

Chairman Nadler and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for inviting me here today.

My name is Gwen Carr and I am the mother of Eric Garner. Five years ago, my beloved son Eric was murdered by those who swore an oath to protect and serve. On July 17, 2014, NYPD officers approached and harassed my son, and one of those officers placed Eric in a banned chokehold. Eric yelled "I can't breathe" 11 times – 11 times. But none of that mattered to cops who were at the scene. Eric died that day. Video of the incident, including the chokehold and my son's cries that he couldn't breathe, went viral around the world and yet somehow no one has ever been charged for his death.

I will never forget that day in July. It started off like any normal day. I got up, did a few chores and I called my son to remind him about an upcoming family reunion. He asked me what to bring and our call ended like usual: I said I love you Eric, and he said I love you mom. I did not know then that this would be our last conversation.

My entire life was uprooted on July 17, 2014. I felt helpless, in a dark place, scattered into a million pieces. It's impossible to fully describe the pain and anguish of losing a child, and then having the added burden of finding out what exactly happened from those who were responsible for his death. How is a person supposed to get answers? And where do you go for help? Most people cannot even comprehend how difficult it is to suddenly lose a loved one, and then have to fight for years to get an ounce of accountability. For my family and I, the trauma has impacted our lives in devastating ways.

My husband, Ben Carr, died about two months ago. He was my partner in every sense of that word. He fought this long fight right next to me. He may not have been in front of the cameras, but he did a lot behind-the-scenes to support my efforts and to support the cause. I miss him dearly, and I know that these past five years took a toll on his health.

Eric's daughter, Erica Garner, died in Dec. 2017 from a heart attack. She was only 27-years-old. My granddaughter fought the good fight till she got ill. She was the one who took up this fight after Eric was killed. She wanted justice for her dad, and she pushed back against a system that didn't value her father's life and treated him worse than an animal. In the end, I say she died of a broken heart.

These are the wounds both seen and unseen that come from police brutality, the loss of a loved one and no recourse for accountability. The entire extended family is traumatized for life. Each and every time we entered a courtroom, or watched the officer responsible for Eric's death get a pay raise, or heard the Department of Justice announce that they would not be seeking charges against this cop, it was adding salt to an already unbearable wound.

I come before you today to not only share my son's story and our long quest for justice, but to urge you to take immediate action to implement national changes and standards towards policing. In 2015, I stood with Rep. Hakeem Jeffries as he introduced a bill that would make

