

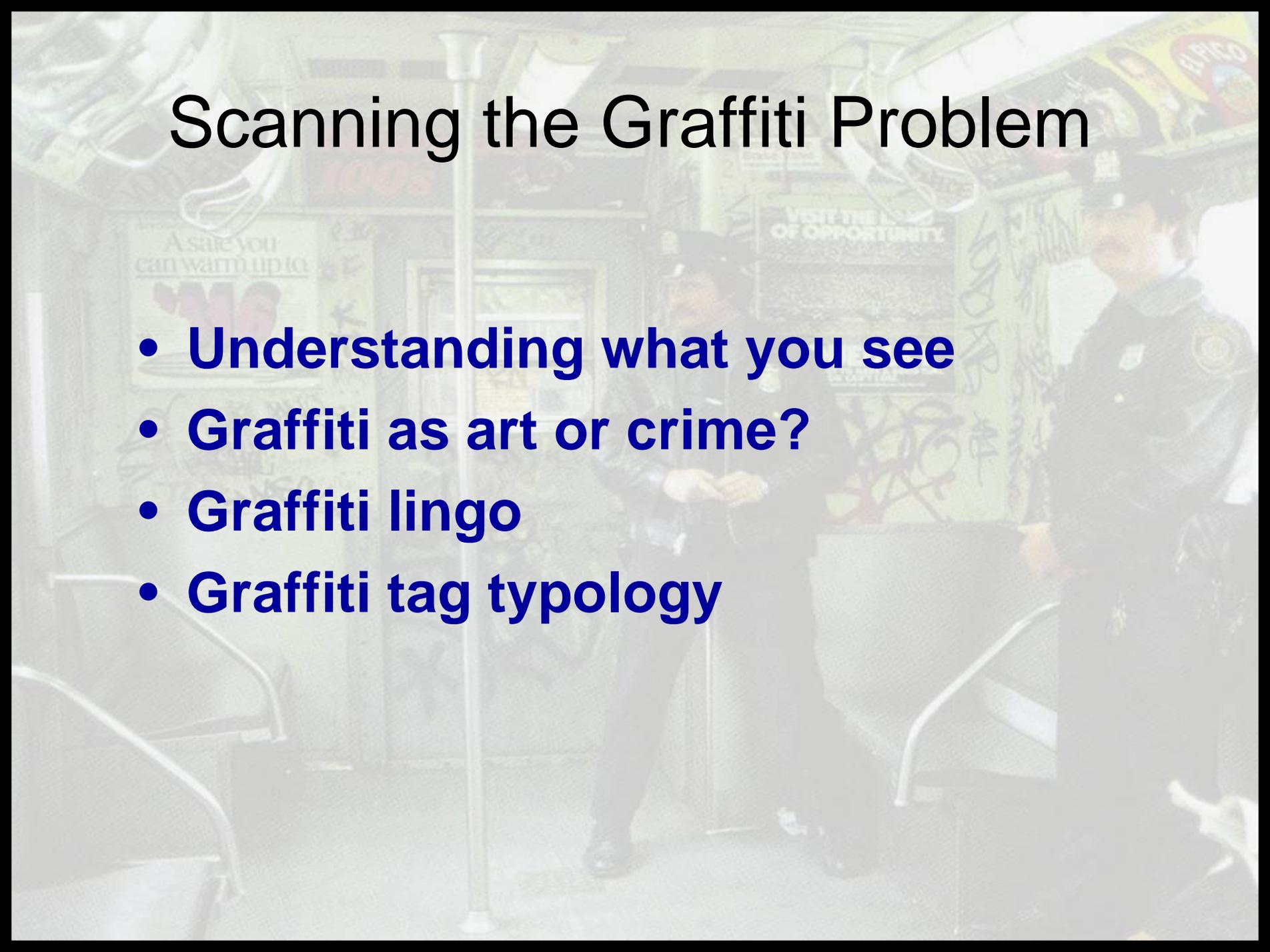
# The Portrait of a Vandal

How Vancouver reduced graffiti by 80% over 3 years

## Madison - 2007

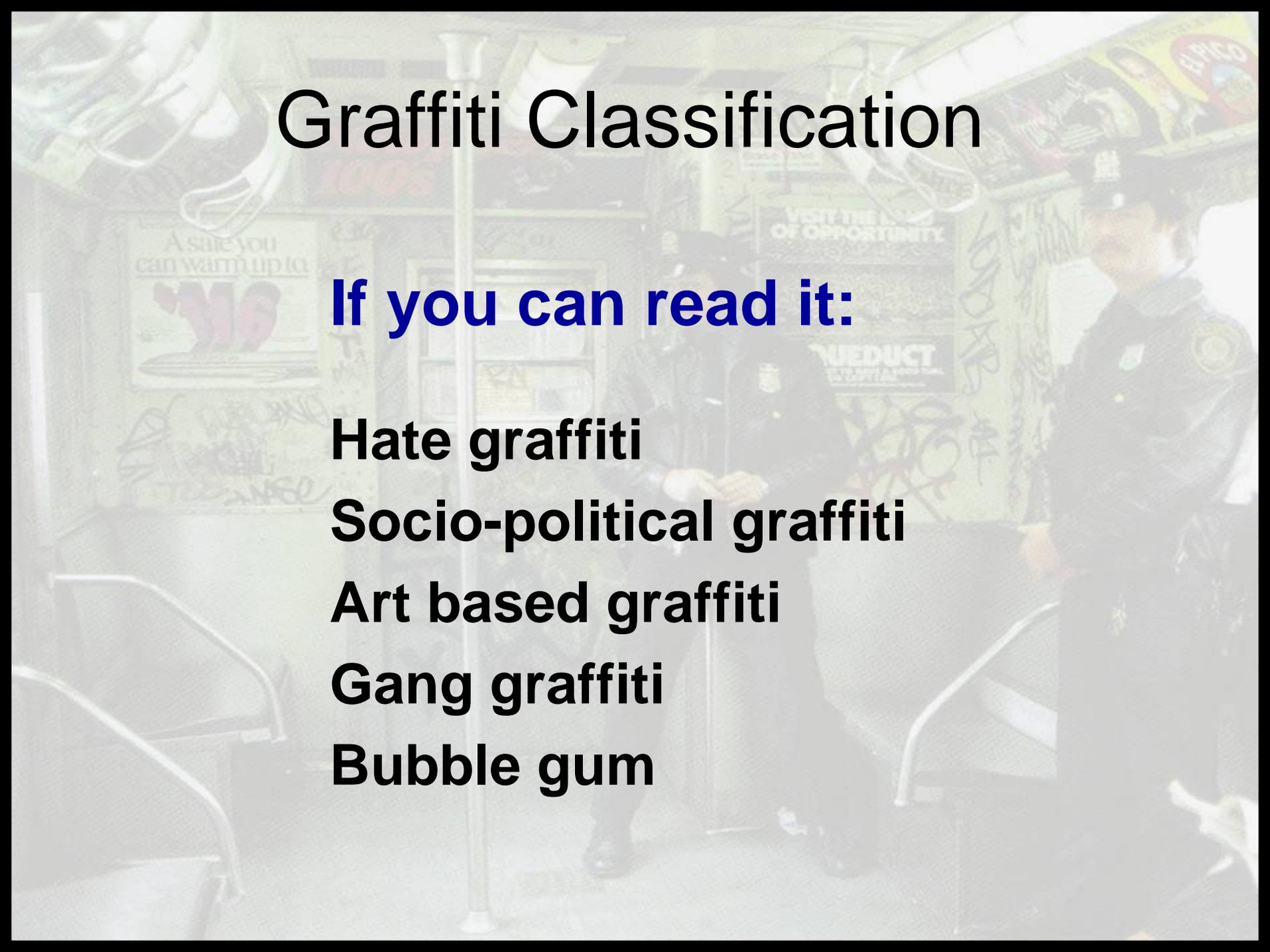
**Constable Valerie Spicer – Vancouver Police Department**  
**M.A. (Art History) M.A. (Criminology) Ph.D. Candidate (Criminology)**

# Scanning the Graffiti Problem

A photograph of a subway car interior. The walls are covered in graffiti, including a large tag that says "BACK". There are posters on the wall, one of which says "A sale you can ward up to" and another that says "VISIT THE L... OF OPPORTUNITY". A police officer in a dark uniform and cap is standing on the right side of the car. The scene is dimly lit, with overhead lights visible.

- **Understanding what you see**
- **Graffiti as art or crime?**
- **Graffiti lingo**
- **Graffiti tag typology**

# Graffiti Classification

A photograph of the interior of a bus, heavily covered in graffiti. A police officer in a dark uniform and cap stands on the right side of the frame. The walls are covered in various graffiti tags and posters. One poster on the left says "A sale you can warm up to" with an image of a turkey. Another poster in the center says "VISIT THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY". A third poster on the right says "CONDUCT". The bus has metal handrails and seats.

