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## **When Police Pull You Over, PART 1: It's Not the Time for Debate: Advice from a Lawyer**

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**Categories :** [Opinion](#), [Public Safety](#)

**Tagged as :** [Matthew Maddox 2016](#), [Matthew Maddox Blog 2016](#)

**Date :** December 15, 2016

This is not about race. It's also not about calling anyone bigoted or anyone else cop-haters. I'm writing this blog as though the reader is already my client, which means that I've already taken on the role of looking out for your best interests and your protection.

This is about common sense.

When you're pulled over by police, it's not a time to [debate the law](#), ethics or the evidence.

The law permits a police officer to stop a driver if the officer believes that there is reasonable suspicion the driver has violated a law.

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— *This is the first of two parts. See Part 2 on Sunday:*

- [When Police Pull You Over, PART 2 — What You Must Do and What Your Rights Are: Advice from a Lawyer](#)

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This is the lowest investigatory and legal burden in criminal procedure and policing. It's the threshold that permits law enforcement's hopefully quick entry into, and exit from your life.

When you're pulled over, control that almost uncontrollable habit that we all have: opening our mouths and talking. You have the right to remain silent. Try that out.

For some of you reading this, you may need to actually remain silent. For others of you, depending upon your circumstances, respond exactly to the questions asked and no more.

If you're asked for your license and registration, comply. Are you entitled to know why you were stopped? Yes, you are. Will a conscientious officer tell you? In almost every instance, yes.

That doesn't mean that if it's not clear to you why you were stopped, that you should launch into a constitutional debate. [Legal argument](#) is my job.

If police ask , don't consent to a search of your car: no matter who you are.

BUT, please understand that being asked by police and refusing consent is VERY DIFFERENT from the situation in which you have been removed from your vehicle and the police have commenced a search already.

If the police have commenced a search, don't interfere. You're simply going to have to wait to contest constitutionality after you've met with a qualified attorney.

Be polite. Be respectful. This should be easy. Remember that a police officer who is following his oath is guided by one paramount principle; keep the peace. That's a peace that we all rely upon in the United States of America, and it needs protection.

Exercise restraint. This is similar to being polite, but it's more than that. It's being patient and objective and non-emotional. Our finest police officers exercise and reciprocate courtesy and restraint on the highest level. This is how those same police officers avoid escalations and loss of life.

They also are not out to prove they are morally or ethically correct. They're not trying to show that they're in a stronger position than you or intimidate you. Our finest officers are doing their job of enforcing the law

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and above all, they are driven to conclude every interaction with every citizen peacefully and professionally.

Common sense — no debates, remain silent or strictly limit your commentary, exercise courtesy, and restraint. Then call me and I'll take care of the rest.

[Attorney Matthew Maddox](#) *has offices in New Canaan. His blog appears on his law firm website and is available by email.*