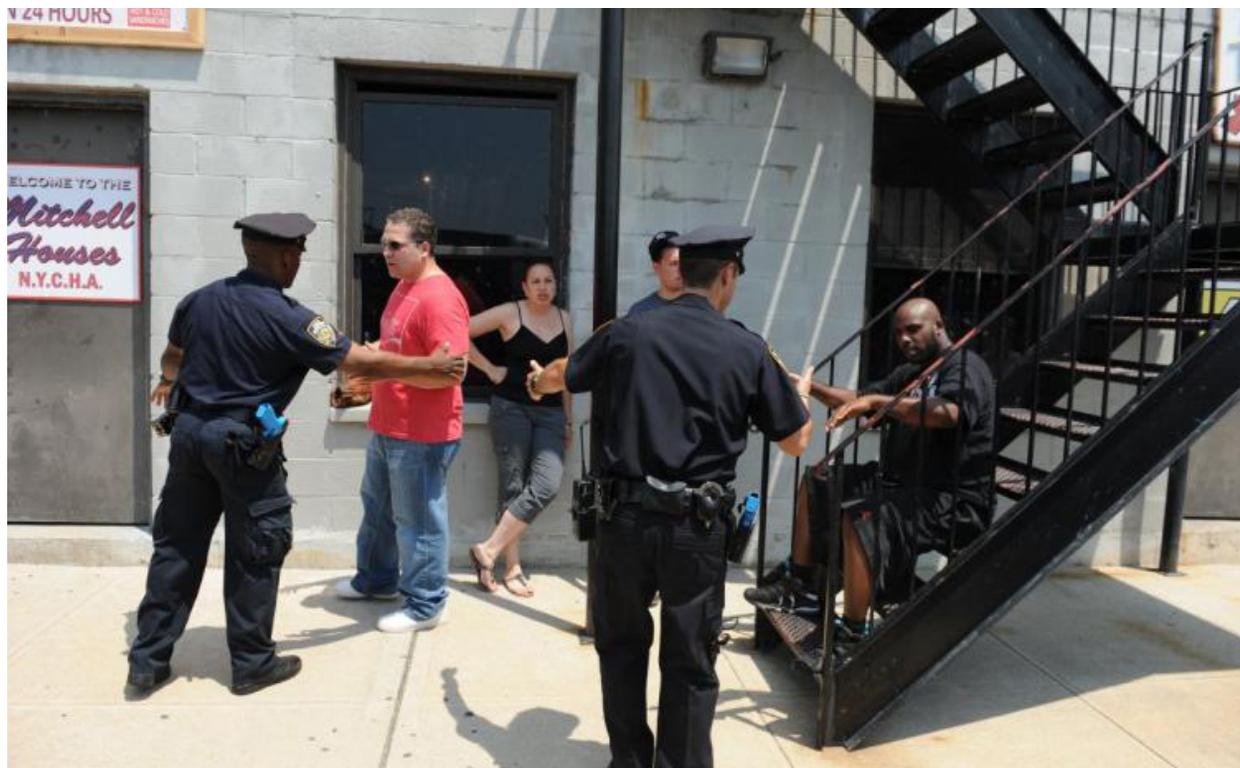


A policing rift that healed: The remarkable transformation of stop-and-frisk in New York City

BY NEW YORK DAILY NEWS EDITORIALS | November 26, 2017



Police training, in 2012 (Mark Bonifacio/New York Daily News)

In a season of gratitude, New York City ought to appreciate just how far, how quickly, a quiet consensus has taken the place of a deep divide on the policing practice called stop, question and frisk.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. Not long ago, many — us included — thought stop-and-frisk to be a vital tool, fueling what was a vicious debate over preserving or discarding the tactic.

After a court ruling, the fight about reforming it was expected to be equally nasty.

That's not the way it worked, at all.

So calm is the atmosphere today, that when last week the court monitor assigned to police the police, Peter Zimroth, signed off on a re-training protocol for more than 22,000 NYPD officers and supervisors, critics who screamed at megadecibels not long ago — be they the New York Civil Liberties Union, police unions or Black Lives Matter activists — issued nary a peep.

All now agree: The old way of stop-and-frisk was wrong. The new way is better. It's not perfect, but it's progress.

How did we get here? Grownups did their jobs, and a city matured.

It was nearly a decade ago that civil libertarians sued the city on the grounds that stop-and-frisk violated the rights of young, black and Latino New Yorkers, stopped by the hundreds of thousands each year, too often on flimsy suspicion of criminal activity.

At the time, Commissioner Ray Kelly vehemently insisted nothing like racial profiling was taking place.

At the opposite extreme from Kelly stood Judge Shira Scheindlin, who in 2013 ruled the NYPD guilty of “deliberate indifference” to the civil rights of those stopped and frisked.

This Editorial Board took strong issue with that ruling, and still disputes its legal reasoning.

But we have since come to acknowledge what Bill de Blasio long insisted and the rest of the city has simultaneously learned: that indiscriminate stop-and-frisk was never an essential policing tactic, and that it in fact aggravated friction between police and the communities they protect.

Crime statistics don't lie: This city is safer since discarding en masse stop-and-frisk. Major felonies are down. Shootings, too.

The new consensus is best reflected in the work of the monitor Scheindlin appointed to enforce her order: Peter Zimroth, working first with ex-Commissioner Bill Bratton and now with Commissioner Jimmy O'Neill.

His calm, systematic labor with critics and practitioners alike began by setting sane protocols for testing the body cameras that will eventually be standard equipment for every patrol officer.

With similar judiciousness, new training guidelines vigorously affirm officers' legitimate powers and urge instructors to hear out and then assuage officers' concerns.

So, be grateful: for the police who then and now keep our city safe, for their capacity to grow, and for all those who, by working in concert to reshape stop-and-frisk, helped turn a divisive flashpoint into a common cause.