Thesis: Community Safety Partnership (Excerpt from http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll3/id/414752)

In 2011, the LAPD's Community Safety Partnership was born in the office of Chief Charlie Beck, where Connie Rice, an influential civil rights attorney, pitched her plan for providing safety to residents of LA's most violent housing developments.

The impetus for the program was a string of racially driven gang attacks in Watts public housing developments. In 1995, the Grape Street Crips, a black gang, firebombed the housing unit of a Hispanic family in Jordan Downs, throwing a Molotov cocktail through their mail slot. Five family members died in the ensuing conflagration. Rice sued the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) — a state-chartered public agency that owns and manages 14 public housing developments in California including Jordan Downs — for not protecting "racially-isolated minorities."

The tipping point for Rice came in 2010, when another black gang, the PJ Watts Crips, attacked a Korean family moving into Imperial Courts. The gang was about to sexually assault the women, when a neighbor heard screams and called for help. Rice was incensed. She stormed into Chief Beck's office.

Rice recounted what happened next in an interview. "What are we doing?" Rice said. "We (she and the police) can't even keep families safe," "Connie, calm down," Beck said. "You and I started in Watts. We are going to fix this.'

"Charlie, your cops are not in Watts to protect and serve anybody," Rice said. "They are there to serve their careers, to act aggressive, look tough, and to get promoted into a specialized unit."[1]

The housing developments had once provided safe and comfortable housing for WWII veterans. But they became killing grounds, when cocaine hit the streets of Los Angeles in the 80s. Murder rates soared as rival gangs battled for territory. The police had difficulty operating effectively. Gangs sold drugs along the main streets and disappeared into the maze of barracks-like building units, when the police came close.

The LAPD's solution to the dizzying rise in homicides was to make thousands of arrests. The police employed a special operations unit called Community Resources Against Hoodlums (CRASH), notorious for the task force Operation Hammer, which arrested more than one thousand people over a single weekend in 1988.

“On the weekends, we would bring 200-300 officer in Hammer Task forces to the developments,” said Bob Green, deputy chief of operations of South Bureau. “They would exercise zero tolerance to keep people from getting killed.”

The LAPD relied on suppression at this time partly because it was a much smaller force between 7,000 and 8,000 officers, Green said. Today, it has approximately 10,000.

The peak of the suppression era came with the 1992 Watts Riots, which were triggered by the publicly televised beating of Rodney King by LAPD officers. It led to a reform in policing.

“Suppression will never go away, but we now use it in conjunction with building relationships, prevention, intervention, and strategic suppression, so it is much more effective policing,” Green said.[2]

Since the early 90s, Rice, a Harvard graduate, has played a key role in Watts. She helped negotiate the gang truce between rival LA gangs, just outside of Nickerson Gardens, to briefly end the violence that had killed hundreds of young men.

In 1999, she jointly founded the nonprofit Advancement Project (AP) with a group of lawyers to provide safety to people, particularly youth, in underprivileged communities.

“We believe that safety is a right and yet low-income communities of color have been structurally deprived of safety,” Susan Lee, an AP program director, said. “If kids can’t walk to school safety, they can’t do well in school.”

If they felt safe, the youth could focus on accomplishing goals.[3]

“The vision for the Advancement Project was to clear the way for every child to have a fair shot at achieving her potential,” Rice said in her book, *Power Concedes Nothing*. “We needed bolder strategies, wider reach, and deeper impact to change systems.”[4]

For Rice, a working relationship between the police and the community was key. She asked Beck for 50 specially trained officers dedicated solely to violent housing developments.

And the officers would work in cooperation with others, as just one leg of a “four-legged stool”: an alliance between the community, the AP, the police, and gang interventionists, Rice said in an interview.

“Everyone will be playing together as an orchestra rather than trying to annihilate one another,”

Rice said in an interview, “Violence will go down. Kids will be safer. Communities will be safer.”

“Let’s try it,” Rice recollects Beck saying. “If it doesn’t work, we will go back to traditional policing.” [5]

Beck agreed to a five-year experiment called the Community Safety Partnership in South Bureau, where four of the largest, most crime-ridden housing developments are located: Nickerson Gardens, Jordan Downs, Imperial Courts, and Ramona Gardens. Each has dozens of buildings and hundreds of units. South Bureau was first under the command of Deputy Chief Pat Gannon, and later, Chief Green.

The CSP is just one part of the Advancement Project’s plan for violence reduction in Los Angeles. In 2007, the Advancement Project published *Call to Action: A Case for a Comprehensive Solution to LA’s Gang Violence Epidemic*, which called for a community-oriented approach to dealing with gangs. [6]

“*Call to Action* was not another dry report,” said Rice in her autobiography. “It was about our failure to deliver the first of all civil rights: the right to safety.”[7]

The report said that the 30-year strategy and $25-billion campaign of enforcement was only perpetuating a cycle of violence and putting lives in danger, including those of 850,000 kids who lived in violent parts of LA[8].

