

# **“HOUNDING THE INNOCENT”**

## **REFUTATION ASSIGNMENT**

### **CONTEXT**

In his editorial entitled “Hounding the Innocent,” *New York Times* Staff Writer Bob Herbert criticizes law enforcement officials for deliberately and unnecessarily targeting Black and Hispanic people for breaking an anti-loitering law that was eventually declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. He explains that the law was “aimed at curbing gang activity” by making it permissible for police to arrest people in the company of suspected gang members who were standing around “with no apparent purpose” after the police had asked them to move along. Herbert asks, “Why should one’s purpose for being in a public place have to be apparent? What business is it of the police? And how could that possibly be a legitimate basis for an arrest?” He also expresses a similar concern regarding the practice of stop-and-frisk.

### **ASSIGNMENT**

One of the problems with Herbert’s editorial is that he doesn’t spend enough time acknowledging possible opposition to his argument. Instead, he asks a series of questions that could be used to introduce the opposition’s perspective, but then never allows time for a response before offering his own retort.

Your assignment is to acknowledge the opposition by providing the perspective of a police officer OR someone who might benefit from the anti-loitering law or the practice of stop-and-frisk – both originally intended to limit the power of street gangs.

### **DIRECTIONS**

1. Read diary entries #5 and #6 from the book *Freedom Writers*, written by two anonymous students from Woodrow Wilson High School in Long Beach, California, whose writing is featured in their teacher Erin Gruwell’s book.
2. Acknowledge and then refute Herbert’s argument by providing evidence from the diary entries. You can write from any perspective that you choose: your own perspective, from the perspective of a police officer, from the students who wrote the diary entries, or from the perspective of someone who knows those students. In any case, you want to include the diary entry experiences as evidence for the opinion you express.