



**National
Urban League**

**To Be Equal #5
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New York to End Stop-and-Frisk As We Know It**

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"We believe in respecting every New Yorker's rights, regardless of what neighborhood they live in or the color of their skin. And we believe in ending the overuse of stop-and-frisk that has unfairly targeted young African American and Latino men." New York Mayor Bill de Blasio

Elections have consequences. Never has that been more clearly demonstrated than last week when New York's new mayor, Bill de Blasio, announced an agreement to reform the stop-and-frisk practice of the city's police department, tactics which have disproportionately targeted African American and Latino young men for years. Last Thursday, at the Brownsville Recreation Center in Brooklyn, a community burdened with more police stops than any other in the city, the mayor fulfilled a campaign promise and announced that his administration would drop an appeal of the August 2013 ruling by Judge Shira Scheindlin, who found the policy unconstitutional and an example of "indirect racial profiling."

Mayor de Blasio made stop-and-frisk reform a major issue in his 2013 campaign, and the agreement he announced last week represents a dramatic reversal of the previous administration's staunch defense of the policy. The agreement calls for the commencement of a dialogue between police and community leaders to ensure that policies driving the police and community apart are cooperatively addressed. Furthermore, for the next three years, a court-appointed monitor will oversee the NYPD's compliance with constitutional law. The mayor explained that once the resolution is confirmed by the Federal District Court, New York City will officially drop the appeal that was put in motion by the Bloomberg administration.

Let me be clear. As the former mayor of New Orleans, I fully understand that the first obligation of government is to protect its citizens, and I believe in community policing – done intelligently. But New York's stop-and-frisk policy was counterproductive and violated basic constitutional principles. According to statistics compiled by the New York Civil Liberties Union, "From 2002 to 2011, Black and Latino residents made up close to 90 percent of people stopped, and about 88 percent of stops – more than 3.8 million – were of innocent New

Yorkers. Even in neighborhoods that are predominantly white, Black and Latino New Yorkers face the disproportionate brunt... This, on its face, is discriminatory.”

The city’s new police commissioner, Bill Bratton, underscored the mayor’s commitment to reform, noting that instead of securing confidence, legitimacy and justice, in recent years the city’s stop-and-frisk practices have “raised doubts and concerns about the police force in this city.” He added, “We will not break the law to enforce the law.”

The National Urban League has been among those calling for stop-and-frisk reform in New York City. This new agreement essentially marks the beginning of the end of this discriminatory practice as we know it. We applaud Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Bratton and especially the people of New York who voted for change and got it. By paving the way to a reduction in racial profiling, a greater guarantee of equal treatment under the law, and better relations between police and the community, this move offers a guide to other cities across the nation committed to ensuring safety, justice and fairness for all citizens.

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