



AG Holder Announces Reopening of DOJ's Civil Rights Division

Last Friday, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder (left) addressed the liberal American Constitution Society, where he announced plans to re-open the Justice Department's Civil Rights division. He claimed the Obama administration has worked diligently through the DOJ to uphold civil rights in numerous areas:



Now, some of you know during this administrations first fiscal year the Department filed a record number of civil rights criminal cases. Weve also expanded enforcement efforts to guarantee [civil rights] in our work places, our military bases, in our housing and lending markets, in our voting booths, in our border areas, in our schools and places of worship. And I mean all places of worship.

Real Clear Politics took the opportunity to point out that despite Holders assertions that he has consistently upheld Americans civil rights, it was he who elected to drop the charges against the Black Panthers in their notorious [voter intimidation case](#). The incident took place on Election Day 2008, when two members of the New Black Panther Party stood outside a Philadelphia polling place in what appeared to be military attire. One of the men bore a club, and they both hurled racial epithets at voters as they entered and exited the polling station. The entire display was captured on video.

Despite the clear evidence of voter intimidation, the Justice Department under Holders leadership elected to drop the charges. An employee of the DOJ came forward and asserted that Holder and the Justice Department were disinterested in pursuing cases in which the assailants were black and the victims were white.

The DOJ's Office of Professional Responsibility conducted an investigation of the incident, but ultimately concluded that everyone at the Department had acted in a professional manner and that there was no clear or present bias.

Holder virtually undermined these conclusions when he appeared offended by statements made by former Democratic activist Bartle Bull, who called the Black Panther case the most blatant example of voter intimidation he had witnessed in his career. Holder [retorted](#):

Here are the facts. Every single suspected terrorist captured on American soil before and after the September 11th attacks has first been taken into custody by law enforcement not the United States military. Since 9/11, hundreds of individuals have been convicted of terrorism or terrorism-related offenses in civilian courts. Not one of these individuals has escaped custody. Not one of the judicial districts involved has suffered retaliatory attacks.



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on June 21, 2011

Holder went on to make it personal, by touting the role his sister-in-law played in the integration of the University of Alabama. He then observed of her action:

To compare that kind of courage, that kind of action, and to say that the Black Panther incident wrong thought it might be [is] somehow greater in magnitude or is of greater concern to us, historically, I think just flies in the face of history and the facts.

Holder's reaction ultimately provoked Rep. John Culberson (R-Texas) to conclude, There's clearly evidence, overwhelming evidence, that your Department of Justice refuses to protect the rights of anybody other than African-Americans to vote.

Perhaps when Eric Holder touted the DOJ's handling of civil rights cases, he was [referencing](#) its intrusion into the recruitment process of police and firefighters across the country. In cities where minorities showed a smaller rate of passage on the entrance exams than did whites, the Justice Department simply intervened and demanded that those cities lower the passing score so that more minority applicants could pass the exams a move that a number of minority recruits found to be offensive.

Whether the Justice Department even has the constitutional power to assure civil rights in all areas, including places of worship, is a separate issue.



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