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## Is goof-up murder?

By Mary V. Lauro

BRONX, NEW YORK, Feb. 6- Patricia Hartly had not a care in the world when the door banged open and her grandson, 18-year-old Ramarly Graham, came running and agitated into the house. Before she could ask what was wrong she heard police at the door. Then she heard them crash through the door. When they entered, her grandson ran into the toilet. The police followed him. They yelled something. Then a shot was fired. Her grandson fell. She looked down. She saw blood pouring out of his chest. What was happening? How could it be? A moment before he had the future in front of him. She thought she would lose her mind. She heard the ambulance siren stop in front of her house. They carried out her grandson while the police searched her house for something. What? They had already removed what was most precious to her. Later she learned her grandson had died and that the police thought he was dealing drugs. They also thought he had a gun, but they found none nor did they find a stash of pot.

Meanwhile at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan, Officer Kennan Brennan was rejoicing over a letter he received from Giants' Coach Coughlin. He was happily and miraculously alive after having a bullet removed from his brain. The bullet was fired into his brain by a perp named Baby Ortiz. Officer Kennan was following "Baby"( Luis Ortiz) who had a history of criminal activity and a number of arrests into a hallway when Ortiz turned around and fired directly into his head. It did not look good for Officer Kennan. Had he died he would have left behind a devastated young wife and a fatherless child.

The scenario of Baby Ortiz turning around and firing at Officer Brennan is every officer's nightmare. Whenever a surveillance or

chase begins, the officer faces the possibility of a gun in the perpetrator's possession. It is not an unreasonable fear given the probability that every criminal wants a gun if not to intimidate a victim, at least to leave earth taking an officer with him.

It is interesting that when Baby Ortiz was arraigned his family and a sizable number of friends screamed their love and support for him as if he were a hero and he, without shame, responded as if he had graduated cum laude. At that time Officer Brennan's life was hanging in balance. Yet neither Ortiz nor his supporters expressed any sorrow for the grief that had been thrust upon Brennan's family.

In the equally sad case of young Ramaley Graham, all of the facts are not yet known. The case is still being studied as to why the teenager was shot. Statements made by Commissioner Ray Kelly and Bronx Borough Commander, Chief Carlos Gomez, while couched in terms of "all the facts not in yet" seem to indicate that either a terrible and deadly goof was committed by the officer who fired or that the explanation is not one that will sit well with the public. Five officers were present. It seems that when the young man was in the toilet with his back towards them, they repeatedly asked him to show his hands so they could ascertain he was not holding a gun. When he did not show his hands one officer fired.

Police have made goofs before. It is not known whether training can guarantee a police force which never goofs, but our 47<sup>th</sup> Precinct does not deserve the contumely it is receiving from a group that identifies itself with the Wall Street Occupiers. This group has been marching from the victim's home to the precinct and protesting there. Residents say they are calling our police murderers!

To his credit, Assemblyman Carl Heastie called a special meeting for community and elected officials on Saturday, February 4<sup>th</sup> at CB 12. Chief Gomez was present to give as many facts on the case currently available after which comments and questions were asked. One

**comment which is often voiced in the community is why so many black youths are the targets of the stop and frisk policy of the police. While this question may be of significance in other parts of the city, in the 47<sup>th</sup> that question defies logic. Census figures show that there are only 10 percent whites in the 47<sup>th</sup>. The majority are black and Hispanic. Most of the whites live in Woodlawn which is an Irish oriented neighborhood. They complain that the police only stop Irish youths.**