

Nicholas Peart

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President's Task Force on 21st century policing

My name is Nicholas Peart. I am a 26 year old resident of New York City. I am currently working at an organization in Harlem called The Brotherhood/Sister-Sol. I've also been a strong Advocate for Police Reforms in my city. In 2013, I was a plaintiff in the class action Lawsuit, Floyd VS the City of New York. When I was 14, my mother told me not to panic if a police officer stopped me. Since my mother gave me this advice, I have sadly had numerous occasions to remember and consider her wisdom. My mother has since passed away and I have become parent and father to my three younger siblings. I have also become the face of the lawsuit challenging the NYPD's policy of stop and frisk.

A few years ago I was celebrating my 18th birthday with my cousin and a friend. We decided to walk to a nearby place to get some burgers; the restaurant was closed so we sat on the bench in the median strip that runs down the middle Broadway in New York City. We were talking, enjoying the evening when suddenly and out of nowhere squad cars surround us. A policeman yelled from the window "get on the ground" I was stunned and I was scared. I was on the

ground with a gun pointed at me. I couldn't see what was happening but I could feel a policeman's hand reaching into my pocket for my wallet, at gunpoint. They ran their hands through my shorts, my legs, and my behind. They asked me questions then the officers handed me my wallet back and wished me a "happy birthday" I was humiliated.

In 2011, I was on my way to the store when two police officers jumped out of an unmarked car and told me to stop and put my hands up against the wall, I complied. Without my permission they took my cell phone from my hand and one of the officers reached into my pocket and removed my wallet and keys. He looked through my wallet and then handcuffed me. The officer asked if I had just come out of a particular building, "No" I told them, I live next-door. They put me in a car, removed my shoes and went through my socks and asked if I had any marijuana in my possession and if so, I should let them know. They then took my keys and went into my building and tried to enter into my apartment. My terrified younger sibling tried to call me as they heard strangers trying to get in. I couldn't answer because the police had confiscated my phone. The police tried to use my keys to get into my apartment; they banged on the door but my siblings said only children were in the house, they left. The police came back downstairs and I was simply let go and I felt helpless.

The NYPD says the purpose of stop and frisk is to remove guns from the streets. Under the Law, the NYPD is supposed to have reasonable suspicion before stopping and frisking an Individual. Yet over the last decade of those stopped less than .1% had a gun and less than 5% were arrested. Nearly 4,000,000 stops have occurred in New York City in the last decade, with Nearly 700,000 stopped in 2012. 84% were black or Latino.

Unnecessary police interaction has become a rite of passage for far too many young people in this country; and the psychological consequences of unwarranted stops and frisks are damaging. Aggressive policing is alienating an entire generation of young people and has long-lasting effects on the community. I represent all those who have been stopped for no other reason than walking while black. Mothers of black and brown boys should not have to mentally prepare their sons to be harassed by people who are supposed to be there to protect them.

Recommendations/Solutions

Strengthening the relationship between the police and the community is imperative to the longevity of crime reduction in this country. It's of the essence to have a police force that will be willing to establish relationships with residents and also be open to community dialogue when it matters most. I encourage this task force to consider long-term systematic solutions where commanding officers

and community affairs officers are easily accessible. I hope to see officers on the beat and becoming a pivotal force in the community like they once were a time ago. There should be greater out reach to the community beyond partnering with a school or the local church, I envision community events where officers are transparent about the current climate of the communities they serve. I would recommend community affairs officers being more visible in big cities. We currently have a culture of reactive community policing, its time to have a proactive approach to policing, where experienced police officers are bridging gaps and easing tensions. I envision a force where police officers understand the culture of the community as well as the socio-economic conditions young people face. I hope to also see more accountability for police misconduct. I would encourage strengthening government agencies like the civilian complaint review board. I am optimistic it would be a step forward in giving individuals a voice instead of being stonewalled. I hope police practices will change and that when I have children I won't need to pass along my mother's advice.