

Attorney general urges data collection on police brutality

WASHINGTON (AP)— In Boston, cries of police brutality are relatively rare. A beefed-up internal affairs division seems to be working, experts say.

In New York, on the other hand, anyone who has ever heard of black immigrants Abner Louima and Amadou Diallo knows the nation's largest city has a problem when race and policing converge.

But whether these cities have the best and worst records in policing their police — or whether police brutality is on the rise in American cities — is difficult to say authoritatively.

No government agency keeps track, and few police departments collect information based on race.

In her longest speech to date on police conduct, Attorney General Janet Reno told a National Press Club luncheon last week, "No matter what the data show, the perception of too many Americans is that police officers cannot be trusted.

"The issue is national in scope and reaches people all across America," Reno said. "Especially in minority communities ... residents believe the police used excessive force, that law enforcement is too

aggressive, that law enforcement is biased, disrespectful, and that they are being treated unfairly."

Reno outlined steps she said were needed to restore trust between police and minority communities.

She urged police departments to gather hard data on racial patterns of traffic and other police stops of citizens and announced that for the first time, this year the Justice Department's annual survey of crime victims would ask respondents if they had an encounter with police in which force was used.

Reno said she would convene a conference in the

next couple of weeks of police executives, academic experts and community leaders to discuss the problem and try to develop standards for respectful police-citizen contacts that are not based on racial profiles.

She also said that rank-and-file police officers must "make it unacceptable to keep silent about other officers' misconduct," that police departments should expand their recruitment in communities that have complained about police work and to provide citizens with a complaint procedure that eliminates their fear of speaking up while remaining

fair to accused officers.

The question has taken on crucial dimensions. Police shootings have taken the lives of blacks in Pittsburgh and Riverside, Calif. In New Jersey, Maryland and Florida, state troopers have come under fire for conducting traffic stops based on a driver's race - so-called racial profiling.

A picture can be cobbled together from hearsay and anecdotes but the lack of hard statistics riles civil rights advocates who believe black and brown people are more likely to end up unjustly facing a policeman's gun or billy club than whites.

"This is frustrating to me in large part because white America has refused to acknowledge a problem exists," said Rep. Gregory W. Meeks, D-N.Y. "Now in 1999, we are seeing some of the same police brutality we saw in the Jim Crow days, but white America just doesn't get it."

Meeks, said the Congressional Black Caucus task force on police brutality, which he co-chairs, plans hearings in several cities, including Baltimore, Chicago and Dallas.

"At least it will be a starting point," said Meeks, a (See Police, Page 11)

NAACP president joins chorus in fight against profiling

Special to Sentinel-Voice
Sandra Gonzales and
Howard Mintz

Using the NAACP's western regional conference in San Jose as a platform, the president of the organization on Saturday echoed the nationwide chorus of civil rights leaders who have urged an end to racial profiling by law enforcement agencies in traffic stops.

In addition, NAACP President and CEO Kweisi Mfume, speaking to reporters, said the U.S. Justice Department needs to take a more proactive role in reviewing police brutality

cases.

"It is eroding public confidence in police departments across the country," said Mfume, a former congressman from Maryland, who was the conference's keynote speaker.

The combination of racial profiling and instances of police brutality against minorities, Mfume said, "is creating a powder keg across the nation that threatens to erupt."

Mfume praised San Jose police for volunteering to record the race of drivers pulled over in traffic stops,

an initiative announced recently by Chief Bill Lansdowne.

Bill Lann Lee, acting assistant attorney general for civil rights, speaking at the NAACP western regional conference at the Fairmont Hotel Friday, said local chapters should "forge partnerships" with Bay Area police departments so there are open lines of communication on the issues of race and crime.

But Mfume also echoed the sentiments of Bill Lann Lee, the Justice Department's top civil rights lawyer, who, while on Friday

complimented San Jose's program, also warned that street officers need to support the issue.

"Collection of data by police departments is a good step — but it is a first step," said Mfume.

He said he hopes federal legislation would require the Justice Department to track police stops to see if race is a factor.

Similar legislation has been proposed in California.

California Attorney General Bill Lockyer also addressed the conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored

People, held at the Fairmont Hotel in downtown San Jose.

Lockyer stressed that he plans to pay more attention to civil rights issues than his predecessor, Dan Lungren.

He said he has formed a separate civil rights office and doubled its budget and staff.

"Justice has both a criminal and civil face," he said.

"We want to do more than just fight crime."

