

Racial Profiling

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LOS ANGELES (CNS) - Police Chief William Bratton today rejected the conclusions of a recent ACLU report that found blacks and Latinos are more likely than whites to be stopped, searched and arrested by Los Angeles police officers.

The report, released by the American Civil Liberties Union in October, was based on 810,000 field stops between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004. The group found there were 4,569 stops per 10,000 black residents, compared to 1,750 stops per 10,000 white residents.

The Los Angeles Police Commission, the civilian panel that oversees the department, heard a formal report on the ACLU's findings during a packed meeting this morning. "This police department does not -- let me make this very clear -- does not believe in racial profiling," Bratton said. "We have one of the most ethnically diverse police departments in the United States," he said. "It is a minority majority police department."

Deputy Chief Sandy Jo MacArthur told the Police Commission that within the first month of training, recruits make a visit to the Museum of Tolerance and complete an eight-hour workshop on how to prevent biased policing. "We expose the recruits to the dynamics of racism, bigotry, prejudice and discrimination," MacArthur said. "We really relate it to their field work. It isn't just going and taking a course on racism -- it's really applying it to the field of policing."

Last year, the LAPD began requiring recruits to complete a research project on the community. The department has also tried to beef up in-service training over the last five years, MacArthur said. "We now continuously take another bite of the apple so people are thinking about this constantly," she said. However, ACLU attorney Peter Bibring said he was disappointed in the LAPD's reaction to the report.

"It's been known for a long time that disparities exist with respect to various races in the frequency of police action in Los Angeles," Bibring said.

"I think what's perhaps most disappointing about the department's response is the sense that it's waving its hands and saying you can make statistics prove anything you like. I don't believe that that kind of disregard for empirical evidence is warranted in this situation."

LAPD officials will report back to the commission in 30 days with an update on developing a system to identify officers who show racial discrepancies in their work.