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ALL ABOUT COLOUR, 'NOTHING ELSE'

The Toronto Sun

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Byline: KNIA SINGH GUEST COLUMNIST

KNIA SINGH --who filed a charter challenge this week in an effort to abolish the controversial police practice of carding-visited the Toronto Sun Friday to take part in a live chat.

Singh, a 41-year-old student at **Osgoode Hall Law School** who says he's been stopped by police numerous times for no valid reason, is also imploring Toronto Police Chief Mark Saunders to use both his expertise as a veteran officer and his experiences as a black man to end carding.

The practice involves officers stopping people, gathering information on them, and then storing that intelligence in a database -even when the person has committed no crime.

@Stewie: One of the basic principles of policing, that is relied upon is the right of the police to ask any person any question... are you saying the police shouldn't be allowed to do this? It is not just visible minorities who get carded or am I mistaken?

KNIA SINGH: Police can ask questions, but when they do this they must let the person know they are not under investigation and that it is voluntary, and that they are free to go at any time. The issue is when police speak to the public, (members of the public) automatically feel that they do not have a right to refuse to answer, or leave, and therefore that is why the notice is necessary. Once they have consent they can talk to anyone. Remember police are granted great power and authority, therefore they must not abuse it, and so far in the carding case, that authority has been severely abused.

@CharWong: Why would a black police chief support carding?

SINGH: I think a black chief would support carding because they are not looking at issues of black or white, they are looking at issues of police. Even in Jamaica it has been said that the police force there in the past was very violent and corrupt, and that may all have to do with power, and not colour.

@Marco: What (are) your thoughts on (former police chief) Bill Blair? He has received several diversity awards and has been referred to as a "champion of diversity," yet complete reluctance to move progressively on this issue.

SINGH: I have met Bill Blair and to me he seemed like a nice person. However I am disappointed in his decision not to implement a procedure on this issue that would have eliminated most of the issues. I do not understand why in the face of so much opposition he chose to support a process that was statistically racist. He may have done good work for diversity in the past, but unfortunately he may be remembered by the community as someone who did not protect the rights of diverse people.

@topogigio007: Carding has and always should be used by the police. The only ones that don't like it are the criminals. Do you people not find it interesting that mostly visible minorities don't want carding but the police chief who is a VM wants it and says that the police need it to do their job properly.

SINGH: I don't like it and I am not a criminal. You have to remember that carding is about stopping innocent people who are not engaged in crime. I have been carded because of my skin colour, nothing else. The visible minorities do not like it because they are targets based on their visibility. The chief may want it, but that does not mean it is right.