

Part 6 ~ GANGSTA COPS + ~ Various News Releases: 1998—2001

The Los Angeles Police Department ~ LAPD has had a **troubled history**, from the **pervasive corruption** of the 1930s and 40s to the bitter feelings of the city's **minority Communities toward** former Chief Gates' department, **culminating** in the uproar over the 1991 beating of **Rodney King**. But **this Rampart scandal** has taken police **misconduct** to a new level of **lawlessness** and given currency to a new term: **gangster cop** – not much different from the **gang members** the police are battling.

The upshot has been the **biggest police scandal** in Los Angeles history. At the center is the **Rampart Division** – a police station in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods – and its **special anti-gang unit**. **Dirty cops ~ bad cases** ~ and it has **spread** to other divisions.

In their domain, **Rampart's CRASH** officers ruled. The most **powerful public official** in the city of Los Angeles is not the mayor, but the **officer** we put out there on the **street** in a black-and-white **car** with **guns, badges, shot guns** and **assault weapons**. In the '90s the **CRASH** unit lived up to its name, with a **confrontational** style of **policing** that aggressively took back the streets ~ and finally gave the **public** proof of their scares.

And now, just **one officer** admitted to **hundreds** of **abominable illegal acts** of his own, who spoke of the **widespread crimes** of numerous **other officers**. This became known as the **tip-of-the-iceberg**. The city now faced a **crisis-of-confidence**, notwithstanding a federal consent of decree. Is **police reform** possible at a correct, effective level? **So very doubtful!** Lets look *only* at the **depth of corruption** that has surfaced.

Rafael Perez was a **LAPD cop** accused of **stealing 6 pounds** of cocaine from downtown **headquarters** to **sell** on the street. He then wanted to **plea bargain**.

Perez admitted that **he** and his **partner** **shot~killed** an **unarmed, handcuffed 19-year-old** and **planted a rifle** on him as a **cover-up**. He continued, in **2,000 pages** of riveting **testimony** to yank back a curtain of expose in which **cops routinely frame the innocent** by **planting** ("throwing down") **drugs and guns, smack around** ("thump") citizens on the streets for kicks and **perjure themselves** ("join the liar's club") to **get convictions**.

Lurid **revelations** about law enforcement *Rampart-style* **emerged daily**: allegations that **cops raped** a woman while **on-duty**; accusations that a **cop interrogating a hand-cuffed man** - **beat him** until he **vomited blood**; a **fast-growing list of prisoners** who had been **railroaded with fabricated evidence** and **police lies**. Public defenders predict upwards of **4,000 cases of false imprisonment** could be affected. **20 officers** were immediately **relieved** of their duties, **two others fired** and **scores more placed under suspicion**.

It is estimated that up to 90% of LAPD cops frame innocent people.

The **FBI** joined an urgent campaign to attempt to root out **public corruption** and **civil rights abuses**. There were others investigators involved ~ the civilian police commission,

the L.A. district attorney's office, LAPD Internal Affairs and a special task force; and an **army** of private lawyers flooded with calls from alleged **Rampart victims**. In the end, **Los Angeles** will face **hundreds of millions of dollars** in **Liability** from settled suits. **Richard Riordan** was mayor. **Bernard Parks** was the **LAPD police chief**. The city wrestled with an even larger question: **Who will**, or effectively can, **police the police?** Remember, readers, that **Bill Parker** obtained from the citizens full **license for cops** to **do** virtually **anything** they wanted to, and **without** civilian **oversight**.

The **Rampart** Police Station sits in an 8-sq-mi area and had lost control. To win the area back, the LAPD established a special **anti-gang** unit, Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums, or **CRASH**. In addition to their **weapons** and **swagger**, **CRASH officers** were armed with a powerful legal tool – **sweeping anti-gang injunctions** that gave them free rein to push around suspected gang members, including blocking sidewalks and carrying pagers.

There had been **long complaints** against Rampart cops. "Its been happening for years" says Alex Sanchez, a former gang member facing deportation. "We've seen cops **take drugs** and then let the youths go. We've seen cops **plant drugs** on others. Youths were too often saying, 'That wasn't mine. He **planted it on me.**' But who would believe them?" The fact was that no one seemed to care to go against the cops. Charges were leveled at the **Rampart division** for systematically **targeting for deportation immigrants** who were **witnesses to police malfeasance**.

Although over 17,000 convictions were considered 'tainted', only about 100 prisoners were actually released, involving only 71 LAPD officers.

Rampart officer **Perez** testified that he was a part of the **CRASH unit** that played by **twisted rules**. This **close-knit fraternity** acted a lot like a **gang** itself. They even had a slogan, "**Puro Rampart**", [Totally Rampart], an imitation of a **gang** slogan. This cry was heard by a white officer **leaving the scene of a police beating of a civilian** – for which the city had to pay a \$25,000 settlement.

