



Who have we really become beholden to? Has the mission become less about crime fighting and more about endless documenting for the sake of documenting, that only seem to cause more documenting? The idea that documenting a use of force in an arrest report often overshadows the actual criminal offense is insanity. I have seen many arrest reports where the body of crime was half a page long. Yes, the actual part that matters to courts and the sole reason you are writing the arrest report, only to be followed by two pages of use of force account (administrative portion, not important or material to the filing process). Yet the same report that contains the Mona Lisa of all use of force reports may not have the required elements of crime to obtain a filing on the case. It just goes to show how the trickle-down effects of the organizational values permeate through all levels of the Department and that crime fighting is a secondary issue. The admin always comes first.

To my detective friends: How many commanding officers have you had who were as obsessed about following up on your cases for filing purposes and progress of the investigation as they were about your case clearance by any means necessary? These poor detective COs are doing this because of the organizational values and expectations *NOT* created by them. Those of you with a CO who is more enthusiastic about crime follow-ups and overall success of cases (aka real-life police work), consider yourself lucky! As an organization, we spend an obscene amount of resources on the administrative part of the process. We kill trees as if the Amazon rainforest has somehow wronged us. We have a report on a report, an audit on an audit and a finding on a finding.

In fairness and in the spirit of full disclosure to Angelenos, we ought to let them decide, as it is their tax dollars in question, where they would like their money to go: documenting crime investigations and arrest-related activities, or satisfying the internal and external administrative demands? As we have mastered the art of documentation, we ought to make a good faith effort in compiling data, how many man-hours and how much taxpayer money we invest as a Department in administrative work. Some of it may be hard to quantify, but a lot of it is easily identifiable by assignment. Although we are quick to tout 10,000 cops in the name of public safety, the truth is that at any given time, we have 260–300 uniformed officers handling radio calls in a 465-square-mile area with over 4 million residents (numbers vary and are based on daily RACR deployment reports.)

I understand that we are one of the most visible police departments in the world and that a certain amount of administrative work is required to satisfy our detractors and people building careers. This includes attorneys dedicating their careers to suing the LAPD, thereby the City of Los Angeles; anti-LAPD journalists; “civil rights activists” (yes, in quotation marks) and other nuisance-creating activism, such as satisfying the anti-law and order entities like the former U.S. attorneys’ and DOJ administrations’ witch hunt on American law enforcement and, thereby, public safety.

But for the sake of this important discussion, where do we draw the line? When is enough enough? There seems to be no end to compiling data. All this has a real impact on public safety, and so far, it has not been a positive one. It actually erodes and undermines our efforts to keep the public safe, the more we dedicate our resources to administrative quantification of Department activity.

We need to ask, who is to bear the burden of funding this seemingly never-ending quantitative stream of administrative requests? Is it fair that the hard-earned tax dollars meant for the public’s safety now go to satisfy the administrative machine that has become the means to an end? In this vein, the true victim is the taxpayer whose chances of becoming a victim of crime increases due to misallocation of Departmental resources, and on top of that, they get to finance their own victimization. That does not seem just to me. I hope that our solemn pledge to serve and to protect is not only evoked as a buzzword in a promotional exam, but that we actually live by it, and I know that a great majority of us do, to the end of career, no matter what rank or assignment. This is not just a job. The reason we become cops ought not be pay and benefits, for there are many other jobs with less headaches. This always ought to be and remain a career of calling.

An example of this unconscionable wasteful spending is that we always have to “do better” by creating our own more stringent guidelines for everything. This is particularly important when it comes to our complaint system.

Instead of sticking to the consent decree recommendations that spell out the types of complaints we need to investigate and monitor, the LAPD decided to go above and beyond and accept any complaint regardless of merit, truthfulness or believability. Why do we do this? Who does it benefit? The idea of internal investigations is to maintain the public’s faith in our ability to be an honest department with integrity and reverence to law. It was created to weed out the cops on the take, those who lied and stole, and those who betrayed public trust by using the badge to advance their personal agendas. We are talking about crooked cops that none of us would like to have around. The public in today’s environment has come to connote the arrestees, their families and their partners in crime. How about the victims or the good folks who are law-abiding and live peacefully? Should we perhaps be more concerned with what they think of us than the less than 1 percent of the population that victimizes them?

