

MEDIA ADVISORY

June 9, 2006, 79 5th Ave., Park Slope

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MEMORIAL BIKE RIDE TO DOT HEADQUARTERS On the One-Year Anniversary of Elizabeth Padilla's Death

- What:** A memorial for Elizabeth Padilla followed by a group ride to DOT Commissioner Iris Weinshall's office in Manhattan to call for stronger bike safety measures on 5th Avenue in Brooklyn and citywide.
- Where:** In front of 79 Fifth Avenue, at the corner of Prospect Place, Park Slope, Brooklyn.
- When:** Friday, June 9th, 8:00 am
- Who:** Members of family, Park Slope Neighbors, Transportation Alternatives, Park Slope Civic Council, Visual Resistance, Councilmembers David Yassky and Bill DeBlasio and Community Board 6 and neighborhood cyclists.

BROOKLYN, NY (June 9, 2006) – On June 9, 2005, 28-year-old pro bono lawyer and Park Slope resident, Elizabeth Kasulis Padilla was hit by a truck and killed on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Prospect Place while riding her bicycle to her new job at the Brooklyn Bar Association.

One year later, Park Slope Neighbors, Transportation Alternatives, the Park Slope Civic Council and Visual Resistance, along with elected officials, local bike commuters and members of Elizabeth's family will gather to honor her and to announce bicycle safety improvements that the NYC Department of Transportation has agreed to make on Fifth Avenue between Carroll and Dean Streets (see attached).

After the brief memorial, cyclists will ride to DOT headquarters in Manhattan at 40 Worth Street. There, Commissioner Iris Weinshall will be presented with flowers and requests from cyclists for safe streets for bike riding in Brooklyn and stronger street design standards to encourage bicycle commuting and regular riding by better protecting New Yorkers on bikes.

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Elizabeth Padilla worked as a pro bono lawyer and legal services coordinator with the Brooklyn Bar Association and was a tireless volunteer with a number of organizations. After graduating from Cornell, Ms. Padilla spurned a six-figure starting salary with a Silicon Valley law firm to do poverty law. She worked at the Family Center in New York, providing pro bono legal services to indigent persons suffering from terminal illnesses, primarily people living with HIV-AIDS. She volunteered for Human Rights Watch, taught English as a second language to immigrant high school students, and worked in a soup kitchen run by New York Cares. A cyclist, swimmer and marathoner, as well as a personal trainer, Ms. Padilla was a member of the Achilles Club, an organization that enables people with all sorts of disabilities to participate in mainstream athletics.

<http://www.thepadilla.com/LizkP/Lizindex.html>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/29/AR2005062902889.html>

<http://www.naparstek.com/2005/06/brooklyn-neighborhood-cyclist-killed.php>

<http://visualresistance.org/wordpress/ghostbikes/memorials/elizabeth-padilla>

June 2006

To the community in Brooklyn:

How do I begin to capture the spirit and the life of my sister, Elizabeth Kasulis Padilla, in a few words? Perhaps it is not possible, but for you to understand the depth of our loss, and to honor her memory, and her life, I will try. Liz was my sister. In many ways, it was Liz who always knew me best. Born less than 3 years apart, we shared a childhood. We played, yelled, laughed, cried, ate, slept, studied, ran, and swam together. We shared bedrooms and bathrooms and clothes and a lot of tears and a lot of laughter, and we went on family vacations, camping and road trips, and to countless swim meets and soccer games and piano recitals. Wherever I went, Liz wrote me long letters that always ended with I love you. But it did not end when we grew up. Liz was always more than just a sister. She was my friend. At 28 years old, she was a woman who possessed kindness, strength, and a passion for love and for life that she did not hesitate to share with others no matter what the circumstances. She not only enjoyed a challenge; she sought them out.

A small example: during the fall of 2001, after training in sweltering conditions all summer long, I ran my first marathon in Washington DC. At approximately mile 16, my right knee began to throb, and my run slowed to a very painful jog. Liz jumped into the road and ran the final 10 miles with me to the end, giving me constant pep talks and stopping to help me stretch. She wasn't supposed to have been running that day; for she was planning to run in her first marathon the following weekend. But no matter: for me, and for others, she did not rest. She was strong, and compassionate, and determined. Just before the finish line, having assured I would finish, Liz skipped off the course and ran around to meet me as I officially finished the race, tired, and happy. The following weekend, I watched her successfully run the New York Marathon. What a wonderful experience.

It has been one year since my sister died on these streets. Like many days before, she was riding her bicycle, beginning a new day, on her way to help make a difference in the lives of her family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and in the lives of those she had yet to meet. Since June 9, 2005, time has stood still, and yet so much has happened. Having "the rest of my life" in front of me is not easy knowing Liz will not be there at my side, not like she was before. I did not realize then what a gift my sister was, and how much I learned from her over the years, nor how much my sister was a part of me.

Elizabeth's tragic death will never be "got over". I wish healing, or understanding why she was killed, was as easy as running a marathon, but it is not. It is to her credit that a resolution has been made by key decision makers to make city streets safer for cyclists in Brooklyn. She would expect, and fight for, nothing less. She would recognize this moment to be important and her heart would expand to include those of you she had yet to meet, and yet to befriend.

Thank you,

Sara Padilla on behalf of the entire Padilla family.



**New York City
Department of Transportation**

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Iris Weinshall, Commissioner

Web: www.nyc.gov/dot

May 19, 2006

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
Council Member, 39th District
2907 Ft. Hamilton Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11218

Dear Council Member de Blasio:

This is in response to your May 3, 2006 letter regarding bicycle accommodations along 5th Avenue from Carroll to Dean Streets. As you are likely aware, the street at this location is too narrow for striping a bicycle lane (Class II facility) and, therefore, motorists and cyclists must share the travel lane. We would like to inform you that the Department will make changes to this corridor to improve operations for motorists and cyclists. We will install "Bike Route" signage to designate this as a route (Class III) for cyclists. Also, we plan on installing shared lane markings that should improve motorists and cyclists behavior, as well as additional signage that will encourage them to courteously share the road.

We anticipate installation of these improvements to be completed by this Summer. Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,


Joseph Palmieri
Borough Commissioner