There were so many stunning, bizarre and disturbing **illegal acts**:

- 1] When a cruiser's tire was slashed, the two cops tracked down a gang member they **thought** may have done it, and **dropped him naked in a rival gang's turf**.
- 2] Another officer **shot** a suspect **repeatedly** with a beanbag **shotgun** just for **fun**.
- 3] A 1996 **shooting** of a skinny **19-year old**, then **planted a rifle** on him to make it look like he attacked the cops. This left Ovando permanently **paralyzed**.
- 4] Then the **judge** at trial **lambasted** Ovando-who had to be wheeled in on a gurney- for endangering the lives of two hero officers, giving him a **23 year sentence**.
- 5] A **cover-up** of an **unjustified shooting** where cops **planted a gun** next to the body. Then they delayed calling an ambulance as they worked with their supervisor on getting their stories straight. Victim ended up **bleeding to death**.
- 6] Police **shot at** New Year's celebrators who were firing guns straight up in the air at midnight. At first they picked up their shell casings, but when they saw that two men were **hit**, they **concocted** a story that the injured had been firing at the cops.

- 7] A brazen **cop** is Perez's friend, **David Mack**, serving a 14-year prison term for **robbing a bank of \$722,000**. After the robbery, they traveled to Las Vegas for a high-living gambling spree.
- A] Mack has now renounced his police associations and claims to belong to the **Piru Bloods**, an L.A. street gang.
- B] **Officer David Mack** is also being investigated for the **murder** of the rapper **Notorious B.I.G.**, shot to death while leaving a party in 1997.
- C] The rap star's family currently has a wrongful-death suit against the City of Los Angeles over the killing of the rapper
- D] To win monetary damages from the city, the plaintiffs must **persuade the jury** that **Mack**, a **police officer** at the time, was **'liable'** for the **killing**.
- E] U.S. District **Judge Cooper** split the case in three parts – one **involving Mack**, The second involving the city and the last to determine damages.
- F] She ruled that plaintiffs could only pursue their claims against the city and reach damages phase only if they first **persuaded the jury** that **Mack was liable** for Wallace's **death**.
- G] Plaintiff's attorneys offered **Mack** financial and other **inducements** to make **him millions** if he'd plead the 'fifth' which would help plaintiffs win the case.
- 8] Charges surfaced that **cops** have **illegally** used **deportation** as a weapon, that violates a 21 year old standing policy which **bars** cops from arresting **illegal aliens**.
- 9] **CRASH** officers are also accused of using the **INS** to have **antipolice** witnesses **deported**. They had a list of **10,000 Latinos** merely suspected as gang members.
- 10] Any **Latino** suspected of knowing **how the cops operate** will be set-up for **illegal deportaion**.
- 11] **90%** of **CRASH** officers, **not just Rampart**, **falsify much information**.
- 12] Rafael Zambrano was only one of **hundreds harassed**. **15 Rampart** cops would come to his home and harass **him** and his **family**. They once held his brother **over a rooftop ledge threatening to drop** him for **no reason**. He's **illegally** spent **16 months** in **prison**, and is now suing the city.
- 13] **So many cases of police misconduct** points to **systematic corruption** by **LAPD**.
- 14] A disturbing pattern is that of **arresting officers** trying to **recruit** those **arrested to sell drugs** for them.
- 15] Chief **Parks** **admitted** to the city council that many should **never have been hired**, usually from so-called binge hiring.
- A] In D.C., 1000 were hired rapidly, later to have **25%** of these **officers discharged for misconduct or indicted**.
- B] **Parks** also admitted that supervisors often **ignored "red flags"** because **officers try to impress supervisors**.
- C] The **only** thing that matters is **getting a conviction**.
- D] The **'seeds of corruption'** begins when cops are asked to **fill in the blanks** for D.A.s to **make cases**.
- E] If the cops **don't remember facts**, they are pressured to **make them up**.
- 16] An **officer** was **convicted** of **murdering a young mother of three** who **filed a supposedly confidential brutality complaint** against **him**.

- 17] **Nine officers arrested** in a sting operation and **convicted of selling protection to a cocaine warehouse.**
- 18] **Two cops charged with raping a 14-year old girl.**
- 19] **Hundreds of other cops were charged with a variety of felonies.**
- 20] Critics are skeptical that the LAPD can put its house in order, as their **investigators have intractable conflicts of interests, and are too complicit in what has happened.**

Perez's Bitter Saga of Lies, Regrets and Harm ~

Rafael Perez's plea bargain got him 5 years ~ out in 2, with immunity given for all of his worst crimes: the shootings, the cover-ups, the fabricated evidence etc.

