

The NYPD Tapes Series: The Cliffs Notes Version

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In [the first](#) and [second](#) articles so far in our NYPD Tapes series, the Voice has documented and chronicled a range of highly questionable NYPD practices.

Here we offer a Cliffs Notes version of what the articles showed, based on the unprecedented recordings of 117 roll calls made inside the 81st Precinct, in Bedford-Stuyvesant, in 2008 and 2009 by Police Officer Adrian Schoolcraft.

Stay tuned to the newspaper and our Runnin' Scared blog for continuing coverage of these issues. And listen to the excerpts of the recordings posted on the *Voice* website ...

1. Police officers were routinely threatened with discipline (transfers, shift changes, partner changes, and assignment changes) by their superiors if they did not make their monthly quota of summonses, stop-and-frisks, arrests, and community visits.

"Again, it's all about the numbers," a sergeant says on October 18, 2009.

2. Among the patrol sergeants and lieutenants, the constant demand for "numbers" from downtown and the patrol borough command was viewed with irritation, at times almost as busy work. Moreover, the Brooklyn North Inspections unit was viewed with contempt, for nailing officers for what were seen as minor infractions.

"Inspections -- they pull you over like a perp, and you know it's disrespectful to us," a lieutenant says on June 12, 2008. "So Inspections is really not our friend. Let's leave it at that."

3. Police officers were ordered to be skeptical about the validity of crime complaints. The precinct commander, a lieutenant, and a sergeant in charge of "crime analysis" would call victims and question them closely on their complaints. Supervisors had to be on the scene to look over the cops' shoulders even on a routine complaint. The precinct had a policy that if a robbery victim refused to return immediately to the station house, cops were told to refuse to take the complaint, known as a "61."

"If the complainant does not want to go back and speak to the squad, then there is no 61 taken," a sergeant says on October 12, 2009. "That's it. ... How do we know this guy really got robbed?"

4. Long before he went to the media, Officer Adrian Schoolcraft disclosed about a dozen

documented instances of crime statistic manipulation to the NYPD unit that audits the crime statistics. The unit, known as the Quality Assurance Division, pledged a vigorous investigation.

"What this is doing is that it's messing with the officers," Schoolcraft tells the QAD investigators. "They're losing track of what's real and what's not real, what their duties are and what their duties aren't."

5. Even within QAD, there was a perception that the downgrading of crimes and the refusal to take complaints from citizens was more widespread than the department has admitted.

"The mayor's looking for it, the police commissioner's looking for it ... every commanding officer wants to show it," says a supervisor in QAD. "So there's motivation not to classify reports for the seven major crimes."

6. In a campaign to clear corners and building stoops in the neighborhood, the precinct commander and his subordinates issued orders that may have led patrol officers to violate citizens' civil rights. The commander ordered officers to make arrests even when they didn't witness the misconduct themselves. Cops were told to arrest people and "articulate" a charge later, or arrest people and hold them for hours simply for the purpose of clearing a corner, rather than for a specific criminal act.

"If they're on a corner, make 'em move" a sergeant says on November 23, 2008. "If they don't want to move, lock 'em up. Done deal. You can always articulate [a charge] later."

7. The explosion in stop-and-frisks over the past five years, the tapes suggest, may have as much to do with statistical quotas and avoiding "negative attention" as it does with some law enforcement strategy. That part of the article raises whether New Yorkers' civil rights were being violated for the purpose of a statistical category.

"How hard is a 250? I'm not saying make it up, but you can always articulate robbery, burglary, whatever the case may be," a sergeant says on March 13, 2009. "It's still a number. It keeps the hounds off."

8. The precinct's tactics, which are duplicated throughout the city, caused significant resentment in the community and allegations of civil rights violations. The worst case the *Voice* found was a woman suffering two broken wrists during an arrest for not having her ID even though she was a few steps from her home.

9. The staffing shortages currently plaguing the department also hit the 81st Precinct. To make up the difference, precinct supervisors ordered forced overtime, left sectors unpatrolled, refused of days off, and pulled cops from the plainclothes units.

"Where is everybody?" a lieutenant wonders on October 27, 2009. "This is going to be a bad month."