

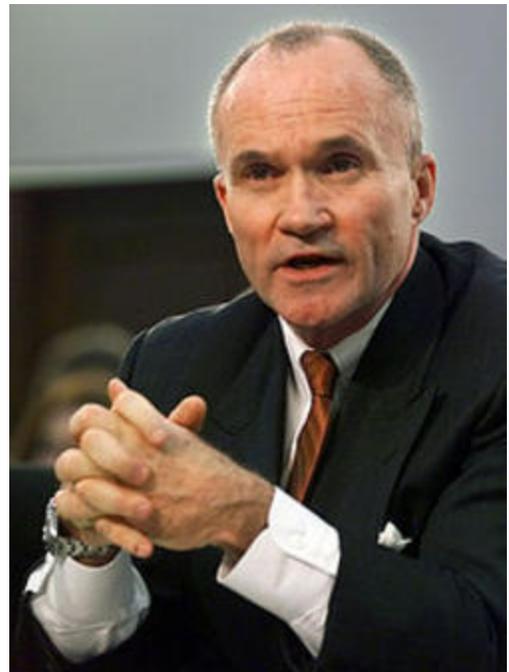
The Constitution Versus Ray Kelly

A new coalition is ready to take its fight to the commissioner

By [Nat Hentoff](#) Wednesday, Feb 29 2012

Our police commissioner and his chief cheerleader, the mayor, have forgotten or never learned that the Constitution would not have been allowed to work until the [Bill of Rights](#) (the first 10 amendments, introduced by [James Madison](#)) were added. These guaranteed that the new Americans' personal constitutional liberties would be protected from abuses by a government ignoring the separation of powers while suspending, for example, the [Fourth Amendment](#)'s right to privacy.

What has now become a national story is the Associated Press's month-long investigations, including internal NYPD documents, that reveal the extent to which [Ray Kelly](#)'s Intelligence Division in alliance with the [CIA](#) (forbidden by law to engage in domestic surveillance) is monitoring and infiltrating ethnic (especially Muslim) groups without any evidence of wrongdoing. Also, in black and Latino neighborhoods, monitoring bars, cafés, bookstores, and nightclubs.



All this, of course, is to protect us from terrorists. Nothing wrong with that, the commissioner and the mayor keep assuring us—and both add, it's constitutional.

This ethnic-mapping system is—or rather, was—secret, and dig how it was defended before a [U.S. Senate](#) committee by NYPD Intelligence Division official, also connected with the CIA, [Larry Sanchez](#): “The key was viewing innocuous activity, including behavior that might be protected by the [First Amendment](#), as a potential precursor to terrorism.”

Anyone and anything can be suspect. It's as if legendary [J. Edgar Hoover](#) is our police commissioner.

But New York City hasn't seceded from the United States, has it?

To combat this subversion of who we are as Americans (as taught when there were civics classes in New York schools), there is a new organization directly challenging Kelly and [Bloomberg](#) by bringing the Constitution back alive to New York in specific ways. Already, several leading candidates to succeed our undereducated mayor next year are paying attention to the goals of this rescue operation.

Welcome to Communities United for Police Reform! There are 27 member organizations. Among them: [Center for Race, Crime & Justice \(CRCJ\)](#) of [John Jay College of Criminal Justice](#); [Center for Constitutional Rights](#); New York Civil Liberties Union; [Legal Aid Society](#); [NAACP](#) Legal Defense Fund; Sistas & Brothas United/Northwest [Bronx](#) Community & [Clergy Coalition](#); CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities; [Malcolm X Grassroots](#) Movement; Bronx Defenders; Picture the Homeless; [Color of Change](#); Institute of Juvenile Justice Reform & Alternatives of the [Center for NU Leadership](#).

Since I came to New York to live in 1953 and then soon joined *The Village Voice*, I've never been so excited covering a story as this one. It's as if such key forces leading to the American Revolution as [Samuel Adams](#) and the Sons of Liberty have sent emissaries to town.

In the months ahead, I'll be updating this story. Ray Kelly's Intelligence Division might want to get my [FBI](#) file, which begins with my teaching, in my early twenties, jazz at the [Samuel Adams School](#) in Boston. I knew it was a Commie front and mocked that in class, but no one else had asked me to teach jazz.

Here, Communities United for Police Reform speaks for itself: "An unprecedented campaign to end discriminatory policing practices in New York, bringing together a movement of community members, lawyers, researchers, and activists to work for change.

"The partners in this campaign come from all five boroughs, from all walks of life, and represent many of those unfairly targeted the most by the NYPD."

I await, folks, your exposing the Kelly infiltrators into your communities.

The coalition continues: "We are a movement that is here to stay—a Campaign that will be a visible, lasting presence in the streets and neighborhoods citywide. We will be in communities and on the streets educating people about their rights; and in the courts and on the steps of City Hall and the state capitol, demanding change to the NYPD—until the policies end."

The website is changethenypd.org/problem.

There is one of the Bloomberg-Kelly achievements protecting us from residents of a certain neighborhood cited by Communities United: "In 2001, the New York Police Department made over 681,000 (stop-and-frisk) police stops—a 14 percent increase over 2010 (and a 603 percent

increase since 2002, Bloomberg's first year in office. Close to 90 percent of the stops resulted in no arrests or stops or summonses whatsoever."

Take your bows, Bloomberg and Kelly.

Also on this agenda that [Tom Paine](#) would have appreciated is to "reduce the number of encounters between police and residents that are based on profiling and discrimination."

Such continuous NYPD profiling is defined by the [ACLU](#): "Racial profiling disproportionately targets people of color . . . alienating communities from law enforcement and trust among the people they are sworn to protect and serve . . . hindering community, police efforts. . . . The despicable practice of racial profiling . . . has led countless people to live in fear and created a system of law enforcement that cast entire communities as suspect."

In a subsequent column: how Ray Kelly has cast practically anyone who is a Muslim as a suspect.

Also valuably, Communities United is "calling on the New York City Council to pass legislation calling for far more vigorous oversight of the NYPD."

One of Communities United's members, the New York Civil Liberties Union, has done a lot of research on that accountability. As have other organizations on the list.

And in view of the searing loss of credibility and respect for the NYPD among especially students of color by Kelly's badly trained, sometimes bullying School Safety Agents, that division needs real-life, real-time oversight from the [Department of Education](#), which, under [Joel Klein](#), relinquished all responsibility and accountability to Ray Kelly.

For additional, much needed educational initiatives by Communities United, its February Week of Action included: "Calling on the Bronx and All New Yorkers to Watch the Cops: Free hands-on Cop Watch training to learn your rights and get tips on how to educate the community and prevent police abuse. RSVP required. For more info, to request childcare, or to register, contact Peoples Justice: info@peoplesjustice.com."

I will not be surprised if some of the participants in this coalition keep getting anonymous tips from members of the NYPD to look further into abuses of civil liberties and plain human rights.

There are cops who also want more accountability all the way up top. After several of my *Voice* columns on brutish behavior by School Safety Agents, I got a call from a cop angry at what he called the poor training that School Safety Agents get at Kelly's direction.

Communities United for Police Reform has given the next mayor a lot to start with to provide the NYPD with ways to regain the respect of New Yorkers of all backgrounds—and to restore the self-respect of the police themselves.