

Good Morning!

I am Reverend Robert P. Shine, Sr. and I am the Senior Pastor of the Berachah Baptist Church in Philadelphia, and the Vice President of the Black Clergy of Philadelphia and Vicinity, and Chairman of the Social & Civic Committee.

On behalf of the Black Clergy of Philadelphia & Vicinity, representing some four hundred pastors and ministers and more than 250,000 congregants; I am pleased to be here to join with so many responsible citizens of this Commonwealth, who are equally concerned about an immoral addiction that is pervasive in our society. The denial of which is tantamount to the denial of an illegal substance abuser, when the obvious symptoms are vividly manifested. Both have made lies their refuge, and under falsehood have they hid themselves (Isa. 28:15).

I refer to the Racial Profiling that not only is occurring on our State's highways, but also going on ^{IN} the streets of certain communities where the majority of residents are not African-Americans.

It is an outrage, that on the eve of a new millenium, African-Americans are still finding themselves victims of the most heinous evil to have plagued

this great nation – racism and its various forms and manifestations.

Your efforts, ^{MUST} not end in unsettled frustration, ^{in us} but doing your part to ensure every motorist, especially African-Americans and Hispanics that highway policing does not mean make the highway safe for whites only, but for all of the tax payers black, and brown included.

In a recent Gallup Poll, released Thursday, December 9, 1999, it revealed that the majority of Americans – both Black and White – believe that racial profiling is both widespread and unfair.

It continues to say that the American Civil Liberties Union, calls the poll a resounding wake up call for public officials who deny that a problem exist.

Denial or simply wishing that this problem would just go away on its on, is just that, wishful thinking at best and procrastinating unwillingness to take decisive steps to end it, at its worse.

Racial Profiling is consent behavior between two or more adult white officers, who conspire by the abusive use of their power to disrupt the lives of otherwise law abiding citizens of color and impose

on them the unjustifiable characterization of what their preconceived image of what a criminal looks like – Black and dressed a certain way and driving a certain kind of car, and then criminalizing them.

How does it work? There is , what might be called “Irrational Discrimination!” The idea that if Blacks are over-represented among those arrested for crimes ranging from murder to larceny, then if police want to catch people involved with drugs, target Blacks in order to catch more bad guys. The notion of those following such flawed thinking is the product of dangerous and costly stereotyping. There is the unsubstantiated assumption that more Blacks are involved in drug traffic than others... more Blacks are arrested, so more Blacks are criminals, so catch more criminals, stop more Blacks, which leads to more Blacks arrested.

It was reported in the Patriot News on Thursday, July 8 1999 that State Representative Harold James introduce legislation that would order Attorney General Mike Fisher to conduct a statewide study into the racial breakdown of traffic stops.

For in Philadelphia alone, while 54% of drivers are white, 79% of the traffic stops involved Black drivers. And if there is no similar figures available

at this time for other parts of the state, such a study becomes all the more imperative. Here again it is a matter of the "Will!"

Will this State take whatever appropriate action necessary, as prudent and expeditious as possible to conduct a review of the records of past traffic stops and reexamine all policies relating to stops, searches, and the use of force? And get to the bottom of this pervasive practice before some other untimely fate come upon another citizen of color?

It is my belief that this Committee is much aware that the American public believes that racial profiling is corrosive and corruptible to the American sense of justice and that there is growing national consensus that it must be stopped not just studied!

Appropriating money and setting guidelines for a study, while the beat goes on, when 'Floyd' came through, appropriations were found and an assesment was made and before long something was done. Racial Profiling has been going on for many years, and you mean to tell me that it still has to be studied? Before something can be done!

I heard and I am sure you have by now heard as well that there was legislation that called upon the Attorney General of the United States to conduct a study on the issue, was passed by the House on an overwhelming bi-partisan basis in 1998 only to die in the Senate. Can we wait for Racial Profiling to pass away? Well it wont! You must put it out of its misery. By an act of decisive legislation.

Needless to say Racial Profiling has created a crisis in confidence in communities of color. And addressing this problem will take more than compiling data and recorded hearings.

Deterents to Racial Profiling must be in place. Guilty officers loose their driving privileges. Falsifying records, immediate discharge. Use of excessive force, criminal and civil liability suits. No union protection for the violation of human and civil rights. Can never hold a civil servant job again.

Holding the police departments accountable should also lead to a decrease in the number of bogus stops. Any legislative action is long overdue, but any remedial action now is better than any re-action later.

I do not wish to appear to criticize this august Institution, only to allow this body to know that for a while the Church was dormant and apathetic and took a non-involvement position in the affairs of government and regrettably so, for Racial Profiling is but one of egregious symptoms of the moral corrosion taking place in our society.

I am here because, I believe that the Church, the people of God, we must be the cultural force which brings the realities of the Gospel we preach to the attention of those who sit in the seats of the political leadership and urge that legislation be enacted swiftly that gives relief to every motorist 'Driving while Black' and remedy to those who are made the victims by this injustice.