**American Government**

**Basic Concepts of Democracy**

1. Explain how any 3 of the 5 basic concepts of democracy apply to the issues presented in the articles below.

A)

B)

C)

1. What is your opinion on each of the issues?

**Facebook: US government requests info on more than 100 users a day**

Gerry Shih Reuters August 27, 2013



Governments sought information on over 38,000 Facebook users in the first half of 2013 and the No.1 social network complied with most requests, the firm said in its first report on the scale of data inquiries it gets from countries around the world. The report follows allegations by former intelligence contractor Edward Snowden that practically every major Internet company — including Facebook, Google and Microsoft — routinely hands over troves of data on potentially millions of users to national intelligence agencies.

Facebook has more than 1 billion users worldwide.  U.S. law enforcement authorities were by far the most active in mining Facebook, seeking information on about 20,000 to 21,000 users between January and June, or more than 100 users a day on average. That represents a slight rise from the six months between June and December 2012, when U.S. agencies requested information on roughly 18,000 to 19,000 Facebook accounts, according to figures previously released by the company.

Authorities in other countries with large Facebook user bases, including India, the United Kingdom and Germany, also requested information on thousands of users.

Facebook, which disclosed the figures in its first "Global Government Requests Report," said it individually scrutinized every information request and required governments to meet a "very high legal bar" to receive user data.  Although the full scope of the National Security Agency's electronic data collection programs remains unclear, Facebook has vigorously contested claims that it allows the U.S. government unfettered access to secretly gather information on a significant fraction of its users.

Facebook General Counsel Colin Stretch said in the Tuesday report that Facebook hoped to contribute to the "ongoing debate about the proper standards for government requests for user information in official investigations."  "We fight many of these requests, pushing back when we find legal deficiencies and narrowing the scope of overly broad or vague requests," Stretch said. "When we are required to comply with a particular request, we frequently share only basic user information, such as name."

<http://www.nbcnews.com/technology/facebook-us-government-requests-info-more-100-users-day-8C11016738>

**'Stop and frisk' is un-American**

Duncan Black August 21, 2013

**Bad government decisions are inevitable, that we accept them is not.**

When I was growing up, I heard comforting myths about certain features of American society. These myths weren't entirely mythical. They held some truth. But they were more expressions of certain ideals that we attempted to live up to, rather than claims of actual perfection. Still, we treasured ideals of fair justice, of freedom, of liberty, and of an absence of abuses of police and state power.

No one with any knowledge of the history of country would truly believe we always lived up to these ideals, but that we claimed to believe in them had some value nonetheless. It provided a template to help define what was right and what was wrong, and allowed us to recognize when the actions of our governments appeared to fall outside of supposed accepted norms.

Urban crime, the rise of the drug war, and the post-9/11 security state have all chipped away at both the degree to which we manage to live up to these ideals and, perhaps even more sadly, the persistence of those ideals as norms. That those in power sometimes do the wrong thing is inevitable, that we increasingly tolerate such things as acceptable is not.

Sometimes we hear about policies and practices here at home which sound like things that must exist in some other country, a country we have likely denounced as having a poor record on human rights. Once cherished [4th amendment](http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/fourth_amendment) rights protecting us from unwarranted searches, along with the expansion of civil and criminal property seizures, have made a mockery of the concepts of personal privacy and that we are innocent until proven guilty in the eyes of the law.

In this context, the [recent ruling](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/13/nyregion/stop-and-frisk-practice-violated-rights-judge-rules.html?_r=0) by [Judge Shira Scheindlin](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/13/nyregion/stop-and-frisk-practice-violated-rights-judge-rules.html?_r=0) which found fault with the "[stop and frisk](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/13/nyregion/stop-and-frisk-practice-violated-rights-judge-rules.html?_r=0)" practices by the New York City Policy Department is welcome. Personal body searches with little or no justification by law enforcement should not happen in "the land of the free."

The view of urban areas as perpetual crime zones, and of certain people within them as likely suspects for unspecified crimes, is both offensive and wrong. High crime rates are neither limited to urban areas nor necessarily more prevalent in them. While supporters of such intrusive police tactics tend to credit them for crime reductions, many cities which rejected such policies have also seen serious reductions in violent crime rates.

Last June, New York's [Mayor Bloomberg said](http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/whites_subjected_to_too_many_stop_QM64S34uJ37zoJ36auG0HM), regarding the stop and frisk activities of his city's police force, "I think we disproportionately stop whites too much and minorities too little." This statement was made despite the fact that whites that were stopped were [more likely](http://pubadvocate.nyc.gov/stop-frisk) to have illegal weapons than were African-Americans or Latinos.

This doesn't demonstrate that whites in New York City are actually more likely to possess illegal weapons, but it does show that the police are more likely to treat minorities as potential criminal suspects than is warranted by the facts. Even if we -- and I don't -- accept that racial profiling is appropriate in these circumstances, the data show that minorities are stopped [disproportionately relative](http://pubadvocate.nyc.gov/stop-frisk) to the likelihood of actually finding evidence of illegal activity. It isn't just that there is racial profiling, it's that they're profiling the wrong races.