**If you can read it:**

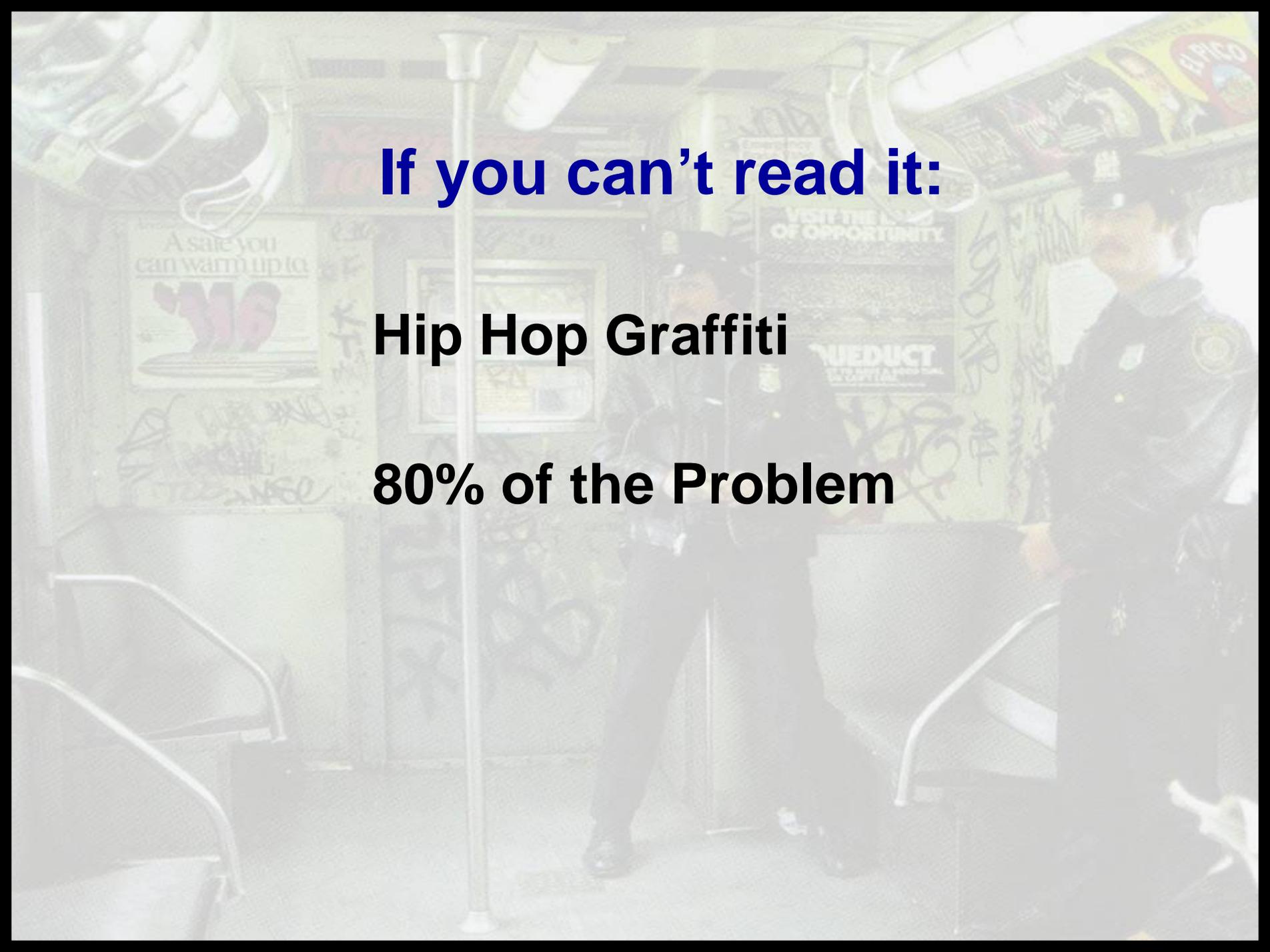
**Hate graffiti**

**Socio-political graffiti**

**Art based graffiti**

**Gang graffiti**

**Bubble gum**

A photograph of the interior of a subway car. The walls are covered in graffiti. A police officer in a dark uniform and cap stands on the right side of the car. In the center, a person is walking. There are advertisements on the walls, including one for 'A sale you can warm up to' and another for 'VISIT THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY'. The text 'MEDUCT' is also visible on a wall. The overall scene is dimly lit and has a grainy texture.

**If you can't read it:**

**Hip Hop Graffiti**

**80% of the Problem**

# Gang Graffiti

**Recognition - Intimidation - Turf Marking**



# Hate Graffiti

**Discriminating comments - use of symbols**



# Socio-Political Graffiti



**Adult oriented**

**Social issues**

**Used by anarchists**

# All Other Wall Markings



**Art projects**

**Satanic comments**

**Religious ideas**

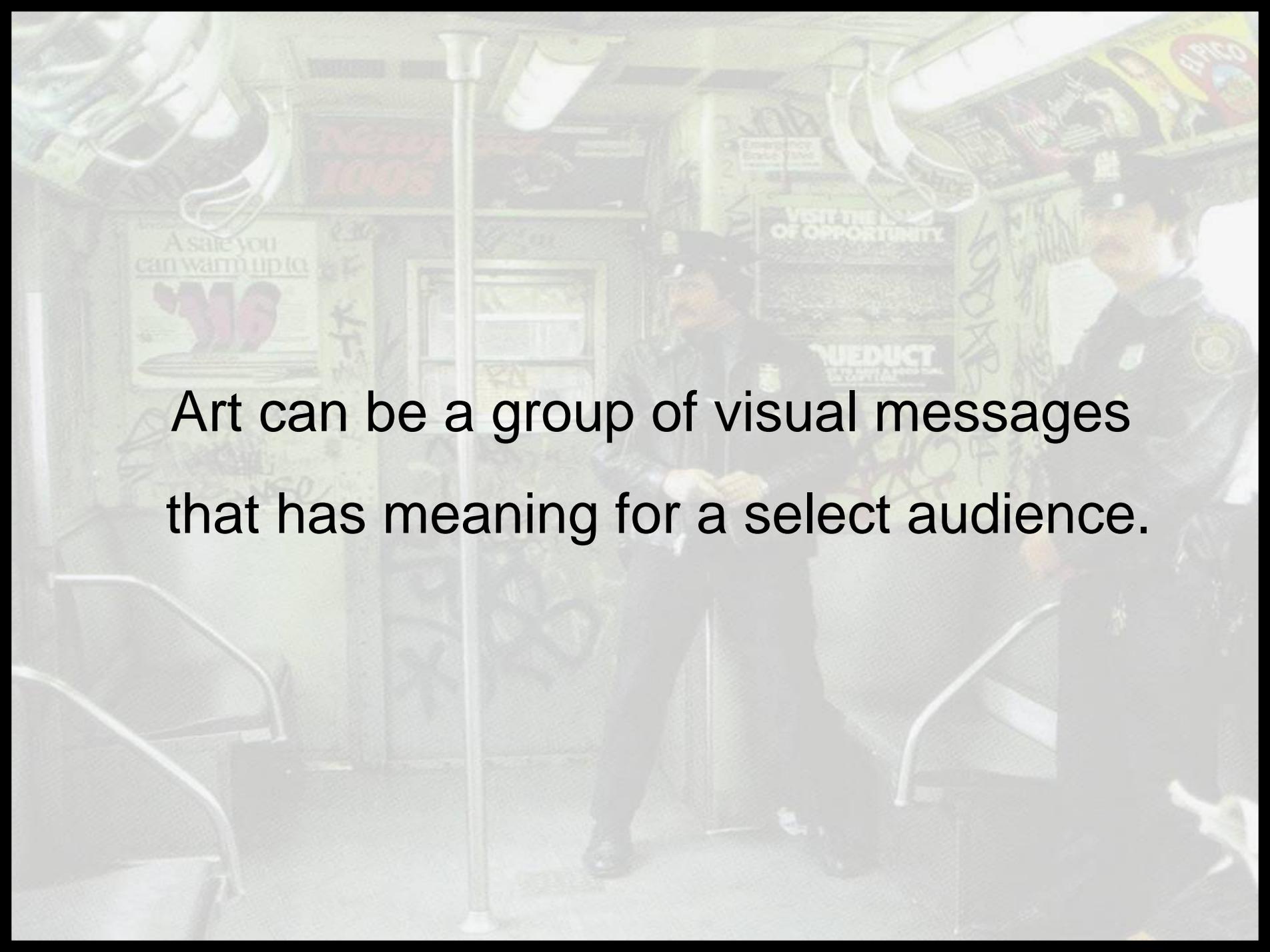
**Threats**

**Doodling**

# Graffiti

**Art or Crime?**



A photograph of the interior of a bus, heavily covered in graffiti. Two police officers in dark uniforms and caps are standing in the aisle. The walls are covered in various graffiti tags and posters. One poster on the left says "A sale you can warm up to" with an image of a turkey. Another poster in the center says "VISIT THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY" and "DUECT". The ceiling has hanging lights and a sign for "ELPICO". The overall scene is a mix of urban art and law enforcement.

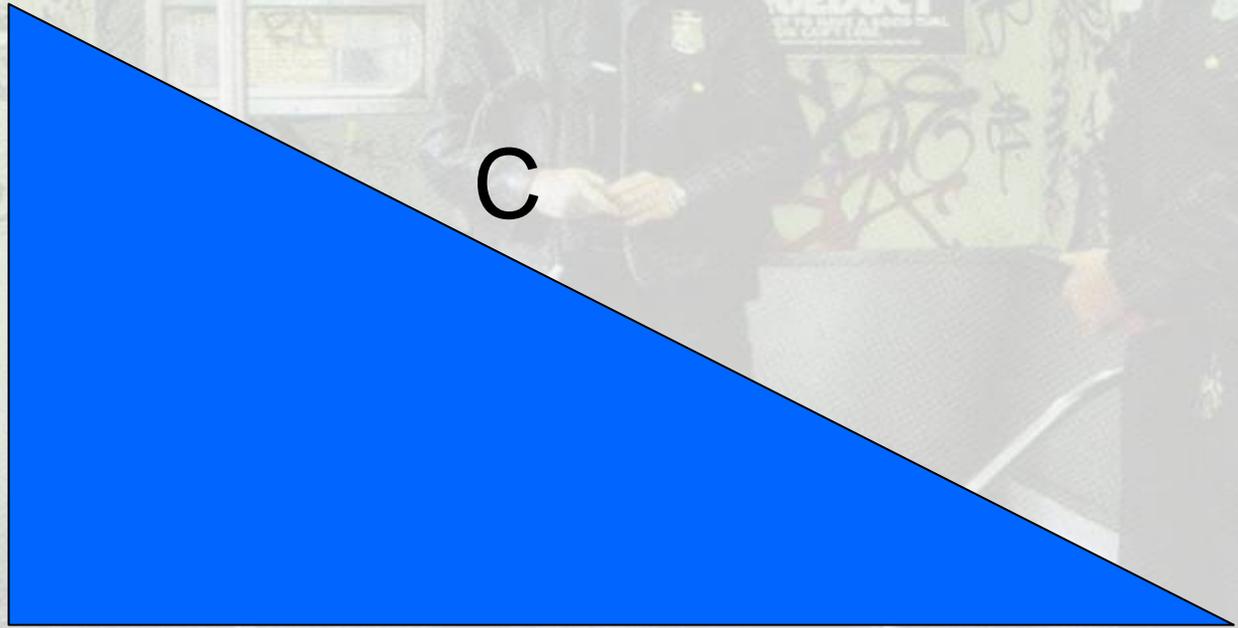
Art can be a group of visual messages that has meaning for a select audience.

