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**LAPD's Consent Decree Maybe Partially Over,
but Racial Profiling Certainly is Not Over in America
Between The Lines**

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The City of Los Angeles made a big announcement that the biggest gang in the city, "the Code Blue" gang on the city payroll, the Los Angeles Police Department is being paroled from its eight year federal consent decree oversight. At least, partially anyway.

Guess that means LAPD is still on probation with the feds since all aspects of the decree was not abolished. It just means the more egregious aspects of the widespread police corruption, that was exposed in the Rampart Scandal a decade ago, have been mitigated. Their more delicate, and less obvious, forms of abuse are still in evidence, though Chief Bratton, the Police Commission and the city brass chooses to ignore them. Especially racial profiling. Bratton, in particular, chose to front off the ACLU at his press conference just because they said the decree shouldn't be lifted. Bratton's act was the equivalent to flipping off the prison guards as soon as you walk out the prison gates. The decree may have been lifted, but racial profiling ain't hardly over.

It was very interesting that in the same news cycle that LAPD was announcing that the jailbird had been freed, there was another story reporting that famed Harvard Professor, Louis "Skip" Gates, had been arrested for "disorderly conduct" after police responded to a breaking and entering call. Now this is when you say, "America is funnier than a motherf*#!#r." Will deny something on one hand while it's plainly "in your face" on the other.

Who the hell does not know who Skip Gates is, particularly on the Harvard campus in Cambridge? He makes two documentaries a year, has one of the most prestigious teaching positions in the nation and speaks all over the world. He's been at Harvard for over 20 years. At least his hometown folk and campus colleagues should know who he is? Yet, when he returned from a trip to China and his front door jammed when he tried to open it, the police received a report from a Harvard employee that two black men (Skip and his driver) was trying to break in a house.

Skip Gates is five feet four inch tall, 140 pounds soaking wet, 60 years old and walks with a limp (and a cane). Plus he makes "a grip" of money. Not exactly the "profile" of your everyday burglar. Common sense would tell you that he must live there. By the way, breaking into your own house is not against the law. But to the woman that reported it, and to the simple-minded "Homer" that showed up, he was a different kind of profile - just "a black man" doing what they think black men do - steal, rob, rape, lie and kill.

Gates, no matter how many times he appears on PBS (which is damn near more than Oprah comes on regular television), was being put through the paces for being just another black man caught up in a place white folk thought he had no place being. And it pissed him off!! It would piss me off too. So when the officer asked to step out his house and asked him for his ID, I can imagine how that conversation went. Skip Gates got arrested for talking down to a white person (after the white person talked down to him). We call it, "Standing up for our rights." They call it disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. Now that they found out who he is, they want to drop the charges - but the indignation from the whole experience has occurred.

They picked the wrong one this time. There's no, "Sorry, we stopped the wrong Nig..." in racial profiling because there's no such thing as the wrong Nig. For their purpose, it could be any Nig. Just stop one and find something. The glaring irony of the whole situation is that, NO black man in America is above it. Back to L.A....

What Chief Bratton and the rest of the blue crew don't get is that putting black men through the paces, for indignation sake, creates a whole 'nother level of hostility that leads to the use of deadly force and other abuses that the department has been known for. So, don't just dismiss that racial profiling exists. We know it does, and we know you'll never admit it. But that's okay - because it happens everyday, somewhere in America. Be it in the streets, highways and alleys of Los Angeles, California, or in the privileged university spaces of Harvard surrounded by the mansions of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Somewhere in America, a brotha is being unnecessarily put through the paces, for no other reason than supremacist arrogance and entrenched stereotyping.

LAPD may be off parole as it relates to the federal consent decree, but they're not off probation. Racial profiling is a primary indicator as to whether LAPD has really changed.

And the world is watching...


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