

Sharpton: Feds need to tackle police misconduct

By Saeed Shabazz

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK (NNPA) — Three New York City police officers were indicted in early December for the alleged sodomy of a 24-year-old tattoo artist, after the man was arrested for allegedly smoking marijuana outside of a Brooklyn subway station.

Richard Kern, 25, a four-year veteran, is charged with the most serious crime of using a baton to violate Michael Mineo in October. Officers Alex Cruz and Andrew Morales were indicted on the charge that they tried to cover up the sodomy.

Rev. Al Sharpton, of the

National Action Network, was the first civil rights leader to appear at Mineo's side — even as the police department's Internal Affairs Division and the media said there was no sodomy.

Rev. Sharpton told audiences at weekly National Action Network meetings in Harlem headquarters that incoming attorney general in the Barack Obama administration must make investigating police brutality a priority.

"We must go to the attorney general and deal with the issue of police misconduct," Sharpton said. Obama's choice for attorney general is Eric Holder, a former deputy

attorney general in the Clinton administration.

New Yorkers are recalling the 1997 sodomizing of Haitian immigrant, Abner Louima, by an NYPD officer with a broomstick.

The guilty officer was sentenced to 30 years in prison; a second officer was given a five-year sentence for perjury.

Ron Hampton, president of the Washington-based National Black Police Association, told the *Final Call* that he agrees with Rev. Sharpton's call for the attorney general to prioritize stopping police misconduct. "If it's Eric Holder, he has a monumental job of cleaning

up a U.S. Justice Department, so that it can get back to being what a Justice Department is suppose to be," Mr. Hampton said.

Sharpton, speaking to a Chicago audience in mid-December, again called for federal action against abusive cops. "There's still a problem with criminal justice in this country. The authorities must enforce the laws that they abide by," Sharpton said.

"Police misconduct complaints are up across the U.S.," Hampton noted. "And we are seeing more and more that there is a management issue at the local level."

Hampton, in discussing the latest NYC cop abuse case, said the Internal Affairs Division set the tone when it found no crime was commit-

ted in Mineo's case. Then a transit officer stepped forward to tell the grand jury he witnessed the alleged sodomy.

"People who are in charge of the NYPD don't want to address the systemic issue of police brutality and racial profiling," Hampton said. A culture exists whereas the police feel they can do what they can get away with, he said. "They say, 'nothing is going to happen to me,'" said Hampton.

It is up to police department leaders and managers to set standards that don't tolerate misconduct, he argued.

Back in September, analysts with the N.Y. Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) warned that the NYPD seemed headed towards a

record number of stop and frisks of people, particularly people of color. The rights organization said in the first quarter of 2008, 145,098 stops had been made — the highest quarterly rate since the highest quarterly rate since the NYPD started keeping data on the controversial procedure.

Through September, some 391,000 people had been arbitrarily stopped and searched.

The NYPD stopped 508,540 people in 2007, up from 97,296 in 2002, when the recording of the data began. In 2006 the number had dropped to 468,932. The NYCLU said 86.4 percent of the people stopped were Black and Latino, while Whites constituted 2.6 percent. (See Feds, Page 5)

Big gaps in what we say, do about beating racism

WASHINGTON (AP) — Think you wouldn't tolerate a racist act? Think again, says a surprising experiment that exposed some college students to one and found indifference at best.

Here's the scene: Researchers in Toronto recruited 120 non-Black York University students for what purported to be a psychology study.

A participant was directed to a room where two actors posing as fellow participants — one Black, one White — waited. The Black person said he needed to retrieve a cell phone and left, gently bumping the White person's leg on the way out. The White actor then did one of three things: Nothing. Said, "I hate when Black people do that." Or used the N-word.

Then a researcher entered and said the "psychology

study" was starting and that the student should pick one of the two others as a partner for the testing.

Half the participants just read about that scene, and half actually experienced it.

Those asked to predict their reaction to either comment said they'd be highly upset and wouldn't choose the White actor as their partner.

Yet students who actually experienced the event didn't seem bothered by it — and nearly two-thirds chose the White actor as a partner, the researchers report recently in the journal *Science*.

"It's like these nasty racist comments aren't having an effect," said York University psychology professor Kerry Kawakami, the lead author.

"It's important to remind people that just because a

Black man has been elected as president doesn't mean racism is no longer a problem or issue in the States," she added.

The study can't say why people reacted that way, although the researchers speculate that unconscious bias is at work.

They have new experiments under way to see if maybe these witnesses suppress that they're upset to avoid confrontation.

"The failure of people to confront or do anything about racist comments is pretty widespread in the real world," said Indiana University psychologist Eliot R. Smith, who co-wrote a review of the experiment. "People may feel uncomfortable if someone makes a remark like this, but it's rare they will actually confront them."

CBC

(Continued from Page 2)

House Ways and Means Committee. Two other CBC members chair House committees. They are Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss. of the Homeland Security Committee and Edolphus Towns, who chairs the House Oversight Committee. In addition, there are 15 subcommittee chairs who are CBC members.

U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., the House majority whip, is currently the highest ranking African-American in Congress.

The growing power of the CBC is clearly bolstered by Democratic majorities in

both houses.

"This will be an outstanding year in the history of our great nation," Clyburn told the audience at the swearing in. He introduced House Speaker Nancy Pelosi as a "strong, steely petite woman."

Pelosi told the Caucus, "Here we are in this incredible, incredible time. With all the good work, all of the inspiration, all of the volition, leading the challenge with much work undone, laying the foundation for two weeks, Barack Obama for president of the United States."

The audience burst into

applause.

"This is a great opportunity and I think we'll take advantage of it," said Rep. Al Green, D-Texas, at the reception.

Rep. G. K. Butterfield, D-N.C., newly elected CBC secretary, was emphatic: "The CBC has the tremendous responsibility to expose and confront the disparities that hurt our community," Butterfield said in a statement. "With a solid Democratic majority and a powerful ally occupying The White House, the African-American community can expect us to be relentless in our effort to empower our community."

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