$$A^2 + B^2 = C^2$$

A

C

B











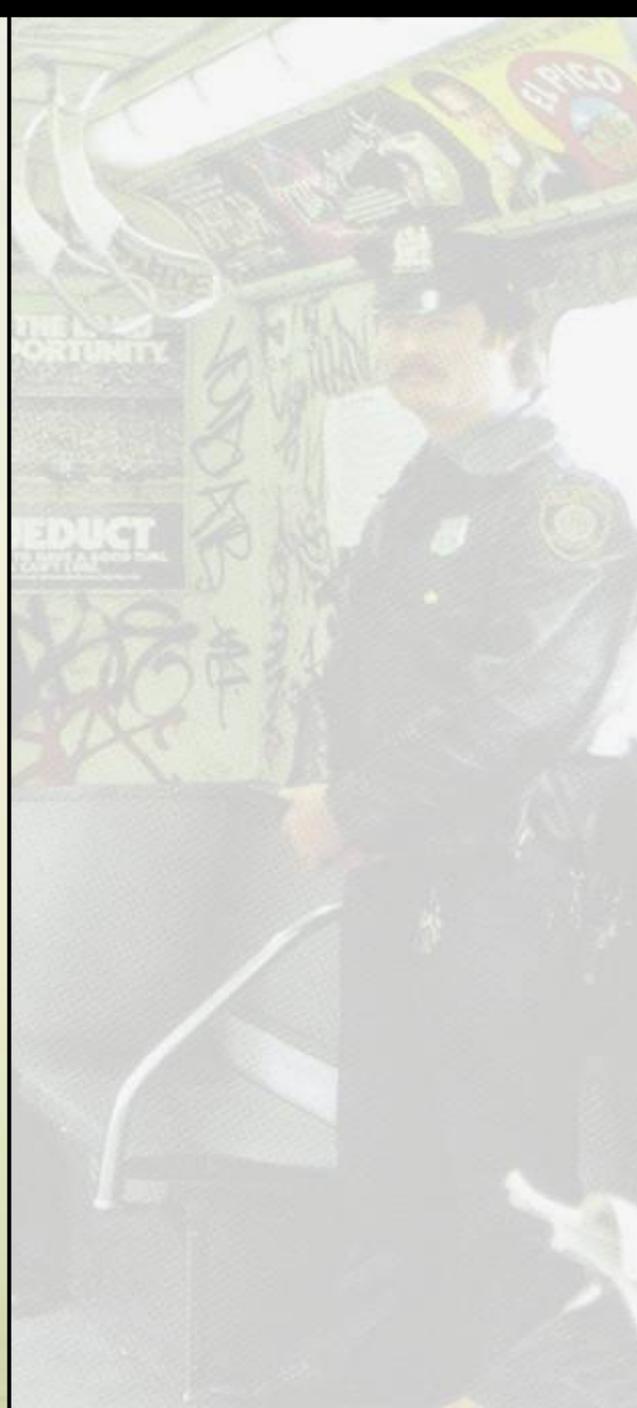
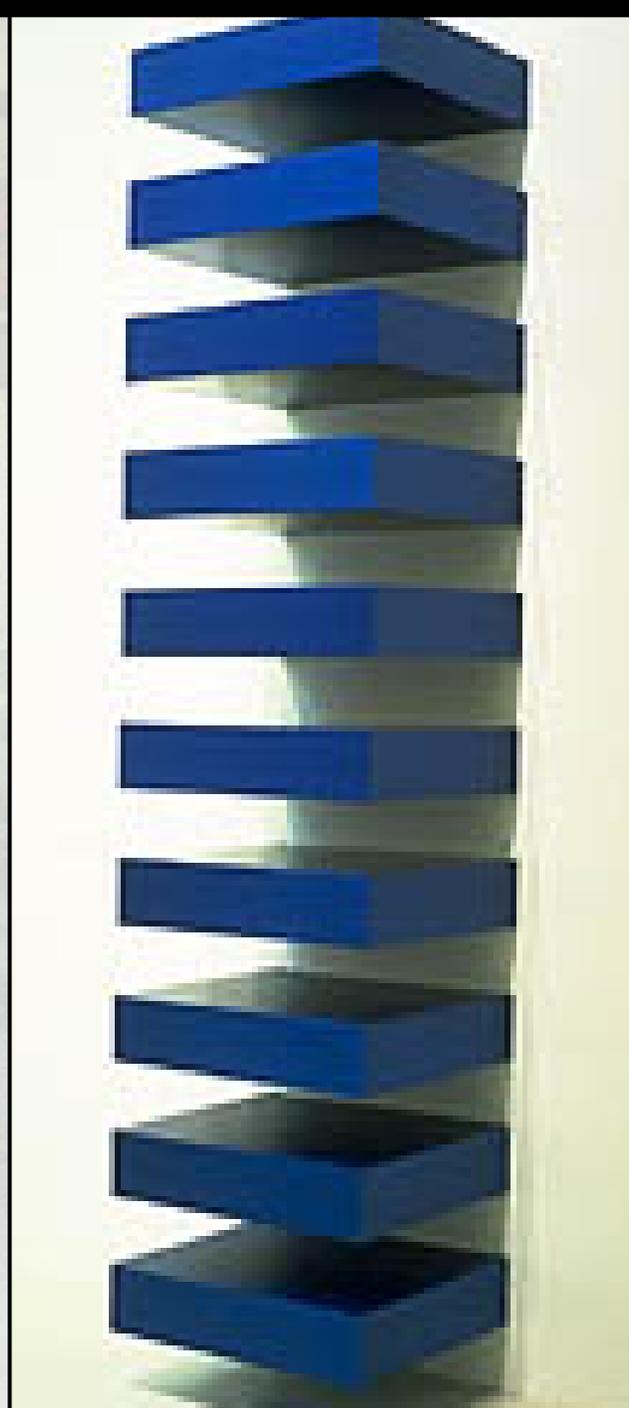
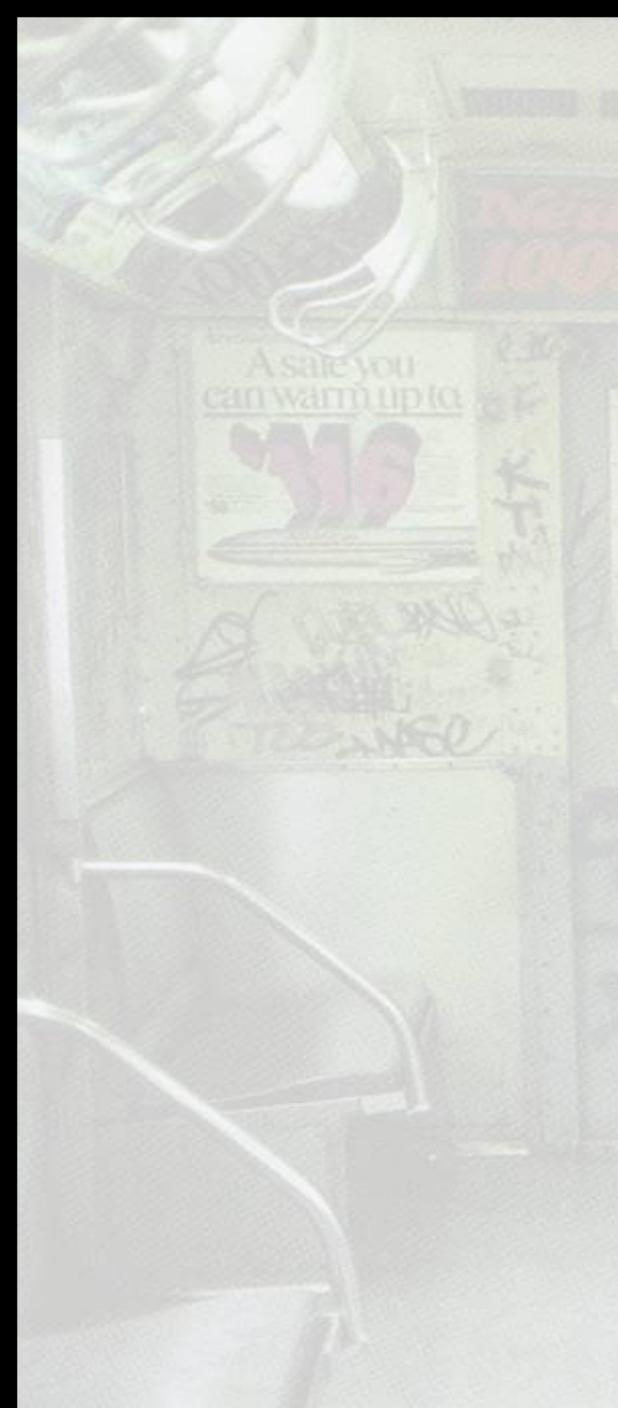
A safe  
can warn

