



## THE BLUE FAMILY TREE

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On January 21st as I sat at home, warm, in a comfortable seat, I heard the awful news: Two NYPD police officers had been shot in the 32 Precinct. Almost immediately my phone began to buzz with text messages and calls from friends and fellow police officers about this horrible event. You see, usually cops hear this kind of bad news faster than the general public. Then we tend to let our fellow cops know what is going on. It's just what we do.

The news was bad. Initial reports, which were not 100 percent accurate, were that two police officers had been murdered by a deranged gunman. Then later as the facts came out, we learned the awful details. Two police officers shot, one had passed, the other in extremely critical condition...a life taken, and another permanently altered by the actions of a lifelong felon. I ended up going to bed angry. Angry for the life lost, angry to once again have to pray that a cop makes it after being shot by a criminal. As I woke up the next morning though, even more details had emerged, the names and backgrounds of the officers. The officer severely wounded and clinging to life was Wilbert Mora, a 27 year old with only a few years on the job. The officer who perished, Jason Rivera, a 22 year old with hardly a year on the job. As I read about Jason Rivera, I found out that he, just like me, is the son of immigrants. Just like me, he is the first generation of his family born in the United States, and he, just like me, was an NYPD rookie cop at 22 years of age. While our backgrounds

have many differences, I still felt like this kid could have been me 24 years ago when I was a cop in NYC's Hell's Kitchen. Because of this I feel like I can relate to him, to his family, and what he had experienced as a cop up until that day.

In actuality I can't. There are some huge differences between Jason and I. He decided to become a cop at a time and in a place where it is hugely unpopular, while I became a cop during the height of the Clinton Crime Act when, let's face it, it was one of the best times ever to become a cop. This hero, Jason Rivera, did the unpopular, but righteous thing. He chose to serve his city when others won't, when politicians vilify the profession. Jason Rivera answered the calling when others who are too afraid to do it don't.

On January 25th, the inevitable sad news came that Jason's partner, Officer Wilbert Mora had passed as well. Today when you read the news, or check social media you're going to see those same politicians that called to defund the Police, thank Jason and Wilbert for their sacrifice. While we thank Jason and Wilbert in prayer for their sacrifice, these politicians don't care. We are just numbers to them. To some of them we are an inconvenience and maybe can serve as scapegoats on the political landscape. They will stop at nothing to make themselves more popular at our expense. Unfortunately for us, it's still popular to say we are the enemy, cut our pay and diminish our benefits.

Thankfully the tide is turning, it is becoming less and less popular to take that position. Politicians are starting to realize the public wants us, they need us and they know it. To those politicians, I say be like Jason Rivera and Wilbert Mora. Answer the calling to do what is right. These young men probably could have been anything they wanted. Thank God they became two of the Finest, New York City Cops, HEROES. Thank you Jason and Wilbert, I will pray for your families to find peace. Rest easy Brothers, go to God, we'll take the watch.

\*Michael Corbett is a contributor to the Blue Family Tree and a 24 year law enforcement veteran in the Empire State.

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