

Los Angeles Police Department



BOARD OF INQUIRY
into the

RAMPART AREA CORRUPTION INCIDENT

Executive Summary

BERNARD C. PARKS
Chief of Police

March 1, 2000

PREFACE

In 1996, the Department of Justice convened the National Symposium on Police Integrity. The 200 participants in this three-day meeting included police chiefs, sheriffs, police researchers, members of other professions, and community leaders. In addition to the United States, there were representatives from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Sweden, Belarus, Nicaragua, Haiti, El Salvador, and Honduras. The results of that symposium were published in January 1997 and included the thoughts and observations of many national leaders from Attorney General Janet Reno to Dr. Vicchio, a professor of philosophy at the College of Notre Dame in Baltimore¹.

Though there are a number of interesting and insightful viewpoints expressed in that publication, there is one in particular which is most relevant to the issues at hand. That observation came from Captain Ross Swope, Metropolitan Police Department, Washington, D.C. At the heart of Captain Ross Swope's remarks was a simple yet profound observation that:

“The major cause in the lack of integrity in American police officers is mediocrity.”

Captain Swope went on to explain that mediocrity stems from the failure to hold officers responsible and accountable. It comes from a lack of commitment, laziness, excessive tolerance and the use of kid gloves. He felt that dealing with mediocrity is perhaps the greatest contemporary challenge to American law enforcement.

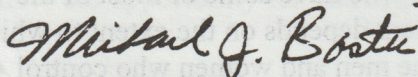
When asked to explain how mediocrity is dangerous, Captain Swope drew an analogy of the bell curve. At the high end of the bell curve are those officers who practice all the core values: prudence, truth, courage, justice, honesty and responsibility. At the other end, are the officers with few of those values. In the large middle are those officers who have some or most of the core values. The extent of moral influence in a police department depends on the extent to which the lower and upper portions influence those in the middle. The men and women who control that influence are sergeants, lieutenants and captains. The irony is that everyone within a work place knows full well which of the three categories their co-workers fall into. When officers in the middle see that officers at the bottom end are not dealt with, they sometimes begin to imitate their behavior. Similarly, when those at the top end are recognized and rewarded, they become the workplace standard. The principal, though not exclusive, agents in encouraging top-end or allowing bottom-end behaviors are supervisors and middle managers. It is our sergeants, lieutenants and captains who have the daily and ongoing responsibility to ensure that the appropriate workplace standards are maintained. However, that observation in no way relieves upper managers from their responsibility to ensure that proper standards are being maintained in their subordinate commands by providing appropriate guidance, exerting their oversight responsibility and honestly evaluating the effectiveness of the commands for which they are ultimately responsible.

¹ “Police Integrity, Public Service with Honor” U.S. Department of Justice, January 1997

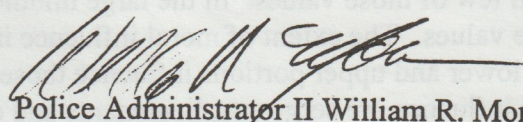
As you read this report from the Board of Inquiry, keep Captain Swope's observations in mind for we found, and you will see, that mediocrity was alive and well in Rampart up until about 1998. We are sad to report that we also found mediocrity threatening to engulf many of our other workplace environments as well. This is not to say or imply in any way that corruption is occurring throughout the Department, for we do not believe that is the case. However, there are strong indicators that mediocrity is flourishing in many other workplaces and the mindset of too many managers and supervisors is allowing it to occur. Rather than challenging our people to do their best, too many of our leaders are allowing mediocre performance and, in some cases, even making excuses for it.

If Captain Swope is correct in his observation that corruption follows mediocrity, and we believe that he is, then we must begin immediately to instill a true standard of excellence throughout the Department. In most cases, this will not require new programs or approaches to police work. However, it will require the scrupulous adherence to existing policies and standards, the ability to detect any individual or collective pattern of performance which falls short of that expectation, and the courage to deal with those who are responsible for those failures. Anything less will surely allow another Rampart to occur.

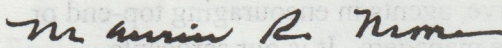
In conclusion, we would like to express our gratitude to the leadership of the subcommittees and work groups as well as the over 300 men and women who worked so tirelessly in conducting this Board of Inquiry. Tens of thousands of documents were meticulously reviewed and hundreds of interviews conducted. In many cases, this was done while people continued to fulfill the responsibilities of their primary assignment. We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to the nearly seventy men and women currently assigned to the criminal and administrative task forces pursuing the Rampart corruption investigation. Obviously, their story of dedication and tremendous personal sacrifice cannot be told now, but we are confident they will receive the recognition so clearly due them.



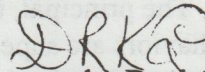
Deputy Chief Michael J. Bostic
Chair, Board of Inquiry



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