“We had to change everything and that is what the *Call to Action* did,” Rice said. “We need cops like those in the CSP who are rewarded for helping poor neighborhoods solve their problems, not rewarded for locking everyone up.” [9]

Capt. Phil Tingirides, 55, a former soldier and commanding officer of Southeast Community Station since 2005, first heard about the CSP program, when Gannon asked for his opinion in 2010.

“I felt it was time we tried something else,” Tingirides said. “I told him that we have done task forces for 30 or 40 years and it hasn’t worked. We still have crime, the same living conditions, and a bad relationships with the community.”

Tingirides had been apart of past missions made dozens of arrests, with the goal of intimidating rather than making peace, he said.

"We were tired of always having to bang our heads and realize we were part of the problem because of the way we were treating the community with animosity and taking hope away," Tingirides said[10].

Rice wanted officers who were "compassionate" for poorer communities or who had grown up in them. These officers would dedicate themselves to restoring this lost trust: They would play with kids and befriend gangsters and clean up neighborhoods. They would allow the community to be part of the solution to the problem.[11]

Emada Tingirides, 43, wife to Capt. Tingirides and coordinator of the daily operations of the CSP, exemplifies this ideal. She was born to a determined 15-year-old mother just outside of Nickerson Gardens in the 70s, who became a registered nurse despite her circumstances. Emada's grandmother was a probation officer for the LA County Sheriff.

Emada's dream was to follow in her grandmother's footsteps and be a police officer and also a teacher. After receiving an AA in liberal arts from Santa Monica Junior College, Emada joined the LAPD in 1995[12].

Some officers have trouble understanding community policing, Chief Green said, which is why the selection of the right officers is critical.

"No matter how much we train them, officers sometime go into policing for the adrenaline rush of chasing bad guys," Green said. "CSP's work may not be the sexiest, but in the end, police are judged by the safety of the community."[13]

CSP officers received approximately 50 hours or two weeks of pre-deployment training through the Advancement Project on how to build relationships with the community and how to work with HACLA and gang interventionists. In a further session, officers learned about adolescent brain development to better understand the youth in the developments. Lee and LuAnn Pannell, director of police training and education, jointly oversaw the training at the Police Academy.[14]

CSP officers take on one of four roles: Community affairs, youth programming, safe passage (school officers), or enforcement. But they are expected to take on several roles including enforcement, if necessary.

"We wanted officers to think outside of the box, to try new things," Capt. Tingirides said. "I didn't want senior leads to tell officers, 'No.' If they come up with an idea they think will work,

try it and see."[15]

CSP Officer Mischell Harvey-Dixon, a community affairs senior lead officer in Ramona Gardens, builds relationships with residents. She created a Facebook page for Ramona Gardens so residents could air their complaints anonymously. She informs them of shootings and CSP programs through her personal cellphone and a Facebook page. She takes the elderly women of the development on trips to the museum and facilitates their sewing group.

Mischell also attends Ramona Gardens Resident Advisory Committee (RAC) meetings, where officers and residents discuss particular problems in the development and introduce programs.[16]

Each of the four housing developments has a team of 10 officers and one supervising sergeant. There is one CSP lieutenant as well.[17]

HACLA agreed to pay for the CSP program, including pay-raises for the officers. The price tag for the CSP is $5 million, about $1 million for five years. HACLA's annual budget is more than $1 billion. Most of HACLA's money comes from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's).

Joel Lopez, the HACLA coordinator, is responsible for financing the LAPD's efforts. He has worked five years as a schoolteacher and another five as a specialist in contracts and budgets.[18]

When Rice introduced community members at a WGTF meeting to the CSP, she was disappointed by their reception.

"We (The Advancement Project) got cussed out by a few of the women leaders in Jordan Downs," Rice said, "They said. 'You light white damn bitch. You are creating a police state. We hate these fucking cops. We don't want them in our housing projects. All these cops are going to do is make us miserable.'"

They had a right to be angry, Rice told them, but she had gone to great lengths to establish an agreement between HACLA, the LAPD, and the Advancement Project and there was no time to confer with them.

"By the time it got approved, there was no time to do a democracy thing and come to you guys," Rice recollected telling the women leaders. "You guys can protest what you want. I don't care. We have to find a way to keep kids in this community safe."

The first time CSP cops went into Jordan Downs they gathered some of the women to find what they needed most. “Just give us a chance to show you we are different,” police told them according to Rice. “Tell us what you want.”