**TOMATO  
SOUP**



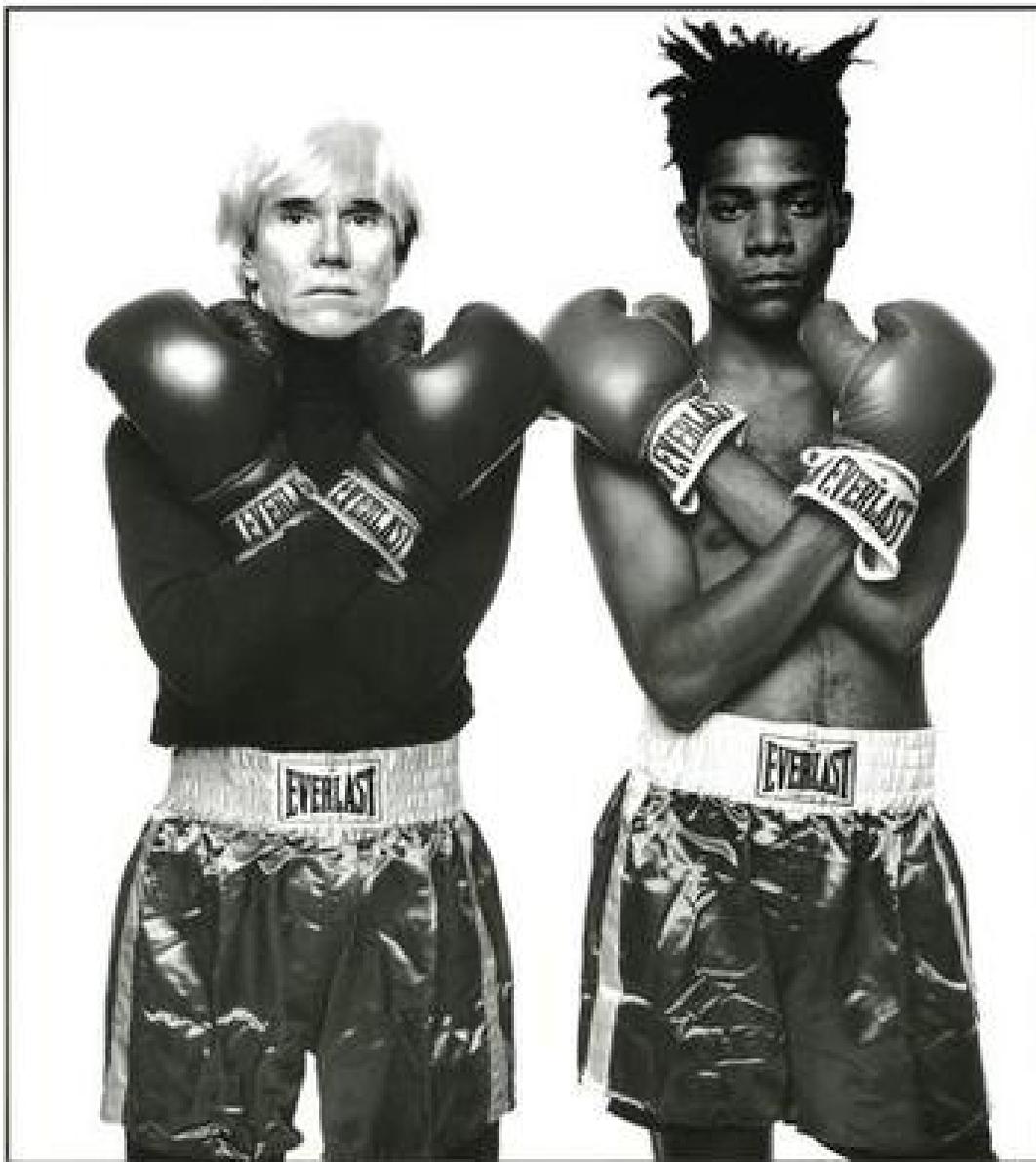












MICHAEL HALSBAND

Andy Warhol and Jean Michel-Bosquiat

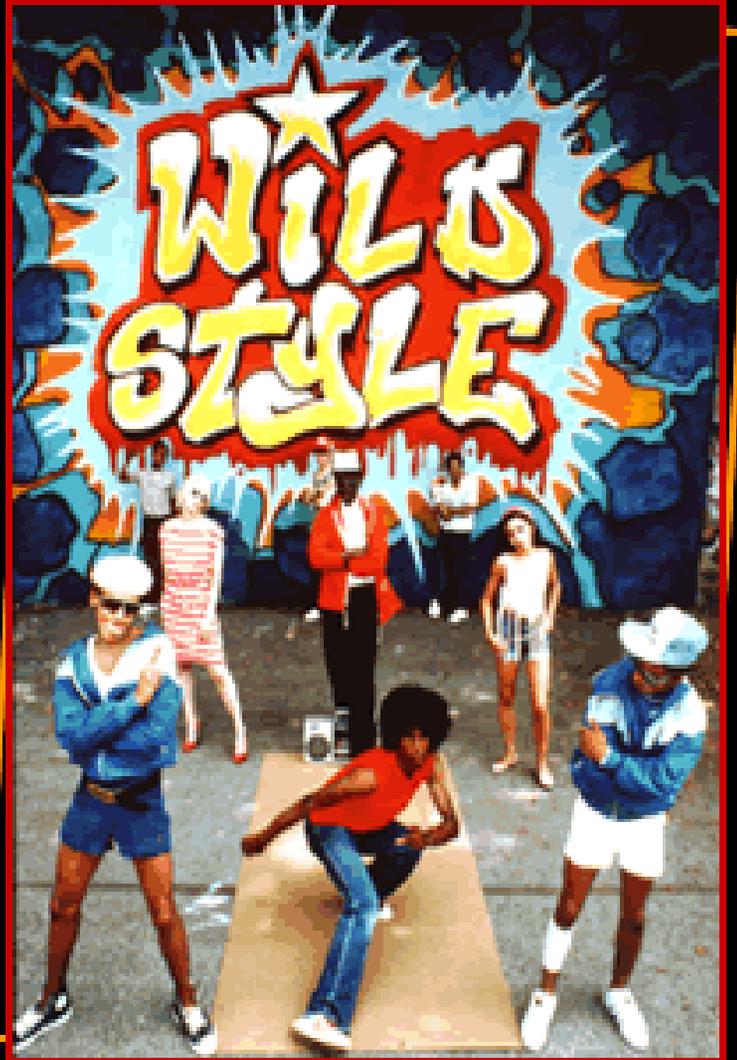


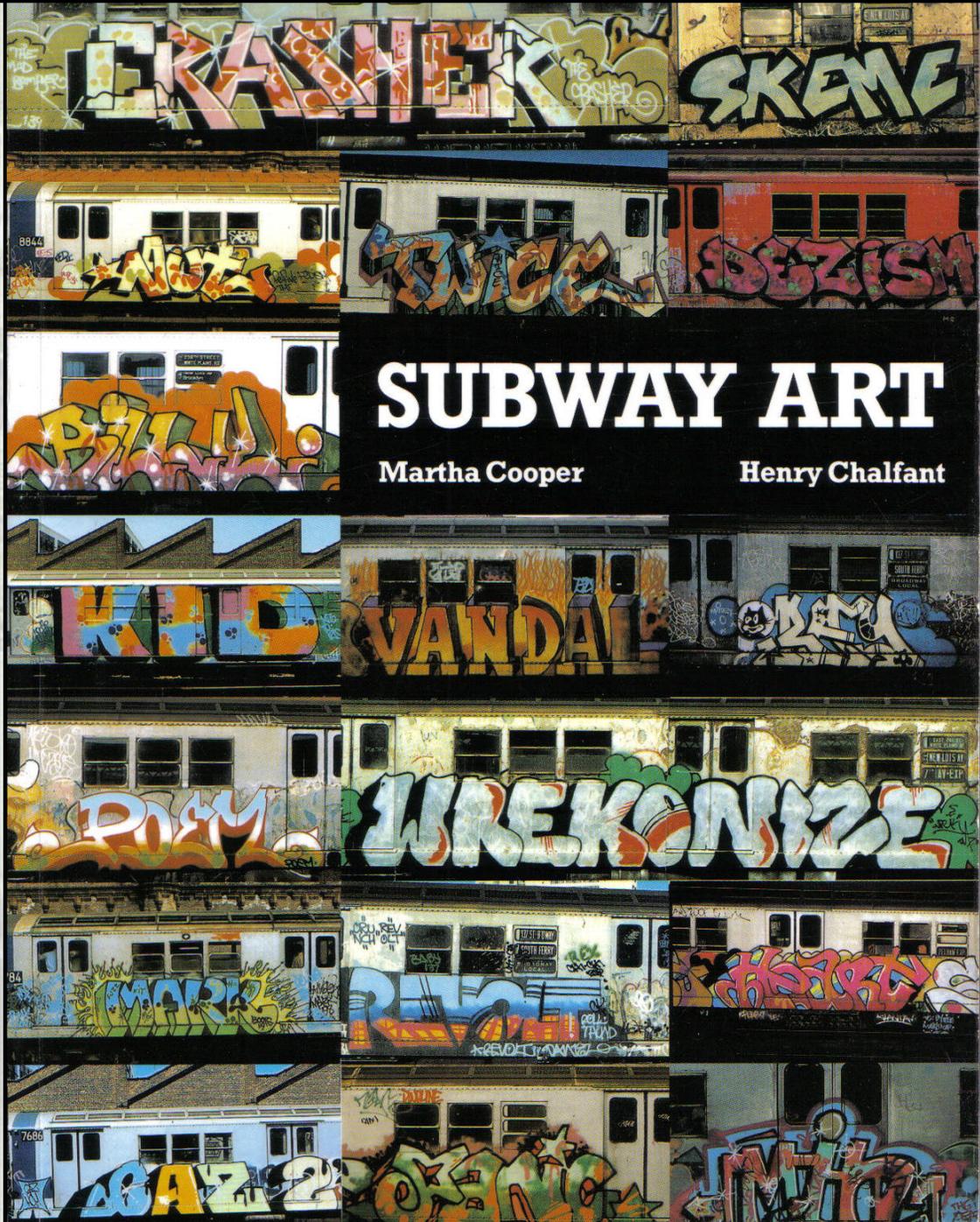
plexifilm

# Style Wars



photo © Martha Cooper





# SUBWAY ART

Martha Cooper

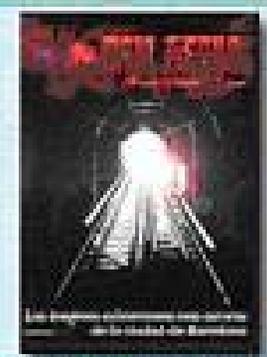
Henry Chalfant

# Bombingscience

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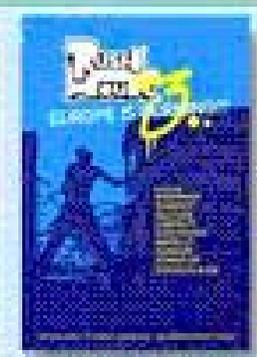
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\$24.95



