

“And Justice for None”

In 2003, the practice of stopping, questioning, detaining, and searching civilians became a wide-scale program in the United States. This practice, known as “stop and frisk,” was a desperate and ineffective attempt to prevent crime, finally coming to a close after being ruled unconstitutional in 2013. However, President Trump urged Chicago police to bring back stop and frisk in late 2018, reiterating the promise he made on the 2016 campaign trail to normalize the tactic. We must ensure that this immoral method of law and order does not make a comeback, violating the privacy of all and encouraging racial prejudice.

Stop and frisk gives police the opportunity to target nearly anyone under the “reasonable suspicion” standard, inviting unwarranted bias. With support from studies of over 100,000 cases resulting from implementation of stop and frisk by police in Long Island, New York, *Newsday* revealed that use of stop and frisk led to a dramatic racial disparity among those targeted for arrest. While making up less than 27 percent of the city’s population, African Americans and Latinos were arrested at nearly five times the rate of whites under stop and frisk laws and were much more likely to serve serious sentences for minor violations. Such discrimination often occurred as minor traffic infractions, such as a broken tail light, spiraled into serious charges and arrests for minorities, when in the same situation whites were let off with a warning. This discrimination was also clearly shown in consequences for petty drug crimes. While there is little reported difference in marijuana use among whites and minorities, nonwhites are arrested at quadruple the rate of whites for possession. Racial bias under the law understandably leads to lack of trust between communities and police officers, and

contributes to issues of mass incarceration and inner city poverty, as those targeted by police struggle to find employment and are at higher risk of serving time than their white counterparts.

Under stop and frisk, everyday people are forced to suffer the humiliation of being questioned and patted down by the police, and are sometimes even in danger of being assaulted or killed. *The Washington Post* recounts multiple cases of such blatant mistreatment, stories of illegal measures taken against minorities, with none of the perpetrators serving any jail time. Most infamous is the case of African American man Eric Garner, who died after being put in an illegal chokehold by an officer of the New York Police Department who was known for racist behavior. This father of six and grandfather of three was killed for being accused of selling untaxed cigarettes, and perpetrator Daniel Pantaleo continues to serve on the force to this day. Such blatant abuses of power should not be tolerated in any form, much less protected by stop and frisk laws that allow police to treat civilians as they wish with no consequence.

Despite such documented reports of civil injustice, the President of the United States remains intent on reintroducing and expanding stop and frisk in cities throughout the nation. There is no denying that American cities like Chicago have major issues with violent crime, and many Americans take comfort in Trump's announced priority of Blue Lives Matter, even as he ignores pleas that Black Lives Matter too. We must find a long-term solution to crime while maintaining equal treatment for all. Fortunately, there is an alternative to stop and frisk that benefits everyone involved.

In contrast to stricter policing methods and fear tactics, New York Times reporter Emily Badger noticed that positive efforts by individual neighborhoods may make even

more of an impact long term on lowering inner city crime rates. When searching for a cause to the 90 percent decrease in crime in American cities from the early 1990's to 2015, New York University sociologist Patrick Sharkey discovered that a dramatic rise of nonprofits in low-income neighborhoods occurred during the same period. For those specifically addressing youth and neighborhood development, researchers found that the establishment of every ten nonprofits in a city with 100,000 residents led to a nine percent drop in the murder rate and a six percent drop in violent crime. Increasing funding to programs dedicated to building playgrounds, mentoring children, and employing high-risk youth would allow more communities to heal themselves and ensure a better life for the people living in them, without the severe costs of policies like stop and frisk.

Stop and frisk does more harm than good and must never return to American cities. Nothing can change the fact that the policy unfairly targets minorities and creates unnecessary fear among law-abiding citizens. Instead of encouraging further division and hate, we must focus on improving life for all people, not just the majority.

Word Count:

Works Cited

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