

LETTERS

When the Police Stop and Frisk

Published: July 2, 2010

To the Editor:

Heather Mac Donald's ringing endorsement of Compstat policing and the more than half a million New York Police Department stop-and-frisk street encounters in just one year brushes aside the consequences that so many adverse interactions have on the relationship the police enjoy with the community.

For too many minority New Yorkers, the sight of a passing police car brings a sense of dread and angst, the terrible feeling that they do not yet enjoy the full liberties the Constitution promises or the rights of redress that many New Yorkers take as a given. It ignores, too, the fact that many street cops bristle at the constant pressure to produce higher year-on-year "numbers," pressure that coarsens a profession that is overwhelmingly rooted in service.

The N.Y.P.D. should be proud that it takes crime and disorder seriously — something that sadly cannot be said for many big city police departments — but people of good conscience should beseech the deservedly much-respected Commissioner Raymond Kelly to look again at whether this level of adversarial interaction is really required.

Eugene O'Donnell

Chicago, June 26, 2010

The writer, a lecturer in the department of law and police studies at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, is a former N.Y.P.D. officer and New York City prosecutor.