

American Civil Liberties Union
Freedom Network

Citing 30-Year Pattern of Racial Profiling, ACLU And Rights Group Sue Cincinnati Police Officials

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CLEVELAND, OH--A coalition of civil rights groups sued the City of Cincinnati today in federal court, citing a 30-year pattern of racial profiling by police.

The lawsuit, brought by the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio and the Cincinnati Black United Front, was brought in United States District Court in Cincinnati on behalf of the African American members of both groups. The lawsuit seeks both a court order requiring the police department to alter its practice of targeting minority citizens for harassment based on their race, and money damages for certain plaintiffs.

"What we are seeking is to correct a 30-year pattern of racial misconduct by the Cincinnati Police Department," said Scott Greenwood, who is General Counsel for the ACLU of Ohio, and who will act as lead counsel for the ACLU in the case.

Papers filed with the court today paint a frightening picture of police harassment based on race. On a daily basis, African American citizens are routinely singled out for minor traffic citations, jaywalking tickets and other minor offenses. African Americans are far more likely than whites to be searched by the police as well.

Even more serious are allegations that police tend to use excessive and deadly force against African American citizens far more readily than against whites. Between 1995 and 2000, for example, Cincinnati Police killed 13 suspects during the course of their arrest, all of them African Americans. Widespread abuse of minority citizens continues to this day, despite the fact that police having been repeatedly singled out for criticism in several government reports published as early as the 1970's.

"This is a city with a serious problem," said ACLU Executive Director Christine Link. "In Cincinnati, racial bias touches almost every aspect of law enforcement. All Americans deserve equal justice under law, and today we are demanding no more and no less for the people of Cincinnati."

Legal papers in the case are available in .pdf format at
http://www.acluohio.org/news/recent_developments.htm.

To learn more about racial profiling, see the national ACLU's "Arrest the Racism" feature online at www.aclu.org/profiling and visit www.aclu.org/issues/policepractices/hmpolice.html.

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