

Sharpton's lawsuit targets stops, frisking

By *Nayaba Arinde*

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK (NNPA) - Earlier this month, many were all caught up in the Super Bowl brouhaha. However, when the police department presented their stop-and-frisk report, Rev. Al Sharpton called a press conference on Super Bowl Sunday at St. Luke's Baptist Church in Harlem, and promptly threatened a class-action lawsuit against the city for Black folk who felt they were racially profiled by the police department.

According to NYPD figures, out of 508,540 people stopped by officers in 2006, about 52 percent were Black and 29 percent Latino.

Bearing in mind the makeup of the city's populace, that math does not add up, said Sharpton.

"Whether this is sanctioned by Mayor Bloomberg or Police Commissioner Kelly, it is certainly happening under their administrations, and we are seeing no remedy from them," Sharpton said. "We are in a city where we are little over 30 percent of the population and, yet, over 52 percent of those being stopped. That is profiling. When you factor in tourists, and people who come from Connecticut, and New Jersey and Long Island who come to shop or work, we're only 25 percent, so that makes the figures even more

disturbing."

Sharpton said anyone who believes that they were racially profiled by a stop-and-frisk should join the class-action suit.

During a heated City Council hearing last month in which Councilman Charles Barron accused Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly of letting his officers engage in racial profiling and asked him to step down, Kelly denied the charge.

He later told the press that the alleged profiling could be explained away simply because, "Officers are stopping those they reasonably suspect of committing a crime, based on descriptions and circumstances and not on per-

sonal bias."

The report came out just as the New Yorkers observed the eight-year anniversary of the death of unarmed 23-year-old Amadou Diallo, who was struck 19 times in a barrage of 41 NYPD bullets in the Bronx; plus the ongoing Queens vigil and grand jury investigation of the Sean Bell 50-shot killing by police.

"Like with Rodney King beating showed obvious police brutality, with these latest statistics no one can deny that racial profiling exists," Barron said in a telephone interview from Washington, D.C.

"I'm asking my colleagues to join me now in asking Ray Kelly to resign. These numbers show only one in 10 officers fill out these forms, most just stop us, cuss us out and tell us to move on, so the real figures must be much higher. The City Council passed legislation to demand that these reports must be quarterly, but the last report was given in 2002, when the figures showed 97,000 stops. Out of the 508,000 people stopped last year, only 20,000 led to

arrests or summonses being issued. That means 480,000 innocent people were harassed."

In response to a request for a comment about Sharpton's charges, Mayor Michael Bloomberg's press office forwarded the remarks the mayor made at a press conference in Albany.

Asked if the report made the case that the NYPD was engaged in racial profiling, Bloomberg replied, "We have a policy of no racial profiling, and I think the numbers clearly show that it's not," he said. "There's a difference between stop-and-question and stop-and-frisk, and roughly half of the stops are stop-and-question."

Then he advised, "The way you look at the numbers to see whether or not the police are doing what they should be doing — and it's my responsibility to make sure that they are — is you look to see in how many stops they make, as compared to how many times a victim or a witness describes the perpetrator of an alleged illegal action, whether the number that gets stopped are in the same proportion as

what the victims are described as looking like.

For example, we stopped fewer Blacks than our witnesses say that's what the perpetrator looked like. We stopped more Latinos, but the numbers in both cases, roughly, Whites, Blacks, Asians, Latinos, it's roughly in proportion to two things: one, in neighborhoods with high crime, you're going to have more stops. And if it's a preponderance of one ethnicity living there, there are just going to be more people."

"There are two reasons why an officer stops and frisks an individual," said newly installed State Senator Eric Adams "One is they are following a description given by a victim, and they find someone fitting the description. That's great. That's what we want. The other way is when a cop stops someone because they have a reasonable suspicion about the person."

But, said Adams, who retired as a captain after 21 years with the NYPD, "What the police department is doing is using the number of (See *Sharpton*, Page 14)

Single families succeed

By *Gene C. Johnson Jr.*

Special to Sentinel-Voice

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) - The reality that some mothers and fathers must raise their children alone has always been part of African-American life. Most find it is the quality — not the quantity — of parents that makes all the difference.

Single parents Dwayne Conard, Janet Lawton and Angela Edward share a common bond in raising their respective children: They're not doing it alone.

That was a tough lesson to learn, said Lawton, 31, who raises her 7-year-old daughter, Camryn without any support from her child's father.

"Based upon my experiences, I've always tried to do things on my own," said Lawton, who is pursuing a master's degree in psychology while working as an office manager for an area church.

"One thing I can say is, allow people to come in and help you," she said. "I'm the type of person who tries to do things on my own — and I would get exhausted."

And support, she said, also comes from an even higher source.

"I know that at any time that I can bow down on my knees and just ask the Lord for strength, guidance and wisdom. He'll give me ideas and things that I wouldn't think of on my own, on how to manage my time, manage my home — how to organize things," she said. "He pretty much keeps me focused."

Lawton met her daughter's father, at 19, through a family member and doesn't talk too much about him. Instead, she focuses on the here and now — and cultivating her daughter's blossoming talents.

"One of the most important things as a parent that you can do is to learn your child's gifts and personality — and really just try to nurture, really help them to grow in their gifts," said Lawton, who added that she sees herself one day getting married and having more children.

According to the Population Reference Bureau's analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, as of December 2006, 65 percent of Black children under the age of 18 live in single-parent homes.

And for all intents and purposes, Conard, 45, says he's not just a single parent of a 5-year-old girl, Ymani Conard, he is also raising his 16-year-old stepson, Tariq Freeman, despite the fact that he and his child's mother have been separated for the past two years.

"The 5-year-old is with me four or five days out of the week," Conard said. "The 16-year-old is just with me. The 16-year-old was once on probation, trying to sell [drugs]. So I figured the best thing to do is to have him with me. Now his grades are good and he's playing on the football team."

"But I was raised by my stepfather. So that's basically why I do the things that I do because my stepfather treated me like I was his," he said. "As far as I am concerned, [the 16-year-old] is mine."

The move in being responsible for both children was perfect, Conard said, because of his current job managing an apartment building.

"It's more kids here to play with and you don't go outside the building," he said. "It's an open courtyard here, so kids don't have to go outside the [apartment building] into any of that drama."

"I mean the bottom line is that my job is to be a good parent, a good father — and to be there when they need you," Conard said. "I have a stepdaughter, too, who is having a baby any day now. And she wants to move, and I'm trying to find her a place. As a matter of fact, I'm not trying, I'm going to get her a place."

About the only problem, Conard jokingly said, is that he tends to spoil his children. "But, I get more results when I'm doing something for them because it's not hard for them to come to me and talk to me when they've got a problem or when they think they've done something wrong," he said.

In raising her 18-year-old son, Edward, 42, said she found support from her parents after having her child, Andre, when she was 24. She decided to move back home when her son was 4.

"My dad has done a lot of things with (See *Family*, Page 7)

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