



MELINDA KATZ DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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SEPTEMBER 2026



A Message from District Attorney

MELINDA KATZ

CHAIN-SNATCHING ARREST

We recently announced that a 16-year-old was charged with robbery, assault and other crimes in connection with three chain-snatching incidents.

The teen defendant allegedly approached the unsuspecting female pedestrians in broad daylight and forcibly grabbed their jewelry from around their necks. Two of the women suffered scratches and felt substantial pain after the robberies.

The first incident was on June 24 in the late afternoon at 111th Avenue and Merrick Boulevard in Jamaica, where the defendant allegedly victimized a 37-year-old woman. Approximately an hour later, at Merrick and Linden boulevards in St. Albans, a 65-year-old victim had two necklaces taken.

The third robbery occurred on July 10 at Roosevelt Avenue and 74th Street in Elmhurst and the victim in that incident was a 62-year-old woman.

I thank our NYPD partners for apprehending the defendant, who will now be held responsible for his alleged actions.

We are continuing to investigate other chain snatching incidents throughout Queens.

In Friendship,

STAY CONNECTED



STAGED CAR CRASH DEFENDANTS SENTENCED

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz was joined by New York Gov. Kathy Hochul to announce that two men pleaded guilty and were sentenced for their roles in staging car crashes on New York City highways. The conspirators sought insurance payments for damages and purported injuries.

"Staged auto collisions not only terrify the drivers who are targeted, they also put other motorists at risk and ultimately lead to increased insurance costs for all New Yorkers," DA Katz said.

According to the investigation, between August and October 2024, the defendants – both residents of Brooklyn – conspired to stage car crashes as part of an insurance fraud scheme. The defendants recruited participants for three separate auto collisions with the promise of cash payouts.

The 34-year-old defendant was the designated driver for the staged crashes. Victor Murillo deliberately stepped on the vehicle's brakes, which caused the automobiles behind him to rear-end his car.

In one of these "crashes," the driver of the car behind Murillo managed to brake in time

and avoided striking the car. The defendant then quickly reversed hitting the vehicle to make it appear as though his car had been rear-ended.

Video of that crash went viral on social media.

"Thank you to the brave victim who came forward with dashcam video showing the crash," DA Katz said. "That video led to a thorough investigation of the facts by my Financial Frauds Bureau with our partners at the NYPD and the New York State Department of Financial Services."

Murillo pleaded guilty to staging a motor vehicle accident in the second degree, insurance fraud in the fourth degree and conspiracy in the fifth degree. He was sentenced to two years in prison.

The second defendant, 53-year-old Jaime Huiracocha, who orchestrated the collisions, pleaded guilty to insurance fraud in the third degree and conspiracy in the fifth degree. He was sentenced to one to three years in prison.

Two other people who participated in the staged collisions also pleaded guilty and will be sentenced in the near future.



3,000 GUNS REMOVED FROM NYC STREETS



DA Katz joined NYPD Police Commissioner Jessica S. Tisch, along with fellow New York City district attorneys, State Attorney General Letitia James and federal law enforcement partners, to announce the removal of more than 3,000 firearms from the streets of New York since the start of 2026.

In Queens, 605 guns were seized in the first seven months of the year.

Shootings are now at their lowest level in 30 years in Queens. Through the first seven months of 2026, the city has recorded fewer murders, shooting incidents and shooting victims.

The announcement also marked the fifth anniversary of the Gun Violence Strategies Partnership, a multi-agency effort to stem gun violence.

"It is thanks to collaborations with the NYPD, gun buybacks and long-term investigations that we can enhance public safety and celebrate the achievement of removing more than 3,000 guns from our streets this year," DA Katz said.

It takes law enforcement on all levels — local, state and federal — working as a united team to rid Queens and New York City of illegal firearms.

Each gun removed from the streets is a potential life saved — a family that is not grieving a loved one killed by senseless gun violence.

"I applaud the work of the NYPD and the collaborative model we have built that has made every corner of Queens safer for our families and senior citizens," DA Katz said.

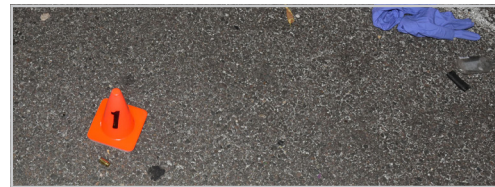


CASES OF INTEREST

A Flushing man was convicted at trial of murder and criminal possession of a weapon for killing a 29-year-old outside a Jamaica bodega in August 2022.

Damion Howell, 42, argued with the victim after propositioning the man's girlfriend in the store. The defendant left the bodega, returned 30 minutes later, and shot the victim outside. Howell then fled the country and was apprehended nine months later at Kennedy Airport from an overseas flight. He faces up to 25 years to life in prison at sentencing.

In a separate case, unlicensed surgeon **Felipe Hoyos Foronda** was sentenced to five to 15 years in prison for killing a 31-year-old woman during



a botched butt implant removal procedure in March 2025.

The 40-year-old injected the victim with a lethal dose of anesthesia. The 31-year-old woman went into cardiac arrest at a makeshift clinic in his Astoria home. She died weeks later. The defendant pleaded guilty to manslaughter in the second degree.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

The DA joined community celebrations around the borough during the annual National Night Out event. DA Katz visited five precinct locations in Queens and members of the DA's office were present at all 18 sites throughout the county.



BACKPACK GIVEAWAYS

The District Attorney's office sponsored several backpack giveaways on the eve of the academic year to help students go back to school ready to learn.

Hundreds of book bags were handed out to

excited youngsters at Majority Baptist Church, Rufus King Park, P.S. 95, the Horace Harding School, Our Lady of Mount Carmel and other locations. The DA's office also donated book bags to other giveaways throughout Queens.