[Graffiti Instincts vol.1 \(DVD\)](#)  
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[Grovt Skadeverk \(Serious Vandalism\) DVD](#)  
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[Rush Hour 3 \(DVD\)](#)  
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Items in cart: 0  
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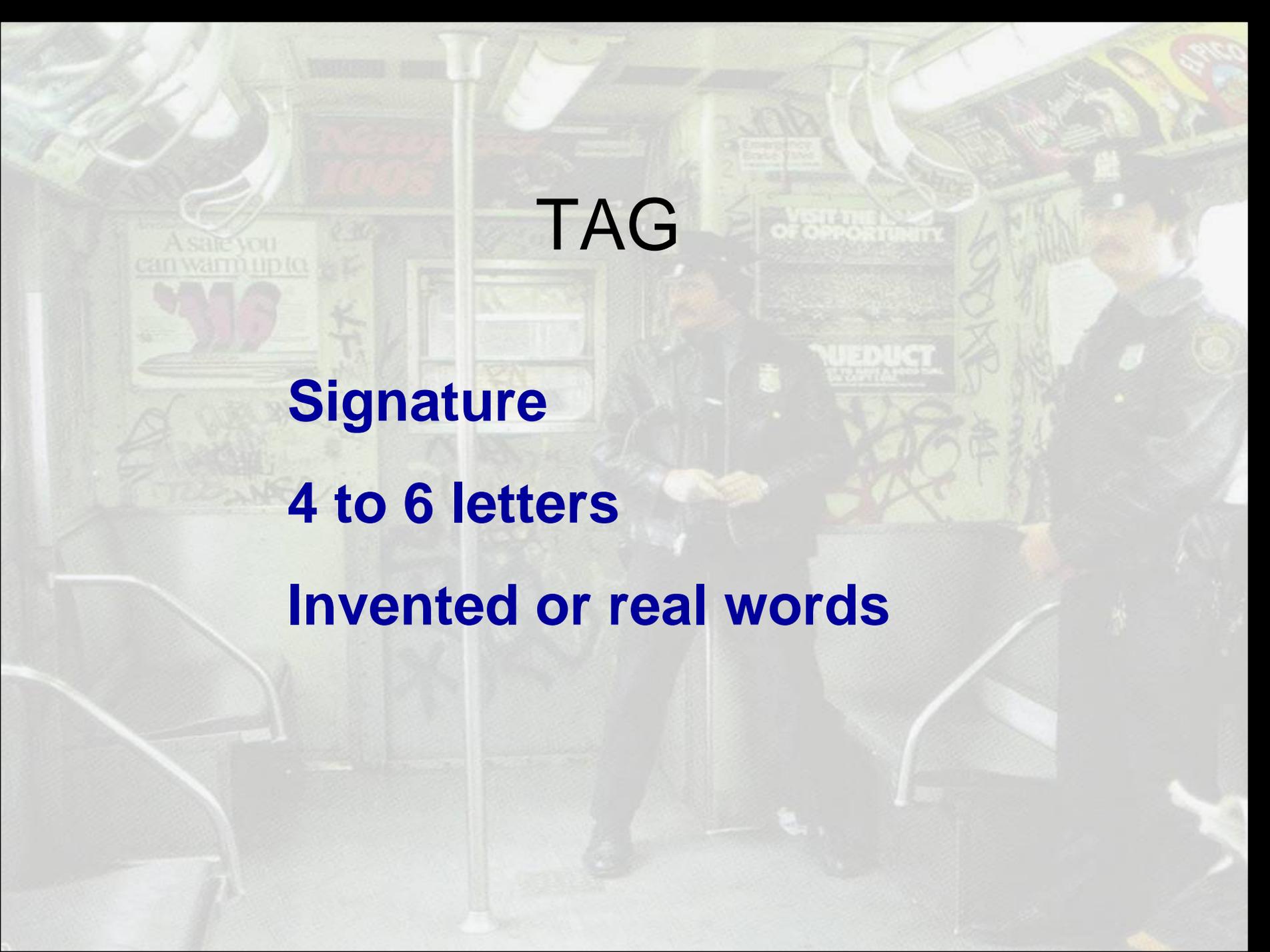
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A photograph of the interior of a subway car. The walls are heavily covered in graffiti. A police officer in a dark uniform and cap stands on the right side of the frame. In the center, two individuals are standing, one wearing a dark jacket and the other in a dark hoodie. The scene is lit by overhead fluorescent lights. A sign on the wall reads "A sale you can warm up to" and another says "VISIT THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY". A poster for "DUCEDUCT" is also visible. The overall atmosphere is gritty and urban.

# Lingo and tools of the trade

Seattle PD picture

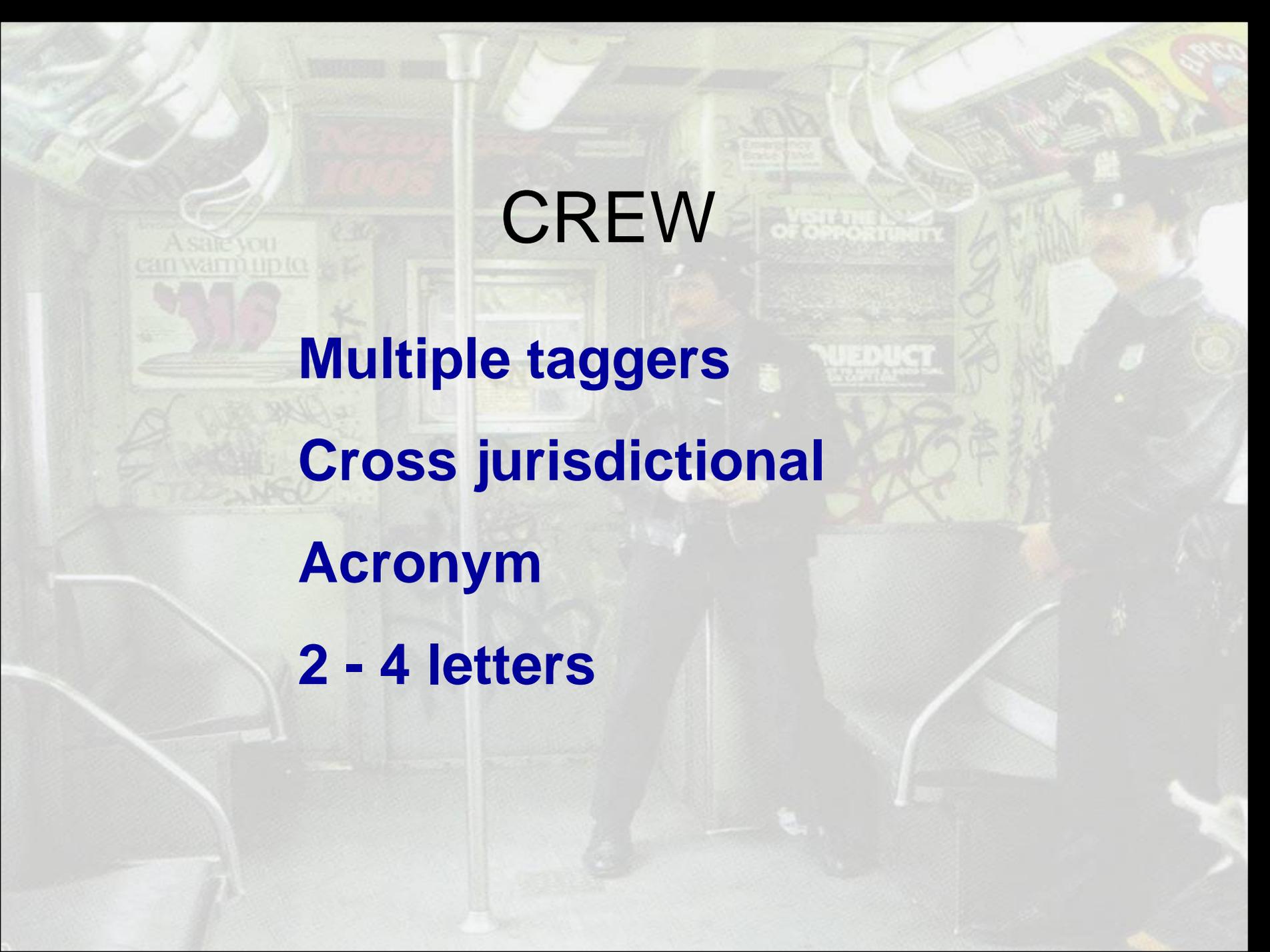
A photograph of the interior of a subway car. The walls are covered in graffiti. There are two police officers in uniform. One officer is standing in the center, and another is standing on the right. There are signs on the wall, including one that says "A safe you can warm up to" and another that says "VISIT THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY". There are also signs for "CONDUCT" and "ELPICO".

# TAG

**Signature**

**4 to 6 letters**

**Invented or real words**

A photograph of the interior of a subway car, heavily covered in graffiti. Two police officers in dark uniforms and caps are standing in the center of the car. The walls are covered in various graffiti tags and posters. One poster on the left says "A safe you can warm up to" with an image of a hot dog. Another poster on the right says "VISIT THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY" and "CONDUCT". The ceiling has hanging lights and some graffiti. The floor is a light-colored material.

