

MORE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION CIVIL LIBERTIES NEGLECT

In New York, the cops are getting frisky with minorities (suspect classes under the equal protection clause):



From 2004 through 2009, in a policy that has gotten completely out of control, New York City police officers stopped people on the street and checked them out nearly three million times, frisking and otherwise humiliating many of them.

Upward of 90 percent of the people stopped are completely innocent of any wrongdoing. And yet the New York Police Department is compounding this intolerable indignity by compiling an enormous and permanent computerized database of these encounters between innocent New Yorkers and the police.

Not only are most of the people innocent, but a vast majority are either black or Hispanic. There is no defense for this policy. It's a gruesome, racist practice that should offend all New Yorkers, and it should cease.

Police Department statistics show that 2,798,461 stops were made in that six-year period. In 2,467,150 of those instances, the people stopped had done nothing wrong. That's 88.2 percent of all stops over six years. Black people were stopped during that period a staggering 1,444,559 times. Hispanics accounted for 843,817 of the stops and whites 287,218.

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"They have been collecting the names and all sorts of other information about everybody who is stopped and frisked on the streets," said Donna Lieberman, the

executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, which is fighting the department's stop-and-frisk policy and its compiling of data on people who are innocent. "This is a massive database of innocent, overwhelmingly black and Latino people," she said.

Bob Herbert is right, it is "a gruesome, racist practice". Thank god we have a Constitutional law scholar President, expert in civil rights and dedicated to protecting the liberties afforded by them. This is a perfect situation for the President's Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board!

Oh, wait.....

When President Bush two years ago failed to name members to a federal board to monitor the protection of civil liberties, Democrats and activist groups were duly outraged, seeing it as one more example of his administration's indifference to the subject.

But more than a year into a new presidency, the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board—created by Congress in 2007—remains as much a cipher under Barack Obama as it was under George W. Bush. The White House has yet to nominate a single person to sit on the five-person board. It has no members, no staff, and no office.

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All the letters noted there would be no shortage of issues for a civil-liberties oversight board to investigate, ranging from the impact of Patriot Act reauthorization proposals to the administration's plans to install body scanners and other new security measures at airports. And then there's the mounting controversies over new technologies, such as the Justice Department's expanding collection of

cell-phone tracking data gathered surreptitiously.

But when she recently raised the issue of the vacant board with Denis McDonough, one of the president's top national-security advisers, Harman said the response she got back was "nothing," just "we're working on it."

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But others are getting skeptical. According to Franklin, nobody at any of the civil-liberties groups that signed off on this week's letter is aware of anybody even being contacted by White House personnel about accepting such a job. Another leading civil-liberties activist (who asked not to be identified because of political sensitivities) said he suspects top White House officials like chief of staff Rahm Emanuel are reluctant to staff a board that can only give it political grief.

Yeah, Presidents Emanuel and Obama sure wouldn't want any entity with subpoena power out there actually trying to protect the citizenry from civil rights abuses; that would be totally inconvenient. I'm sure they will continue working on appropriately staffing the board at the current break neck pace....

Who could have ever suspected that Obama was more interested in political expediency than actually protecting silly little things like Constitutional civil rights?

(Graphic courtesy of Sunita's Blog)