It is Not Smart to Take Rule of Law for Granted.
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We take "rule of law" as much for granted as we assume that our supermarkets will not run out of food. It is part of modern society that these things work. Most of us drive our cars on the right side of the street, stop at stop signs and traffic lights, and generally drive with consideration of traffic flow and other drivers whether a police car is patrolling or not.

When we are stopped by a highway patrol officer for something we might have done, the exchange is usually civil. Body cameras will weed out abuses of power.

However, there are poor inner city areas rife with crime---and this is not necessarily because most people living there are bad. It is bad circumstances. Young males reared only by mothers, fathers long gone or incarcerated, crumbling infrastructure, inadequate education, and lack of jobs even if a youngster wanted something at minimum wage, create a perfect storm of dysfunction that gives birth to crime.

Youngsters can make more money being part of criminal gangs that provide the irresponsible among us with illegal drugs, illegal sex (sex trafficking) or protection rackets. The people living in these inner cities who have essential businesses needed by everybody are exploited by these gangs and when there is a street rumble, their property is torched. We saw all of this in Ferguson and there was little attention to the people living there who would have liked law and order; they want the police to be there.

The Ferguson incident in which a young black man was shot by a white policeman offered the eager press and those looking for racial bias to weigh in against the officer. What they overlook is that he was in the inner city because that is where the crime is! Police everywhere in this country spend the majority of their time answering calls from inner cities. Our own inner city is Watsonville, and the criminals are not black youth; they are Hispanic, in gangs that regularly murder other Hispanic youth in rival gangs.

New York City, which two decades ago was rife with crime, is now one of the safest cities in the country. It is not all white and middle class; it is a melting pot of every ethnicity imaginable. The transformation of New York from dangerous to wonderful is debated: some saying that the drop in crime was the result of poor women using contraceptives, having only children they want. Others say that the changes in policing made this possible. The broken window theory was that if you address little delinquencies, you have a better handle on bigger ones. Neighborhoods with graffiti and broken windows have crime.

Police also "profile" where trouble is most likely: they do not spend their time patrolling the suburbs; they spend it in the inner cities. A policy of "stop and frisk" turns up weapons that might otherwise kill both civilians and police. It worked, but at the same time, it offended many people of color who felt that they were being unfairly profiled. Driving while Black became a blanket accusation that it was racist, White cops annoying Black citizens, but Black cops were doing this too---an unpleasant action that saves lives.

The campaign to ban profiling is an enormous mistake. All of us profile those likely to endanger us: by dress, by demeanor, by actions. The ban on profiling is at its most ridiculous when we go through airport security. An 80-year old woman is a less likely candidate for terrorism than are young men in Muslim dress or women in total hijab. Is that really a woman (who can tell) and might there be a suicide belt under that cloak? Not profiling here can mean death for many people.

Finally, our rule of law depends upon the foot soldiers on the front lines, our police. They must be trained not to abuse their awesome power, but they should not become victims of young thugs or terrorists because they are constrained by "political correctness."

676 words

Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of God's Law or Man's Law. You may contact her at Lfarhat102@aol.com or www.globalthink.net.