almost always given to law enforcement-- it lacks sense that all 100 people who have claimed abuse are in fact liars, perhaps some, but all? Had those officers, to which these claims are alleged, had on body cameras it would have been very easy to determine which party was being truthful.

According to James Thompson, a Wichita civil rights attorney, Wichita outpaces Chicago and Detroit by average in the number of police shootings that end in a fatality. Often times, witnesses and family dispute the version of events provided by police. Without video evidence it is left up to the police, the district attorney and the KBI to determine what actually happened using the testimony of an officer hoping to be justified in his use of force and a grieving family seeking justice for the loss of their loved one.

The same could be said of the most recent police shooting of John Paul Quintero in Wichita on January 3<sup>rd</sup> this year. Independent, third party witnesses are disputing the narrative being told by police, along with Mr. Quintero's family. Those witnesses claim John had his hands raised and was cooperating, while the police claim he was belligerent and uncooperative. Had the officers that responded had on a body camera, the family and the police department would know what happened versus the messiness of a he said, she said argument.

As I mentioned earlier, police are a needed part of our community and my goal is to strengthen that weakened relationship in my community by making both law enforcement officers and the communities they serve feel safe in their interactions with one another.

I can't get around the fact that people lie and I can't stress enough that this includes police officers, who will often face harsh penalties for mistakes made on the job in the rare case, that they are held

accountable. This argument is further proved when you look at the city of Rialto, CA. Rialto outfitted all of its officers with Body cameras and they realized a drop in “use of force” over 59% and a drop in complaints by 88%. “When you put a camera on a police officer, they tend to behave a little better, follow the rules a little better,” said Chief William A. Farrar, the Rialto police chief, to the *New York Times*. He continued, “And if a citizen knows the officer is wearing a camera, chances are the citizen will behave a little better.”

The Fraternal Order of Police is also in favor of body worn cameras with union President Paul Zamorano telling *The Wichita Eagle* “Body cameras are a silent witness to the interaction between officers and residents, They would help protect the public from police misconduct and protect the officers from false allegations, while also providing invaluable information when there are conflicting accounts of an officer’s actions during the call.”

While the families of the shootings mentioned are still seeking justice and answers in how their calls for help ended with the death of their loved one, due to the activism of Sunflower Community Action and many others in the Wichita community in bringing light to these and other shootings and to the many other cases of police abuse, some of which have resulted in settlements from the city, Wichita, Kansas’ largest city will follow Rialto’s lead by outfitting over 500 officers with body cameras by the end of 2015. While the initial investment could be costly, this investment will ultimately prove invaluable in that it will save lives and it’s the right step in building trust in communities that have little trust to offer law enforcement. I pray that you all will make the right choice in deciding to build that trust on a state level. Thank you.