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## Civil Rights Groups Sue Over Buffalo Police Checkpoints and Discriminatory Traffic Enforcement

### *So-Called “Traffic Safety” Checkpoints and Tickets Target People of Color to Raise Revenue for City, Lawsuit Alleges*

*June 28, 2018, Buffalo* – Today, civil rights groups filed a class action lawsuit against the City of Buffalo over unconstitutional and racially discriminatory vehicle checkpoints and traffic ticketing practices. According to the lawsuit, the Buffalo Police Department deployed unconstitutional vehicle checkpoints in Black and Latinx neighborhoods, resulting in massive overticketing of these communities—and significant revenue for the City budget.

“For more than five years, the BPD systematically targeted low-income Black and Latinx neighborhoods and residents for aggressive and punitive traffic enforcement,” said [Claudia Wilner](#), Senior Attorney at the National Center for Law and Economic Justice. “Our analysis shows that 91.4% of checkpoints occurred in communities of color, and race was a driving factor in the locations of these checkpoints.”

Attorneys say the City used checkpoints and traffic violations to harvest revenue. Income from traffic violations increased a staggering 92 percent after the checkpoints were implemented. The number of tickets issued and the corresponding revenue to the city increased dramatically again in 2015 after New York State authorized Buffalo to keep all of the revenue from traffic tickets as a form of “fiscal relief” to taxpayers. Moreover, officers often issued multiple tickets for a single violation. One plaintiff received four tickets for having tinted windows—one ticket for each window.

“Buffalo’s use of checkpoints and aggressive traffic ticketing is part of a long history of abusive and discriminatory policing in poor communities of color—and then making those communities pay the price for it,” said [Darius Charney](#), a senior attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York City. “These practices are unlawful. Buffalo should not be attempting to balance its budget on the backs of Black and Latinx people.”

Those who have been stopped report that the checkpoints, which often block off certain streets and intersections and can last for as long as 45 minutes, severely burden their most basic activities, such as going to work, dropping children at school, grocery shopping, and attending medical appointments and religious services.

The consequences of BPD’s actions have been devastating,” said Keisha Williams, Staff Attorney with the Western New York Law Center. “Thousands have had their licenses suspended because they could not pay the substantial fines that have accrued from the multiple tickets they have been issued at checkpoints and other traffic stops. Some have even been threatened with jail during the stops.”

“For years, BPD operated a checkpoint in front of my house almost every Sunday,” said Dorothea Franklin, a plaintiff in the lawsuit. “I could not go in or out of my driveway or move freely around my community. It takes you back to the times when there was no freedom.”

Read today’s filing [here](#). For more information, visit NCLEJ or CCR’s case page.

*The Western New York Law Center is a non-profit legal organization in Buffalo. We provide free, direct legal services and impact litigation throughout Western New York, and work through coalitions to promote economic and social justice in our area. Follow us [@wnylawcenter](#)*

*National Center for Law and Economic Justice is a national advocacy organization that uses impact litigation, policy advocacy, and support for grassroots organizing to promote economic justice for low-income families, individuals, and communities across the country. Read more about us at [www.nclej.org](http://www.nclej.org) and follow us on Facebook and Twitter: [@NCLEJustice](#)*

*The Center for Constitutional Rights is dedicated to advancing and protecting the rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Founded in 1966 by attorneys who represented civil rights movements in the South, CCR is a non-profit legal and educational organization committed to the creative use of law as a positive force for social change. Visit [www.ccrjustice.org](http://www.ccrjustice.org) and follow [@theCCR](#).*

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