# CREW

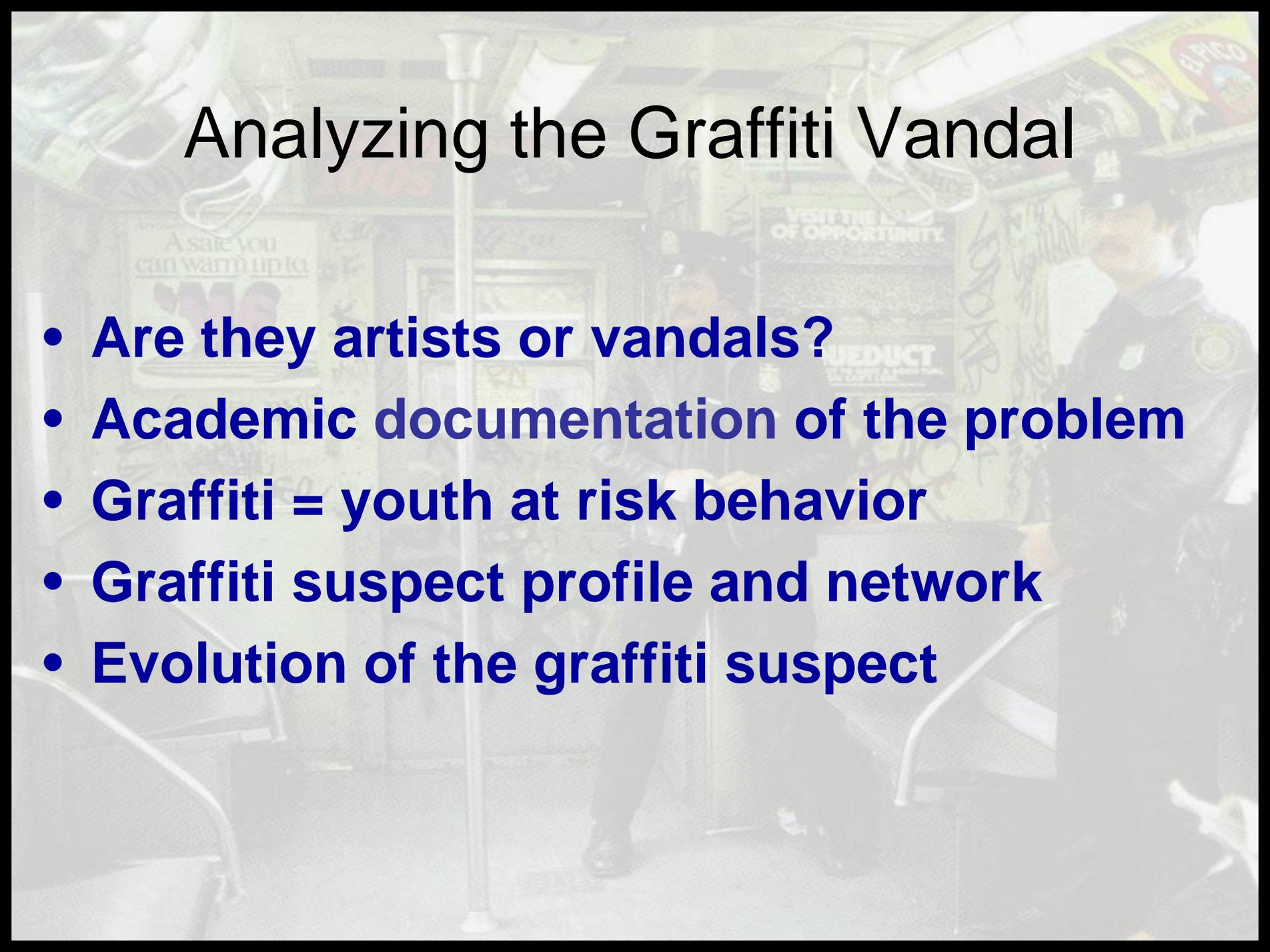
**Multiple taggers**

**Cross jurisdictional**

**Acronym**

**2 - 4 letters**

# Analyzing the Graffiti Vandal

A photograph of a subway car interior. The walls are covered in graffiti. A police officer in a dark uniform and cap stands on the right side of the car. In the background, there are advertisements, including one for 'Asale you can warm up to' and another for 'VISIT THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY'. The scene is dimly lit, typical of a subway car.

- **Are they artists or vandals?**
- **Academic documentation of the problem**
- **Graffiti = youth at risk behavior**
- **Graffiti suspect profile and network**
- **Evolution of the graffiti suspect**

# Graffiti Writer Perspective



- William Wimsat (1994)
  - *Bomb the Suburbs*
- Andrew Witten and Michael White (2001)
  - *Dondi White Style Master General.*
- Roger Gastman (2001)
  - *Free Agents A History of Washington D.C. Graffiti*
- Ivor Miller (2002)
  - *Aerosol Kingdom: Subway Painters of New York City*
- Paul 107 (2003)
  - *All City: The Book About Taking Space*

# *All City: The Book about Taking Space*

“If you get stopped by building security or anyone who isn’t a cop, run. Odds are they can’t chase you off the property they are paid to protect. Plus they’re probably fat. If you’re in a crowd and a civilian catches you in the act and grabs you, start yelling: “He grabbed my dick faggot faggot.” This may not be the PC thing to do, but it will embarrass the hero. When he loosens his grip, bust a Carl Lewis. Carrying mace or bear spray can also be handy in these situations.”

Paul 107, 2003: 14

Project funded by the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council

# Academic Documentation: Qualitative Perspective

- Craig Castleman (1982)
  - *Getting Up: Subway Graffiti in New York*
- Jeff Ferrell (1993)
  - *Crimes of Style Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality*
- Susan Phillips (1999)
  - *Wallbangin': Graffiti and Gangs in L.A.*
- Nancy Macdonald (2001)
  - *The Graffiti Subculture*
- Janice Rahn (2002)
  - *Painting Without Permission Hip-Hop Graffiti Subculture*

# *“Politics of Wall Painting”*

“Illegal wall painting exists at the intersection of art and crime, at the crossroads of cultural production, political resistance, and criminalization. Though wall painters worldwide draw on a plethora of folk art and art world traditions, and in some cases benefit from training or participation in legitimate art worlds, the illegality of their art alters the lived experience and lived politics of their artistic production.”

Jeff Ferrell, 1995: 287.

# Academic Documentation: Quantitative Perspective

- David Shannon (2001)
  - *Graffiti and Adolescent Delinquency: An Analysis of Short Term Career Trajectories*
- Valerie Spicer (2005)
  - *An Aggregate Study of the Vancouver Graffiti Suspect Network*
- Graham Martin (2006)
  - *Graffiti Linked to Personality Disorder*  
[News in Science](#)

# Professor Graham Martin Reports

“Those in the graffiti subculture are more likely to report serious or extreme drug use, perceived academic failure, physical and sexual abuse, suicide thoughts and behaviours, and are more likely to indicate higher family pathology, parental overprotection and criticism, depression, hopelessness, anxiety, external locus of control and risk taking behaviours, and lower parental care and self esteem.”

(Martin, 2003: 6)

# Prior Research Findings

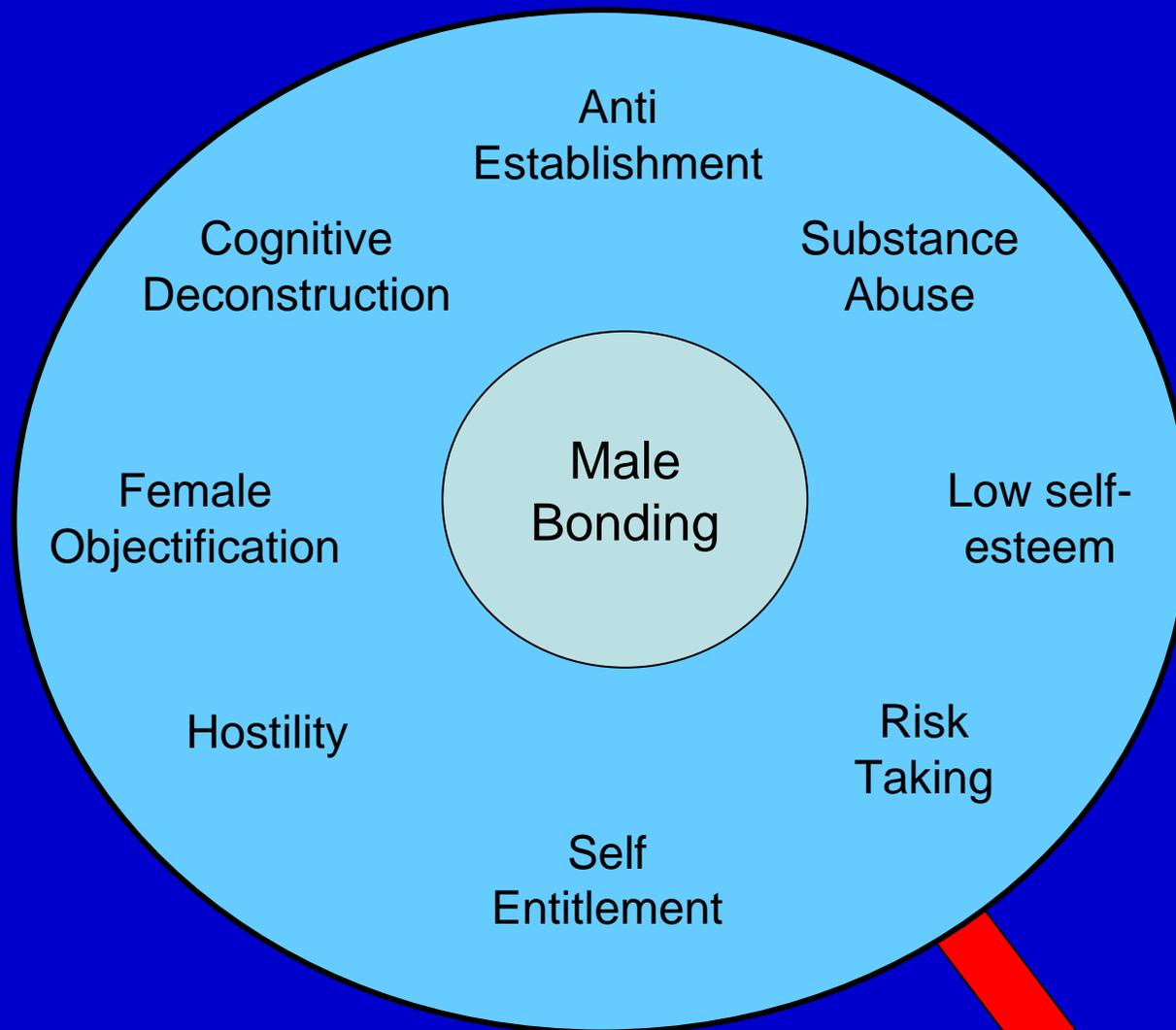
A photograph of a subway car interior. The walls are covered in graffiti. A police officer in a dark uniform and cap stands on the right side of the car. The lighting is somewhat dim, and the overall tone is slightly desaturated.

- The primary motivation for doing graffiti is artistic
- Graffiti produces positive outcomes for those who do it
- Society misunderstands graffiti and criminalizes this behavior

# Current Research Findings

- The primary motivation for doing graffiti is ***vandalism***
- Graffiti produces ***negative*** outcomes for those who do it
- ***Graffiti is an at risk behavior and should be properly addressed***

