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Humanities

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Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXXaj--a6-4>

Stop and Kiss

The stop and frisk program in New York was a practice that gave NYPD officers the right to stop, question, and inspect anyone they found “suspicious”. Although it was meant to reduce criminal activity in high crime areas, the police officers used this policy unreasonably as 90% of the people stopped were innocent. In addition, the police were unproportionally targeting African-American and Latinx communities as 9 out of 10 stopped-and-frisked individuals were black or hispanic. Supporters of the program claim that it reduced crime, while those against it argued that it breached constitutional rights and encouraged racial profiling. The Onion, through their satirical video “Bloomberg Defends NYPD's Controversial Stop And Kiss Program” shows a variation of stop and frisk named “stop and kiss”. This program allows police officers to stop and inspect anyone they deem suspicious and give them a kiss after questioning. Specifically, in *Bloomberg Defends NYPD's Controversial Stop And Kiss Program*, the Onion appeals to both pathos and ethos in order to effectively convey how the stop and frisk movement violates personal boundaries and highlight the fallaciousness of common arguments that attempt to justify it.

The satire utilizes pathos through uncomfortable imagery and burlesque to emphasize how the stop and frisk movement oversteps boundaries and personal privacy. Throughout the video, videos of police officers aggressively forcing them upon and kissing civilians are shown.

The satire shows an interview of one victim of the stop and kiss movement, who recalls how an officer was “kissing [him] on [his] neck and face”, and “pushed [him] up against the wall and started nibbling on [his] ear”. This vivid and uneasy imagery displays how the officers go too far with their “inspections”. Instead of reasonably questioning the subject, they violate the person's personal space to the point of outright harassment. Although this may seem exaggerated, police officers in the real world were treating civilians in the same way during the stop and frisk movement. Officers forced people to stop and let them be inspected, going through their clothes and belongings, disrespecting the person's body just like forceful kissing does. In addition, the police officers in the video were burlesqued by showing their desire to kiss people. The video showed the dialogue of an officer who told a teenager to “shut the **** up and let me kiss you”. The swear is an invective which uses shock to emphasize the eagerness of the officer to kiss the target. Police officers are normally thought of as serious individuals who selflessly try to protect others, so displaying them as inappropriate and kiss-hungry madmen may seem ridiculous. However, this was not far from the truth from many officers during stop and frisk policies. Many seemed to just stop targets for the sake of stopping them, not because they had any reason to stop them. Therefore, all the unsettling depictions of police officers in this video may have seemed silly, but were in fact a reflection of the actions that cops were permitted to do during the stop and frisk movement.

The satire also used ethos by employing the same arguments that are used to justify the stop and frisk movement to defend stop and kiss, which shows how they are logically fallacious. In the video, a debate between a supporter and opposer of the stop and kiss is shown. When the opponent talks about how 9 out of 10 kissed people were black or hispanic, the supporter defends the police as not racially profiling by claiming that they are “kissing people in high crime areas”

and that they are just doing their job. This is fallacious logic, as the fact that there are more black and hispanic people in high crime areas does not justify stopping more black and hispanic individuals. In real life, 90% of the people stopped were innocent, which shows that even in these high crime areas, officers were incorrect in suspecting criminal behavior. This means that they must have stopped more people in these areas not on any logical basis, but purely by the color of the skin. Therefore, the supporter of the stop and kiss movement used faulty reasoning to “disprove” claims of racial profiling. In fact, this exact argument is widely used to justify the stop and frisk movement. By showing this argument applied on the stop and kiss movement, the satire is appealing to the viewer's ethos by making it easier to see why such a justification is faulty.

In conclusion, the Onion in *Bloomberg Defends NYPD's Controversial Stop And Kiss Program* uses the rhetorical devices of appeal pathos and ethos to successfully show how the stop and frisk movement violates personal boundaries and highlights the fallaciousness of common arguments that attempt to justify it. This shows that it is important to consider the costs of using a solution which may create more problems than it solves.