

“IT’S TOUGH ON MY FAMILY:” A TALE OF TWO TEACHERS

“It’s tough on my family,” James Clapper said in an interview with the Daily Beast of observations he’s a liar. Especially his son, who is a high school teacher (though Clapper didn’t explain why his profession led his son to internalize accusations made against him).

The charges against his integrity bother Clapper. “I would rather not hear that or see that,” he said. “It’s tough on my family, I will tell you that. My son is a high school teacher and he has a tendency, or he is getting over it, to internalize a lot of this.”

And yet this man who thinks it unfair to question a public servant’s integrity after he lies blatantly, who has no idea why Edward Snowden did what he did, why he leaked proof that the NSA was collecting the phone records of most Americans, why Snowden leaked evidence of bulk collection (that includes Americans) overseas, why he leaked details on the NSA’s corruption of encryption.

Which made me think of a different teacher, Zaimah Abdur-Rahim, one of the plaintiff’s in the suit Judge William Martini dismissed last week.

Abdur-Rahim taught at the girls school surveilled by the NYPD – the school, which was accredited by the state of NJ – was actually in her home – and now teaches at another of the schools scoped out by the cops.

Zaimah Abdur-Rahim resides at [address removed]. She is currently a math teacher at Al Hidaayah Academy (“AHA”), a position she has held since 2010. A record of the NYPD’s surveillance of AHA

appears in the Newark report, which includes a photograph and description of the school. Abdur-Rahim was also the principal of Al Muslima Academy ("AMA"), a school for girls grades five through twelve, from 2002 through 2010. Like AHA, a record of the NYPD's surveillance of AMA appears in the Newark report, including a photograph, the address, and notations stating, among other things, that the school was located in a private house and that the ethnic composition of the school was African American.

Abdur-Rahim has been unfairly targeted and stigmatized by the NYPD's surveillance of AHA, where she is currently employed, and AMA, where she was last employed, as part of the Department's program targeting Muslim organizations. She reasonably fears that her future employment prospects are diminished by working at two schools under surveillance by law enforcement. Moreover, the Newark report's photograph of AMA is also Abdur-Rahim's home, where she has lived since 1993 with her husband and, at various times, her children and grandchildren. The fact that a photograph of her home appears on the internet in connection with the NYPD's surveillance program that the City of New York has since publicly exclaimed is necessary for public safety, has decreased the value of the home and diminished the prospects for sale of the home.

I'm betting that having her home and places of work surveilled by the cops is tough on Abdur-Rahim's family, far tougher than it is for Clapper's son to internalize complaints by the citizens he serves about the demonstrable obfuscation by his father.

There is no evidence that the NSA programs

defended by Clapper ever specifically targeted Abdur-Rahim, though in this era of information sharing it is conceivable that NYPD identified potential targets (especially mosques) using data obtained indirectly from NSA.

But the entire system Clapper defends – in which communication ties between individuals serve, by themselves, as cause for further investigation – foments a logic that questions the integrity of great many members of the Muslim community. They get swept up in a dragnet (or exposed to infiltrators selected in part by using the dragnet) that targets them not because of what they said publicly in front of television cameras, which is why Clapper's integrity is under question, but simply because they are 2 or 3 degrees away from someone subjected to a virtual stop-and-frisk.

Imagine how the sons and daughters of the real live teachers targeted by Clapper's dragnet must internalize the presumption of a lack of integrity or even worse? Imagine how much worse it must be when the suspicion comes not from actual actions taken, lies told, but from ties to a community?

Clapper's plea for his own reputation here is ill-placed. It actually convinces me we're relying on the wrong evidence for questioning his integrity.

Because his actions, particularly over the past 4 years, involved questioning the integrity of many people based on far, far less evidence than is now being wielded against him. But when he and his employees at the National Counterterrorism Center question someone's integrity, in secret, with little recourse for appeal, there may be consequences, like losing the ability to fly, or receiving extra scrutiny when they do try to fly.

And he still doesn't get the problem with that. He still doesn't understand why his "so-called" domestic surveillance –and the foreign surveillance that also sucks up Americans – is

so much worse than being held to account for
lies you tell Congress.