Perez has called himself a 'monster' and warned of the dangers of corruption of power

There's a phrase in the law ~ color of authority ~ used to describe the use, and often abuse, of position. Here's are samples of how it works:

- 01] **Secret pleasures of cop's life** mean they would think nothing of ending a night-shift at 1 a.m. at **Foothill Division** and speeding to **Anaheim 50 miles away** for a **beer** at a tavern that **illegally stayed open for cops. If you have a badge, you can drive real fast ~ across a landscape of over 12-million sleeping people.**
- 02] This hints at a vital aspect of life as some cops live it. They **inhabit ~ or think they do ~ a world apart** from normal men and women.
- 03] In the **LAPD**, where **insularity** has been raised to a **sacramental rite**, it's particularly pronounced in its **special units ~ distinct segments of the force that operate with virtual autonomy. Cops in these units are, by definition, set apart – even from other police.**
- 04] It is **common** to come to believe **they reign over secret domains**, that they are **governed by codes of behavior of their own devising, liberated from normal life and its bothersome rules.** In this **shadow world**, they can come to feel like royalty, true princes of the city and **masters of all they survey.**
- 05] **Perez has admitted to hundreds of instances of perjury, fabrication of evidence and false arrests. He has admitted to stealing drugs from police evidence lockers and reselling them on the street; admitted stealing drugs, guns and cash from gang members.**
- 06] **Rampart's anti-gang CRASH unit** sought to send gang members to **prison** or have them **extradited, whether or not they actually committed crimes.** He offered that he **helped put hundreds of innocent men in jail ~ innocent of crimes with which they were charged.**
- 07] **Perez routinely observed cops beating innocent people. Rampart CRASH became a "brotherhood", a gang in its own right.**
- 08] They **worked largely at night and without external supervision. It was, in its way, a logical extension of LAPD supervisory style: Bring in the bodies and nobody will much question how you got them.**
- 09] **Shooting Manuel Saldana** was not, **remarkably enough, not in and of itself a**

shock. Saldana was **unarmed** when he was **shot**, but he was just one in a **long line of unarmed people shot** by the **LAPD**.

- 10] Perez offered that **“It is my habitual practice to always let my partner read the report prior to submittal, especially if we are planting or framing somebody.”**
- 11] In a recent **Rampart** trial, Officer **Paul Harper** made it clear without saying so that they’d stopped a group of young men **only** because he knew that they were gang members. **He had no probable cause to think a crime had been committed.** This was an admission to making an **illegal stop**.
- 12] Perez clarified that when they talk about **planting** or **putting a case** on someone, **its not the way** most attorneys and investigators think it works. **When its time to book evidence, we go and get the evidence from our car. There’s no need to go and lay it on the ground next to them or put fingerprints on the baggies. No. We get the evidence when its needed and move forward. We don’t sit there at the scene and say, “Look what we got – 3 baggies.”**
- 13] **They had their own radio frequencies, their own cars, their own motto and methods.** They developed their **own language:** to meet was to **snoopy up;** a gun was an **item;** which came in sizes, **long** for a shotgun or rifle, **small** for a handgun.
- 14] They had standard procedures for **covering up mistakes.** If something **bad went down,** they sent a **coded call** over their **private frequency, calling the CRASH** squad to meet. **Sentries were posted** to keep inquisitive outsiders ~ **other police or commanding officers** ~ at bay.
- 15] They often partied together, at the old Police Academy or to the Short Stop, a cop bar in the division, and **handed out plaques to celebrate shootings.** **Perez, Sammy Martin and Mack,** constantly complaining that Mack never paid his share. Even after **Mack robbed B-of-A,** and they went to Las Vegas, Mack wouldn’t pay for his share of the gas.
- 16] Perez said he **perjured himself in court several hundred times.** **Half** the arrest reports he wrote from 1994 to 1998 were **utter fabrications,** and thousands more included smaller **lies.**
- 17] In more than 70 hours of interviews with a special investigative team, **Perez** has detailed **dozens** of specific instances of **police misconduct.** At the time of this report, they’d confirmed three-fourths of his statements thus far. His immunity agreement stated that he must tell all he knows. If there was a lie, the deal is off.
- 18] **“We gather our story. We put a story as is, but if we need to add to a story to make it better, that’s what we do. If we need to correct something, its corrected right then and there before we have the officer-involved shooting team, lieutenants and captains and everybody showing up, we fix it and correct it right there. And we always say that once we come up with a story, it is never changed, no matter what. Otherwise, your story is not credible.**

Wherever Perez goes, he’ll spend much of the rest of his life, looking over his shoulder
And wherever he goes, he will leave behind a criminal justice system staggering
beneath the weight of his allegations.

~ End of PART 6 ~