Once an independent office with six attorneys, the civil rights division had shrunk to three positions and was combined with the Charitable Trusts Section

under Lungren.

Lockyer said civil rights is an important issue, given the landscape of the state with its growth and diversity.

"This is the most diverse place in the country and it's going to be more so," he said. "State leaders have an obligation to facilitate and manage the interaction of diversity... civil rights is part of the job to guarantee everyone that they're going to be treated fairly. That is why it's a high priority."

Taking shots at his predecessor, Lockyer told the group that he's already (See Profiling, Page 17)

NLV Race

(Continued from Page 1) campaign, Hinson said, "What I do is my job and I do it well—above and beyond. With them not renewing my contract, when you work for five people, you can't please them all. The City Council is a totally different role, though. I'll be elected, serving the citizens."

Hinson also said that although she is a black female, she hopes that the citizens of North Las Vegas will "look to" her "as someone who can do the job", especially because of her inside knowledge and experience.

University of Nevada School of Medicine's Student

Liaison Laura Perkins key issue was the continued development of old North Las Vegas, adding that her "honesty" and "diligence" were her strongest assets.

As a native and an African-American, Perkins said, "I feel that we can bring a fresh approach. As an ethnic candidate, I think that I can understand the sentiments of the people of old North Las Vegas a little bit better."

She added that she felt it was "really important" for her to be representative of diverse ethnic groups and not just other blacks.

Tony White, a technology specialist, also tossed his hat in the ring. White wants to

see more recreational facilities to the city and feels that he knows how to attract "quality builders".

He opposed the frequent changes that the current Council makes to the master plan for development.

"It's a contract," he said, "These arbitrary changes destroy our way of life. A lot of developers are partially building, then, the master plan changes, and all of a sudden, they're building a different project. We'd get higher end

products if we stick to the plan."

White said that his African-Americanness is inconsequential.

"I'd like to bring universal representation," he said. "Segments of our society feel that they have been neglected. As a minority, I want to make sure nobody feels (that way)"

Questions and comments from the audience included concerns about tension between police and the community, lines of

communication between the people and the council members and there was a staunch participant who only wanted to know if the water tax would take a hike.

The role of the city's Redevelopment Agency, which is actually mostly the members of the City Council coupled with a few citizens and an advisory board, was called into question.

Montanez said that the Agency was an additional and unnecessary barrier to


businesses opening up in North Las Vegas, while Hinson defended their role, calling the state-governed group a "blessing."

White suggested that city police, as well as school district police authority should be expanded and that community involvement and communication was key in building a better police-community relationship.

All of the candidates agreed that communication must be improved and formalized.

Davey Deals
AUTOS • BIKES • BOATS
2980 S. Sandhill  **SHELDON WELCH**
E-Z FINANCING & LOW PAYMENTS
HOME OF THE \$300 DOWN
WE SELL 'EM FAST
CUZ WE SELL 'EM CHEAP **474-7777**

Becoming A Homeowner With No Down Payment or Closing Costs Is A Dream Come True.
With Nehemiah Program® at PNC Mortgage, you can own a home with no cash out of pocket.

 **Jacqueline Marion**
Loan Officer
2300 W. Sahara Ave., Ste. 950
Las Vegas, NV 89102
702-257-7440 Office
702-477-1054 Voice Mail Pager

PNC MORTGAGE
A subsidiary of PNC Bank Corp.

Nehemiah funds may not cover all down payment and closing costs on certain conventional home loans.
© 1999 • PNC Mortgage Corp of America, 75 North Fairway Drive, Vernon Hills, IL 60061 • CA Licensed Broker • License #C65038 • Regulated by the CA Department of Real Estate (916-227-0931) • Licensed by the Department of Corporations under the California Residential Mortgage Lending Act • GA and IL Residential Mortgage Licensees • NH License #5469MB • Licensed Mortgage Banker • NJ Secondary Mortgage Licensees • RI Licensed Lender • This is not an offer to enter into an interest rate lock-in agreement under Minnesota law • Prices and programs subject to change without notice. www.pncmortgage.com

 Equal Housing Lender

ABC Insurance Agency
High Risk? Accidents? DWI? Cancelled?
Low Down Payment • Low Monthly Payments
IMMEDIATE SR-22's
FREE QUOTES • SE HABLA ESPAÑOL
Aubrey Branch Quincey Branch
Broker/Agent Consultant

1700 Civic Center Drive
N. Las Vegas 649-1029
BUSINESS • HOME • HEALTH • LIFE 310-6055