# Graffiti Subculture



Overlap into other social situations

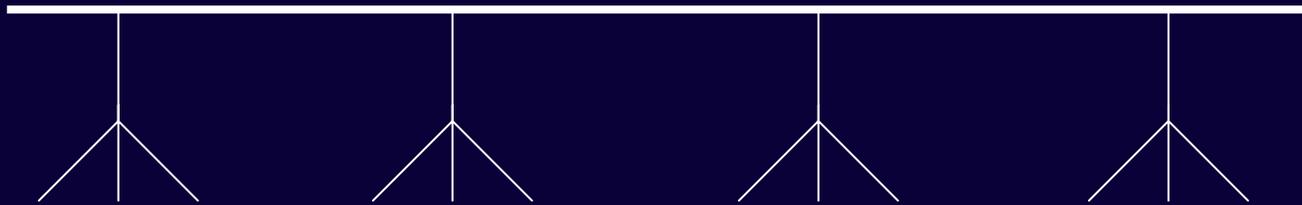
# Graffiti Subculture Structure



# Graffiti Subculture Hierarchy

**KINGS**

**LEGAL**



**ORGANIZED  
CREWS**

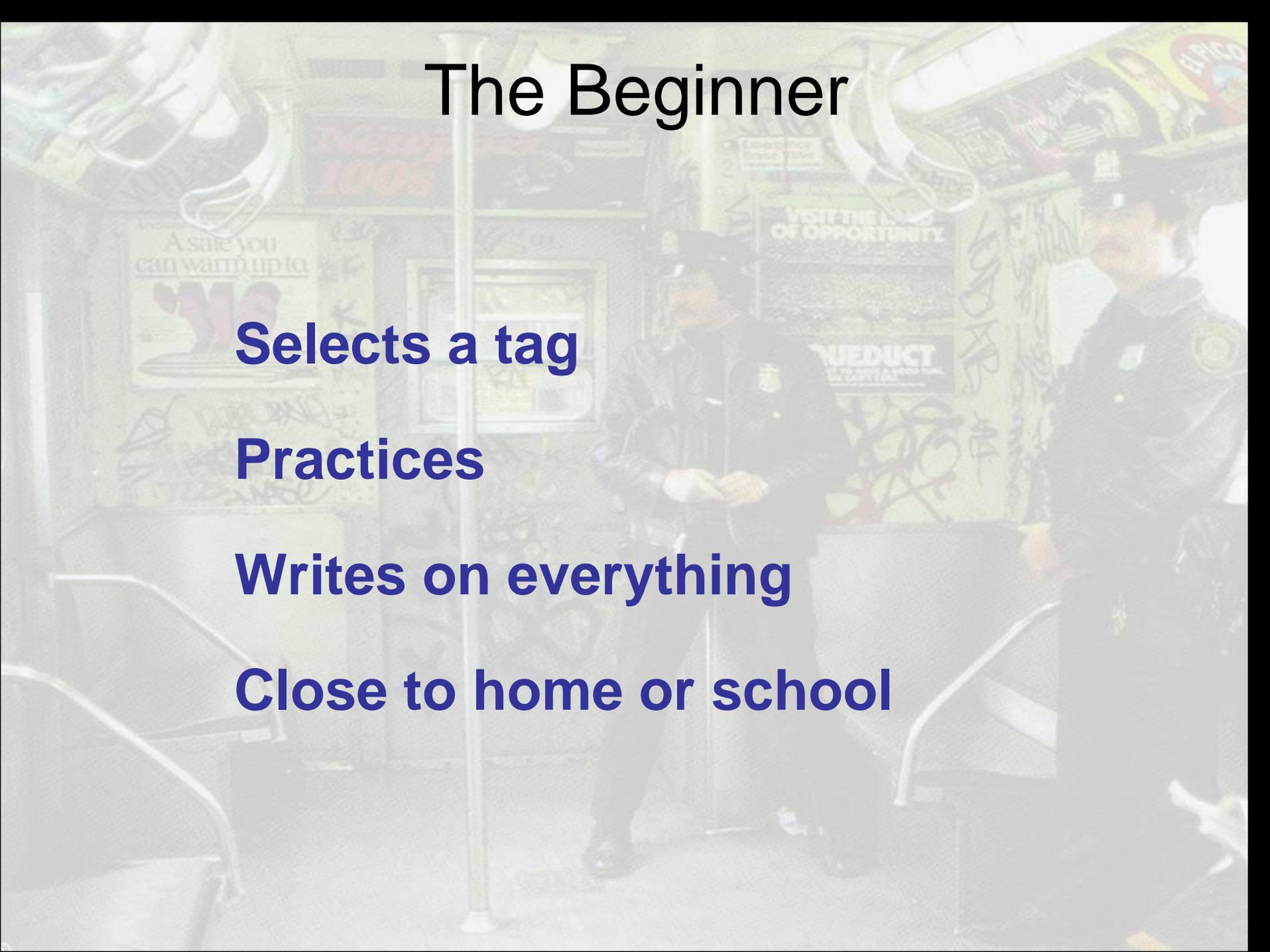
**ILLEGAL**



**TOYS**

**ILLEGAL**

# The Beginner

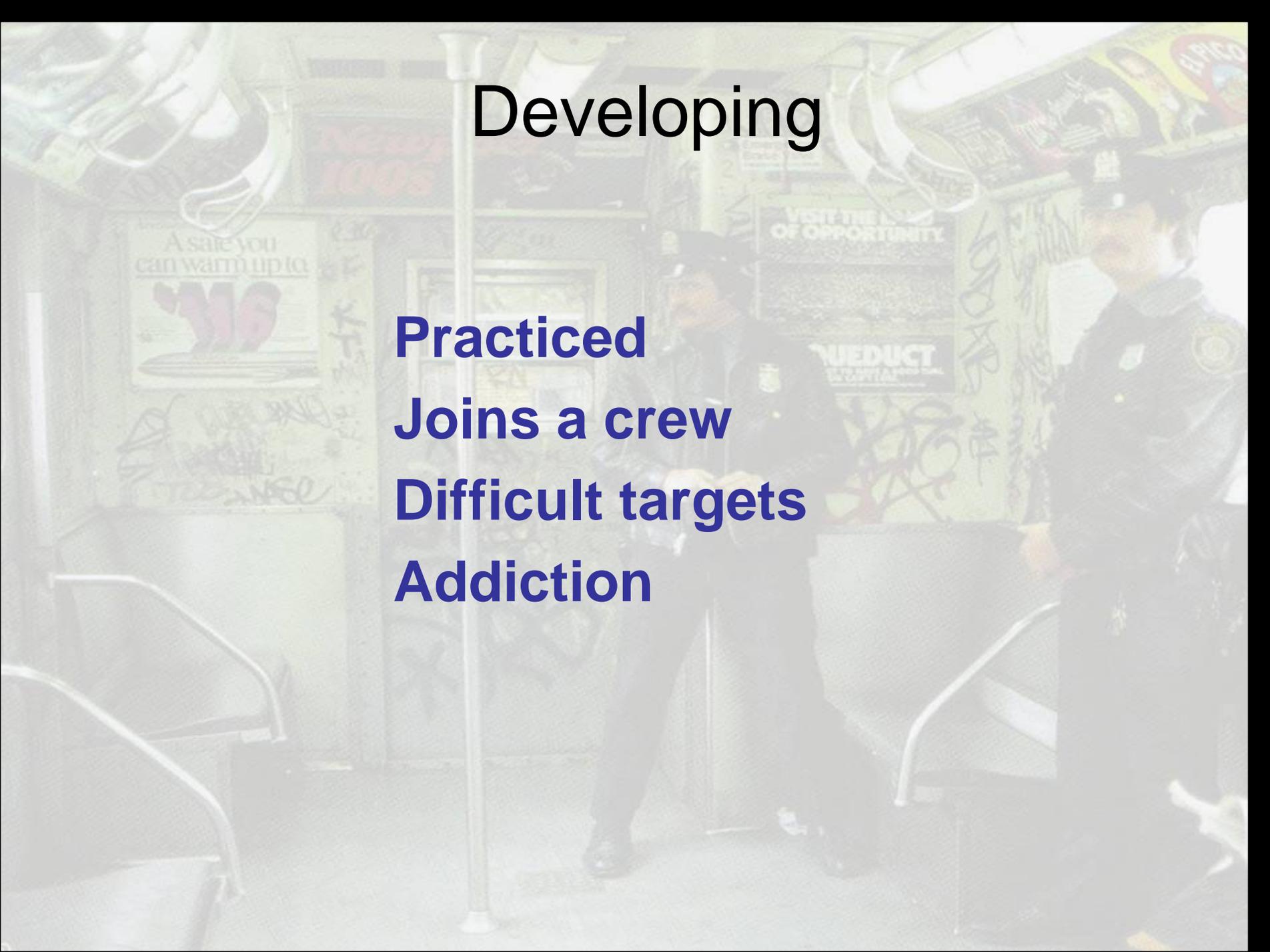
A photograph of the interior of a bus, heavily covered in graffiti. Two police officers in dark uniforms and caps are standing in the aisle. The walls are covered in various tags and posters. One poster on the left says "A safe you can warm up to" with an image of a person. Another poster in the center says "VISIT THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY" and "DUE DUCT". The ceiling has hanging lights and more graffiti. The overall scene is a typical urban bus environment.

