

# The Plague of the Criminal Justice System: Abuse of Power by Law Enforcers

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The criminal justice system is an ideological system comprised of “heroes” who “serve and protect” the “community.” This is a myth. The criminal justice system has been designed to prioritize the interests of a few over the protection of the communities it runs through. This system feeds lies to its enforcers, enabling their gross misbehavior by framing their work as being in the name of justice, peace, and order. This ideological system tells its enforcers that there are bad guys out there, and that they aren’t one of them. This creates a superiority complex among enforcement professionals (such as police officers) which often manifests in the abuse of their power over the communities they interact with. This mentality (the superiority complex) prioritizes power and control and has little concern about the resulting schism between communities and law enforcement.\*

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) is an example of a police department with a tarnished relationship with its community. LAPD in recent years has faced scrutiny for the presence of police deputy gangs in their district. These deputy gang members have initiations and tattoos that set them apart from other police gangs. The gangs are powerful enough to overtake a whole precinct by running many of the operations, such as the “Banditos” that run East L.A.’s police units. In these operations, officers that choose to not participate, are exiled, not given back up when requested, beaten, or worse according to eyewitnesses (Goodyear 2022). Police gangs in LAPD were uncovered by civilian investigation groups. This has yet to be investigated by the federal

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government or local police departments, with no comments given by the LAPD or Sheriff's Department.

Similarly, The Dublin Correctional Facility has been known to have many cases of sexual abuse toward their inmates. Inmates and prison guards described the situation inside the women's correctional facility to be a "rape club." Inmates who reported these abuses were punished by guards who placed the inmates that spoke out into solitary confinement (Egelko 2022). Correspondingly, a federal women's prison in Oakland has been described as an "abuse-plagued" federal facility. The warden of this facility was one of five guards to be charged with sexual abuse, the other guards have been charged with similar crimes of varying degrees (AP News). Guards at both the Dublin correctional facility and the Oakland federal prison placed inmates who reported abuse in solitary confinement. Internal investigations in 2022 found that 27 federal prisons that house female inmates throughout the U.S. had backlogged more than 8,000 cases regarding abuse. With hundreds of these abuse reports being about sexual abuse in particular (Ossof 2023).

These examples illustrate behavioral patterns that are similar in the different sectors of law enforcement. Officers participating in police gangs withhold backup from their own officers for not complying with their internal system of governance. The motives are consistent through the accounts of their actions: the desire for control goes hand in hand with the propensity for abuse of power.

Law enforcement doesn't have power on its own, in a natural, objective, or essential way. Power is gained, for example through controlling and dominating a community. The criminal justice system is plagued by dishonesty and a lack of integrity; contrary to the ideologically assumed core values of justice, peace,

and order. If these values were truly upheld, officers would be held accountable for their actions. Unfortunately, this is often not the case, as seen in the over 8,000 federal women's prison abuse complaints that were backlogged for years, or when bystander officers witnessed abuse of power by the LAPD and different women's prisons. The criminal justice system prioritizes power and control over integrity and honesty; the real criminals are in law enforcement uniforms that serve to frame them as brave heroes who create safety for the public.

One of the definitions of plagued is, "a disastrous evil or affliction" (Merriam-Webster n.d.). The criminal justice system is a plague that has spread and is responsible for officers abusing their power. Choosing to look at the officers themselves as "bad apples" disqualifies any accountability for the criminal justice system to take ownership of what it has created. The criminal justice system is plagued, and it spreads its ailments to its enforcers. The system is diseased, and this is what turns newly recruited officers into power-abusers who are upheld by systems of control. Societal and individual trust in the criminal justice system will be lost if it admits that the system is inherently flawed, and the system will lose its ideological power and control over the masses. Therefore, it actively chooses to allow different types of abuse.

The most widely believed myth is that the criminal justice system in the United States is a well-established system that was made to serve and protect communities. There are two different realities of the criminal justice system, ideological and cultural. The ideological component of the criminal justice system props it up as the champion force for good, prosocial values and attempts to portray law enforcement actions in communities as just. The cultural reality of the criminal justice system accepts abuse of power to adhere to the intentions of the ideological goals. The abuse of

power reflects the cultural need to control communities by whatever means necessary, to then be able to publicize the ideological message to the public as being the only true form of the criminal justice system. This system was not made to protect, it was made to *control*.

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