But this isn't simply about the racism of the specific implementation of this particular police practice. The practice would be wrong and, yes, by the standards of what I learned growing up, un-American, even without the unjustifiable racial disparities in just who is stopped and frisked.

Productive or not, fair or not, there are some policies that the voting population just should not tolerate. The job of the various elements of the security state at all levels, from the police to the military to the [National Security Agency](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/08/09/obama-privacy-nsa-surveillance/2635735/), is to protect us, not to treat us as likely enemies absent evidence. Lines will be crossed sometimes, but we should make sure that those line are clearly drawn so that we can know when it happens.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2013/08/21/us-privacy-stop-frisk-nsa-column/2647741/>

**'Stop and frisk' doesn't target minorities, it protects them**

By [MICHAEL BARONE](HTTP://WASHINGTONEXAMINER.COM/AUTHOR/MICHAEL-BARONE) | AUGUST 20, 2013

[](http://washingtonexaminer.com/gallery/articleid/2534499)Det. Anthony Mannuzza, left, and Police Officer Robert Martin, right, simulate a street stop...

[New York City](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/section/new-york-city) seems on the verge of making the same mistake that Detroit made 40 years ago. The mistake is to abolish the NYPD practice referred to as "stop and frisk." It's more accurately called "stop, question and frisk." People were stopped and questioned 4.4 million times between 2004 and 2012. But the large majority were not frisked.

The effectiveness of this police practice, initiated by Mayor Rudy Giuliani in 1994 and continued by Mayor Michael Bloomberg, is not in doubt. The number of homicides — the most accurately measured crime — in New York fell from a peak of 2,605 in 1990 to 952 in 2001, Giuliani's last year in office, to just 414 in 2012. Nevertheless, the three leading Democratic mayoral candidates in the city's September primary all have pledged to end "stop and frisk." And last week federal judge Schira Scheindlin, in a lawsuit brought by 19 men who have been stopped and frisked, found that the practice is [unconstitutional](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/section/constitutionality) and racially discriminatory.

Bloomberg has promised to appeal and several of Scheindlin's decisions in high-profile cases have been reversed. But the leading Democratic candidates for mayor promise, if elected, to drop the appeal. The two leading Republican candidates support "stop and frisk," but their chances of election seem dim in a city that voted 81 percent for [Barack Obama](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/section/barack-obama) in 2012.

What riles opponents of "stop and frisk" is that a high proportion of those stopped are young black and Hispanic males. Many innocent people undoubtedly and understandably resent being subjected to this practice. No one likes to be frisked, including the thousands of airline passengers who are every day. But young black and, to a lesser extent, Hispanic males are far, far more likely than others to commit (and be victims of) violent crimes, as Bloomberg points out. I take no pleasure in reporting that fact and wish it weren't so.

You can get an idea about what could happen in New York by comparing it with [Chicago,](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/section/chicago) where there were 532 homicides in 2012. That's more than in New York, even though New York's population is three times as large. One Chicagoan who supports "stop and frisk" is the father of Hadiya Pendleton, the 15-year-old girl shot down a week after singing at President Obama's second inauguration. "If it's already working, why take it away?" he told the New York Post. "If that was possible in Chicago, maybe our daughter would be alive."

Chicago and New York both have tough [gun control](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/section/gun-control) laws. But bad guys can easily get guns in both cities. The difference, as the New York Daily News' James Warren has pointed out, is that frequent stops and frisks combined with mandatory three-year sentences for illegal possession of a gun means that bad guys in New York don't take them out on the street much.

"Stop and frisk" makes effective the otherwise ineffective gun control which Bloomberg so strongly supports.

An extreme case of what happens when a city ends "stop and frisk" is Detroit. Coleman Young, the city's first black mayor, did so immediately after winning the first of five elections in 1973. In short order, Detroit became America's murder capital. Its population fell from 1.5 million to 1.0 million between 1970 and 1990. Crime has abated somewhat since the Young years, but the city's population fell to 713,000 in 2010 — slightly more than half that when Young took office. People with jobs and families — first whites, then blacks — fled to the suburbs or farther afield. Those left were mostly poor, underemployed, in too many cases criminal — and not taxpayers. As a result, [the city government went bankrupt last month](http://washingtonexaminer.com/detroit-bankruptcy-filing-puts-obama-in-awkward-spot/article/2533251).

New York has strengths Detroit always lacked. But it is not impervious to decline. After Mayor John Lindsay ended tough police practices, the city's population fell from 7.9 million in 1970 to 7.1 million in 1980.

Those who decry "stop and frisk" as racially discriminatory should remember who is hurt most by violent crime — law-abiding residents of high-crime neighborhoods, most of them black and Hispanic, people like Hadiya Pendleton.

<http://washingtonexaminer.com/stop-and-frisk-doesnt-target-minorities-it-protects-them/article/2534499>