

SUFFOLK COUNTY

Police sued over gang IDs

NYCLU wants info on immigrants who stand accused

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A civil liberties advocacy group is suing Suffolk police, claiming the department did not provide requested information on the identification, arrest and detention of immigrant students accused of gang involvement.

The action, filed Monday in State Supreme Court in Suffolk County by the New York Civil Liberties Union, seeks

“to compel the SCPD to respond” to a wide-ranging information request made in August.

The original request, filed by advocacy groups under the Freedom of Information Law, sought details on the number of individuals the department identified as gang members leading to school suspensions in the South Country school district; all agreements between the local police department and federal law enforcement agencies seeking to apprehend and deport immigrants; and the department’s policy directives on “how to recognize gang membership or gang activity,” among other documents.

The Suffolk Police Department has not commented on the lawsuit. In previous statements, officials said the department followed strict protocols regarding identification of gang membership that could not be disclosed.

The advocacy group’s inquiry originated last year amid a local and federal law enforcement push to arrest or detain teenagers who could face criminal charges or be placed in deportation proceedings. Those agencies aimed to crack down on gang activity following multiple incidents of brutal violence linked to MS-13, a criminal street gang with links to El Salvador.

Immigrant teens and their ad-

vocates in the region have said that some of them were apprehended on baseless allegations of gang involvement and were placed in secure detention facilities in violation of legal precedent on the treatment of those minors.

The NYCLU contends that, after eight months, the department “has not produced any documents or provided a substantive response of any kind in clear violation” of the Freedom of Information Law, whose provisions seek to give the public access to documents and statistics related to governmental decisions.

“Eight months after filing our records requests, New Yorkers still have no answers from

the Suffolk police about its role in the Trump administration’s immigration dragnet,” NYCLU executive director Donna Lieberman said in a statement that referred to President Donald Trump and to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. “During that time, ICE rounded up dozens of Long Island teens only to later concede they pose no threat.”

The civil liberties organization and one of its California affiliates have filed two other federal class-action lawsuits against federal agencies about their detention of immigrant children, leading to the release of some immigrant minors after judges reviewed the evidence in those cases.

HEMPSTEAD

Woman gets 17 years in SUV bystander killing

BY CHAU LAM
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A Hempstead woman was sentenced Wednesday to 17 years in prison for killing a bystander and injuring two others when she rammed her sport utility vehicle into the trio in 2016 as she raced to join a fight at her mother’s house, prosecutors said.

Shania Buchanan, 24, was found guilty Feb. 28 by a Nassau jury of second-degree manslaughter in the death of Barbara Reid, 56, also of Hempstead, as well as assault and other crimes against the other spectators.

Buchanan was tried for murder, but the jury concluded that her conduct did not rise to murder and acquitted her of one count of second-degree murder.

Reid, Betty Sanders and Jose Mena were among dozens of people drawn to a Linden Avenue address in the Village of Hempstead on April 20, 2016, when the clash between Buchanan’s mother and another woman broke out in the driveway, according to Nassau prosecutors.

The three bystanders were watching the fight, prosecutors said, when Buchanan came



Shania Buchanan

speeding down the residential street in her 1999 Pathfinder, going 60 to 70 mph and drove into the crowd.

Acting State Supreme Court Justice Francis Ricigliano in Mineola sentenced Buchanan to 5 to 15 years in prison for manslaughter, the maximum punishment the law allows. He sentenced Buchanan to 17 years for first-degree assault for injuring Sanders. These sentences and the sentences for the other crimes are to run concurrently.

Buchanan, who did not testify at her trial, maintains that the crash was an accident, said her attorney, Jeffrey Groder of Mineola.

“She tried to convey to the judge that she was sorry for what happened,” he said.

Buchanan stepped on her brakes, Groder said, but she didn’t do it in time.

Prosecutors had asked that the sentences for manslaughter and Sanders’ assault to run consecutively, but Groder said the judge noted that the collision was one criminal act and rejected the request.

On the day of crash, Buchanan got a call from her sister that their mother was losing the fight, and Buchanan rushed over to defend her, prosecutors said. Buchanan’s Pathfinder hit Sanders, who was walking away from the fracas, said Nassau Deputy Bureau Chief Michael Bushwack.

Then, he said, Buchanan continued driving toward the group of 40 to 50 people, which included Reid and Mena.

Buchanan’s SUV struck Reid and dragged her down the road. Reid was left lying against a curb with a broken neck and an injury to her brain, prosecutors said. Then, the Pathfinder hit Mena, who was on his bicycle.

Mena sustained a fractured spine and Sanders a broken femur, which prosecutors said caused her to walk with a limp.



A Jeep and Riverhead school district bus collided on East Woodside Avenue in North Bellport on Tuesday morning.

Cops: 7 hurt in bus crash

Seven students were taken to a hospital with minor injuries after their bus was involved in a crash Tuesday morning in North Bellport, Suffolk County police said.

The injured students were among 30, ranging in age from 14 to 17, from the Riverhead school district who were traveling to Eastern Suffolk BOCES in Bellport when their full-size school bus was involved in a crash with a Jeep, police said. The crash occurred at about 8 a.m. on East Woodside Avenue.

The injured students were all taken to Long Island Medical Center in East Patchogue.

The driver of the Jeep also was taken to LIMC for treatment of undisclosed injuries.

Police said the crash occurred as the eastbound Jeep attempted to make a U-turn at the intersection of East Woodside and Sawgrass Drive, colliding with the westbound school bus. The Brookhaven Fire Department and South Country Ambulance responded to the scene, police said.

Police said the crash forced the closure of East Woodside from Station Road to Horseblock Road for about two hours. The road was reopened just before 10:30 a.m., police said.

— JOHN VALENTI