

Testimony of Heather Mac Donald, Senior Fellow, Manhattan Institute  
“21<sup>st</sup> Century Law Enforcement: How Smart Policing Targets Criminal Behavior”

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House Judiciary Committee

Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security

My name is Heather Mac Donald; I am a fellow at the Manhattan Institute, a think tank in New York City. Thank you, Chairman Goodlatte, for inviting me to testify today about data-driven policing. I have studied policing extensively, including for my book, *Are Cops Racist?*

Since 1991, crime in New York City has dropped close to 80 percent. New York's crime decline is unmatched anywhere in the country, both in its depth and in its duration. It represents the greatest public policy success of the last half century.

The New York Police Department accomplished this unprecedented feat by the managerial revolution known as Compstat. Under Compstat, which was pioneered by Police Commissioner William Bratton in 1994, the department started analyzing crime data daily, and deploying officers where crime patterns were emerging. If officers observed suspicious behavior in a violence-plagued area, they were expected to intervene, pursuant to their legal authority, before a crime actually occurred. Precinct commanders were held ruthlessly accountable for the safety of their precincts. And the department stopped tolerating the disorder that had engulfed so many public spaces.

The benefits of the resulting crime decline have been disproportionately concentrated in the city's poorest neighborhoods, since that is where the costs of crime hit the hardest. Blacks and Hispanics have made up 79 percent of the drop in homicide victims since 1990. Over 10,000 black and Hispanic males are alive today who would have been dead had homicide rates remained at their early 1990s levels. With robberies and burglaries plummeting in once desolate neighborhoods in the late 1990s, economic activity and property values there rose dramatically.

Senior citizens could go shopping without fear of getting mugged. Children no longer needed to sleep in bathtubs to avoid stray bullets.

Critics of the NYPD, however, cite statistics such as the following to charge that the department is racially biased: In 2009, 55 percent of the pedestrian stops made by the New York police had black subjects, even though blacks are only 23 percent of the city's population. Whites, by contrast, were ten percent of all stops, though they make up 35 percent of the city's population.

Here is what you will never hear from the activists, however: In 2009, blacks committed 66 percent of all violent crime in New York. How do we know this? That is what the victims and witnesses of those crimes, most of them minorities themselves, tell the police in making their crime reports. Blacks committed 80 percent of all shootings in 2009, according to the victims, and 71 percent of all robberies.

Whites, on the other hand, committed five percent of all violent crimes in 2009. They committed 1.4 percent of all shootings and less than 5 percent of all robberies.

Given such disparities in crime rates (disparities which are replicated in every city in the country), the NYPD cannot target its resources where they are most needed without generating racially disproportionate stop and arrest data, even though the department's tactics are color-blind.

Community requests for assistance are the other main driver of police strategy, and the overwhelming demand coming out of high-crime precincts is for more cops and less tolerance of

street disorder. If residents of an apartment building ask their precinct commander to eliminate the drug dealing on their street, officers will likely question people hanging out around the building and increase the enforcement of quality of life laws in order to drive away the dealers. Such requests for a crack-down on street sales come far more frequently from minority neighborhoods, because that is where most open-air drug dealing occurs. The resulting stops will be based on behavior, not race, but each stop will count against the department in the activists' "racial profiling" litigation tally.

Under data-driven policing, the police go where the crime and the victims are. Race has nothing to do with it. No government program over the last fifty years has had as positive effect in minority neighborhoods as proactive policing; its successes should be more widely recognized.

Thank you for your attention, Chairman Goodlatte and committee members. I look forward to answering any questions that you might have.