In going over hundreds of complaints as the legal chair, easily over 90 percent or so of the ones that officers seek representation for are directed at uniformed enforcement (Patrol by far being the one in the crosshairs, and other entities, such as SPU, Gangs and Metro, and even some

complaints involving divisional detectives). Almost all of these complaints were initiated by the arrestees. Does it really evoke public trust in the police department if we measure our success in how the arrestees perceive us and if they had anything short of a wonderful stay with us? It seems that we task Internal Affairs folks to act in a capacity of a customer service representative. “I’m sorry, sir. You didn’t like that the officer yelled at you?” (Command presence and giving commands, most likely for a good reason.) “The handcuffs left marks on your wrists?” (Yes, they are made of metal.) “You didn’t like being tackled to the ground?” (You had a chance to comply and not escalate the situation. The ball was in your court, and now thanks to your bad decision, I have to stay an extra three hours documenting a seemingly simple incident.) “Yes, sir! We are on it and will leave no stone unturned. Hopefully your stay with us is better next time!” It’s as if we are your friendly airline commercial. These everyday examples of complaints could go on and on, and I can’t help but marvel at the insanity that we have created. It really defies logic altogether. This is almost like a script from “Saturday Night Live.”

We are using our 1.28 system as if it were a customer service satisfaction survey. This insanity must stop. We are in a business that can be rotten, dirty, sad, horrible, tragic and volatile, or all of the above at the same time.

Remind me again why anyone would stay in the most important function of this Department, namely Patrol, if the suspects, the lawbreakers and the victimizers are the ones who are by far the majority of the individuals filing these complaints, and hence in charge of your career trajectory? But more importantly, what does it have to do with the public’s trust? Nothing. Are we to believe that we will achieve a better and more honest police department because we are more responsive to the complaints of the individuals we arrest as a result of their victimizing the good folks in our city, rather than listening to those who get victimized? (Read that sentence a couple of times and it sounds crazier each time you read it.)

How does this serve the best interests of the people of Los Angeles? Someone please explain this to me. Do we really expect that arrestees in general are happy about their situation and the impending consequences? Do we think that it is reasonable having to use any amount of force on a noncompliant or combative suspect without them feeling at least a little discomfort, embarrassment or having no injuries? Is it really a stretch to think that arrestees (especially the frequent fliers) may not be truthful, honest and objective about what happened? Are we and the public to believe that our arrestees on average are the happiest of the campers? Really? What obligation do we have to making our arrestees feel warm and fuzzy? We do a damn good job at explaining to our arrestees why they are in handcuffs and what will happen to them. We make notifications to their friends and families. We explain to them their rights as they relate to them being arrested and questioned. We oftentimes go back to an arrestee’s home to get their medication prior to booking them, and may give some of their non-case-related belongings to someone they trust. We do a lot more than those things on a regular basis because we are decent people with good values and compassion, and we believe in doing the right thing. Most importantly, we do this with arrestees who are *reasonable* with us and not in it to make their day’s mission to ruin our day, such as but not limited to: spitting, screaming, attempting to injure us, urinating or defecating in the black and white or in the detention tank, repeated name-calling, vandalizing facilities or other property, attempting to destroy evidence and many more other instances that just are not helpful for a reasonable temporary relationship. You get the picture.

The bottom line is that the intent and purpose of having an internal investigative body and the current form of its application are about polar opposites.

This perverted process has destroyed a good deal of timber and has had a negative effect on the careers that otherwise ought to be rewarded. It is easy to judge incidents after the fact when you are not dealing with reality (experiencing firsthand any number of the things I previously pointed out as pretty typical behavior of an unhappy arrestee). I can't think how this type of transparency could possibly make our Department somehow more believable and righteous in the eyes of the taxpayer. I don't think that our victims care that the arresting officer had to do some of the previously mentioned things that most often are required by our own Department policy. Instead of using the complaint history of an officer as a metric (based on the complaints of the victimizers of the public) for their ability to promote or to work in other desired job assignments, we ought to be more concerned about how many victims as citizens in general you were able to help (the main purpose of police). This is another obsession by our Department, wherein we reward those who do the least good for the public and punish those who do the most.

My suggestion is to go back to the basics. We need to take an honest look at ourselves and re-examine the purpose of our mission. We need to unapologetically advance the goals of public safety, order and the rule of law in the name of helping those who are being victimized and those who depend on our creating a sense of safety and security. We need to stop and re-evaluate our current organizational policies that stifle the positive spirit of our workforce, policies which subsequently only hurt the law-abiding citizens, as it leaves little encouragement for a proactive work environment and culture. It's about being honest and commonsensical about priorities and the effects of the current opted policies. I know this is thinking outside the box, but I would highly encourage anyone with any amount of influence in the top echelon to explore this relatively simple concept.

As always, take care and stay safe! If you have any questions, feel free to email me at [TJTarjamo@lappl.org](mailto:TJTarjamo@lappl.org) or contact me at (213) 798-2286.