**Selects a tag**

**Practices**

**Writes on everything**

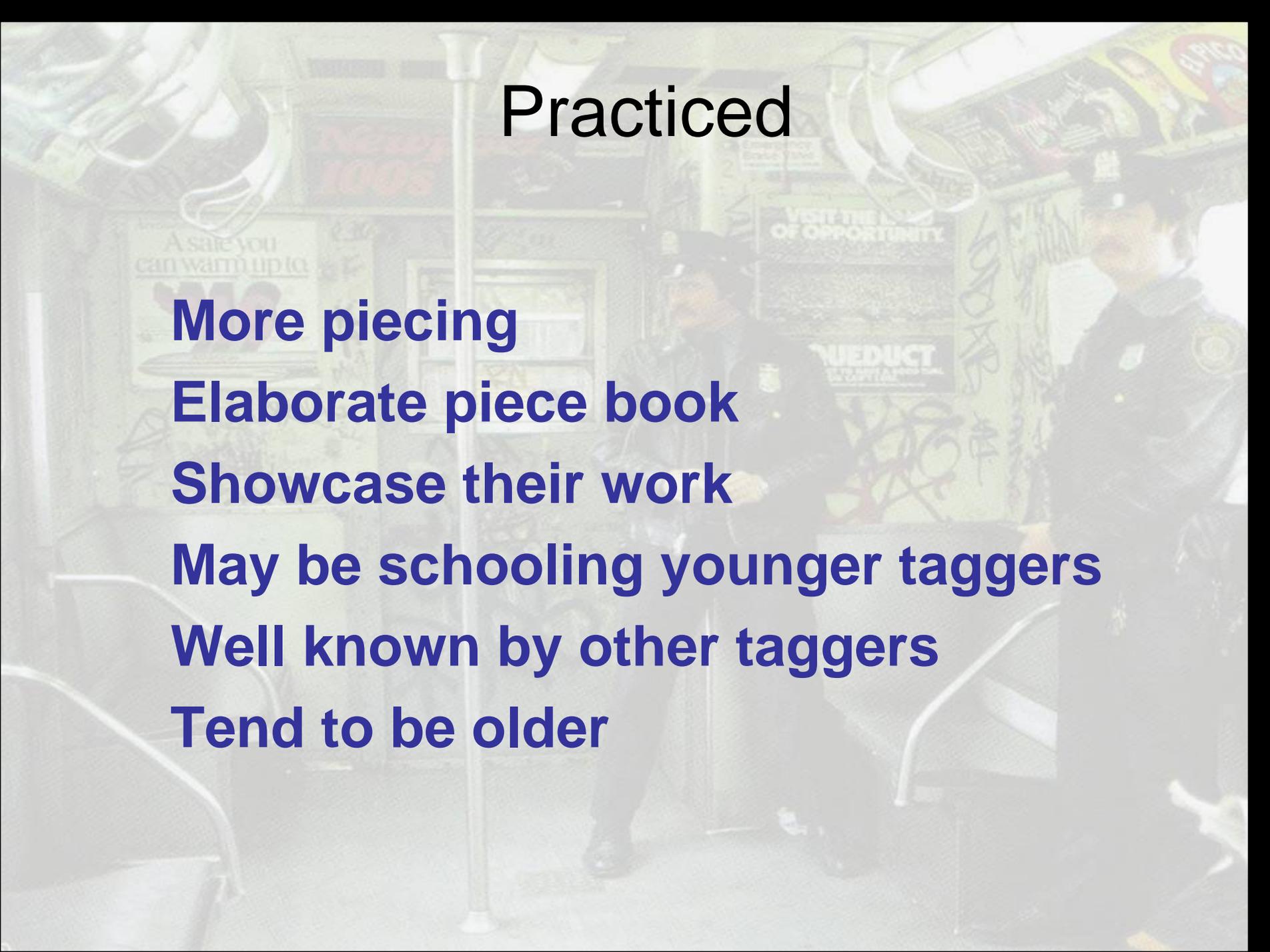
**Close to home or school**



Developing

**Practiced**  
**Joins a crew**  
**Difficult targets**  
**Addiction**

# Practiced

A photograph of the interior of a subway car. The walls are heavily covered in graffiti, including tags like 'MADRID' and 'KAT'. There are posters on the wall, one of which says 'VISIT THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY' and another 'CONDUCT'. Two police officers in uniform are standing in the background. The scene is dimly lit, with overhead lights visible.

**More piecing**

**Elaborate piece book**

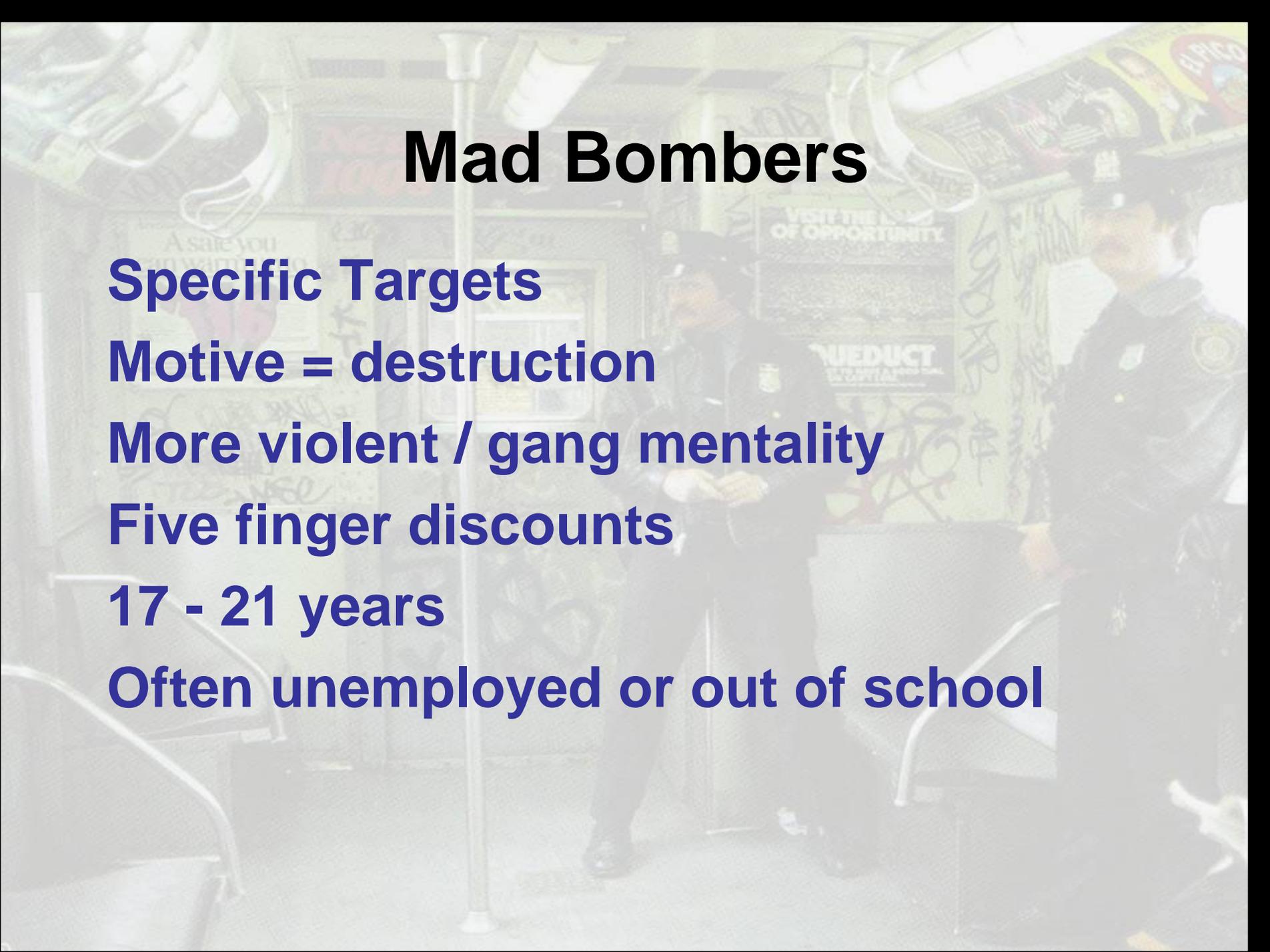
**Showcase their work**

**May be schooling younger taggers**

**Well known by other taggers**

**Tend to be older**

# Mad Bombers

A photograph of the interior of a subway car, heavily covered in graffiti. Two police officers in dark uniforms and caps are standing in the aisle. The graffiti includes various tags and phrases, such as "VISIT THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY" and "CONDUCT". The scene is dimly lit, with overhead lights visible.

**Specific Targets**

**Motive = destruction**

**More violent / gang mentality**

**Five finger discounts**

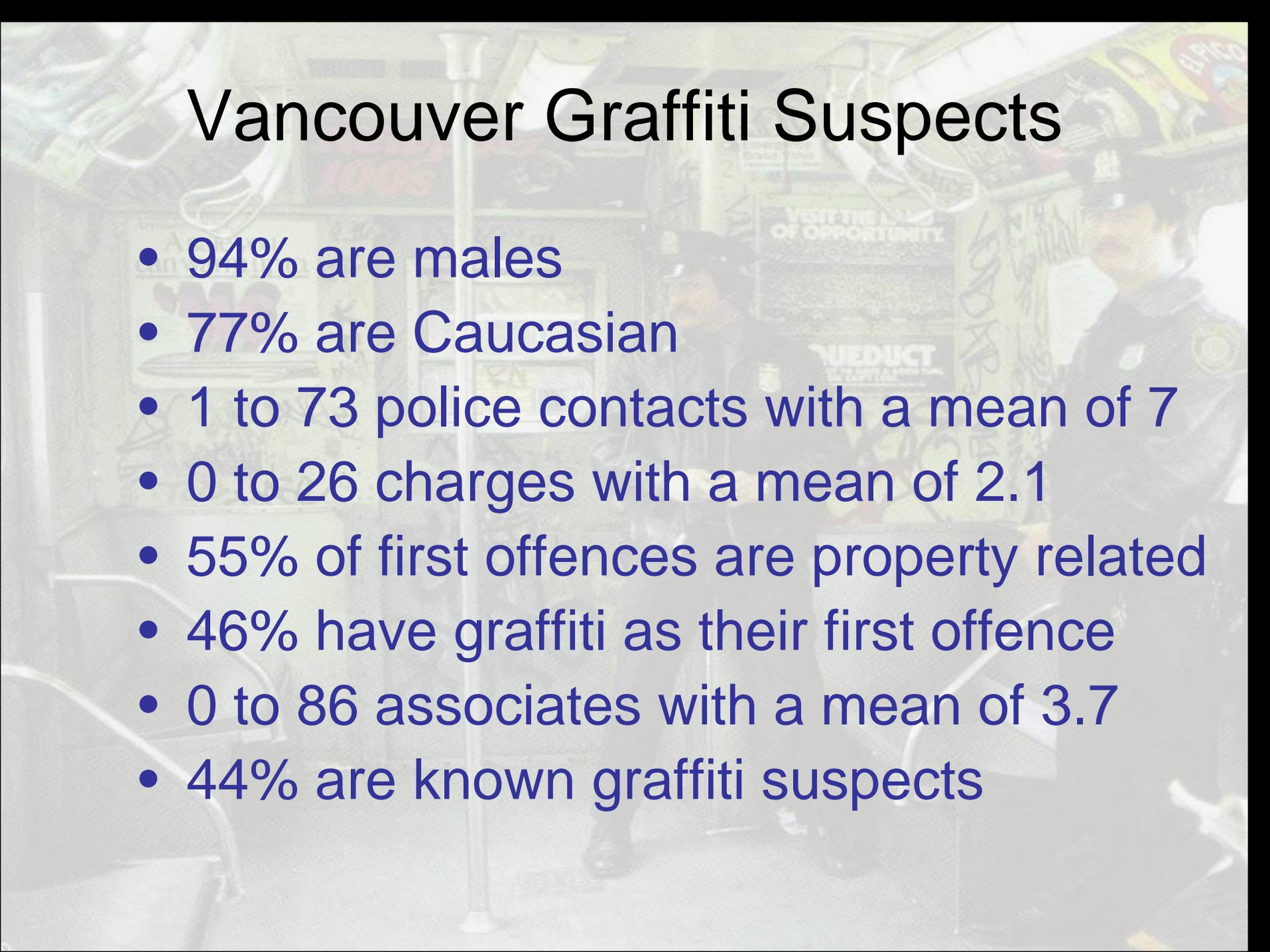
**17 - 21 years**

**Often unemployed or out of school**

# Suspect Profile

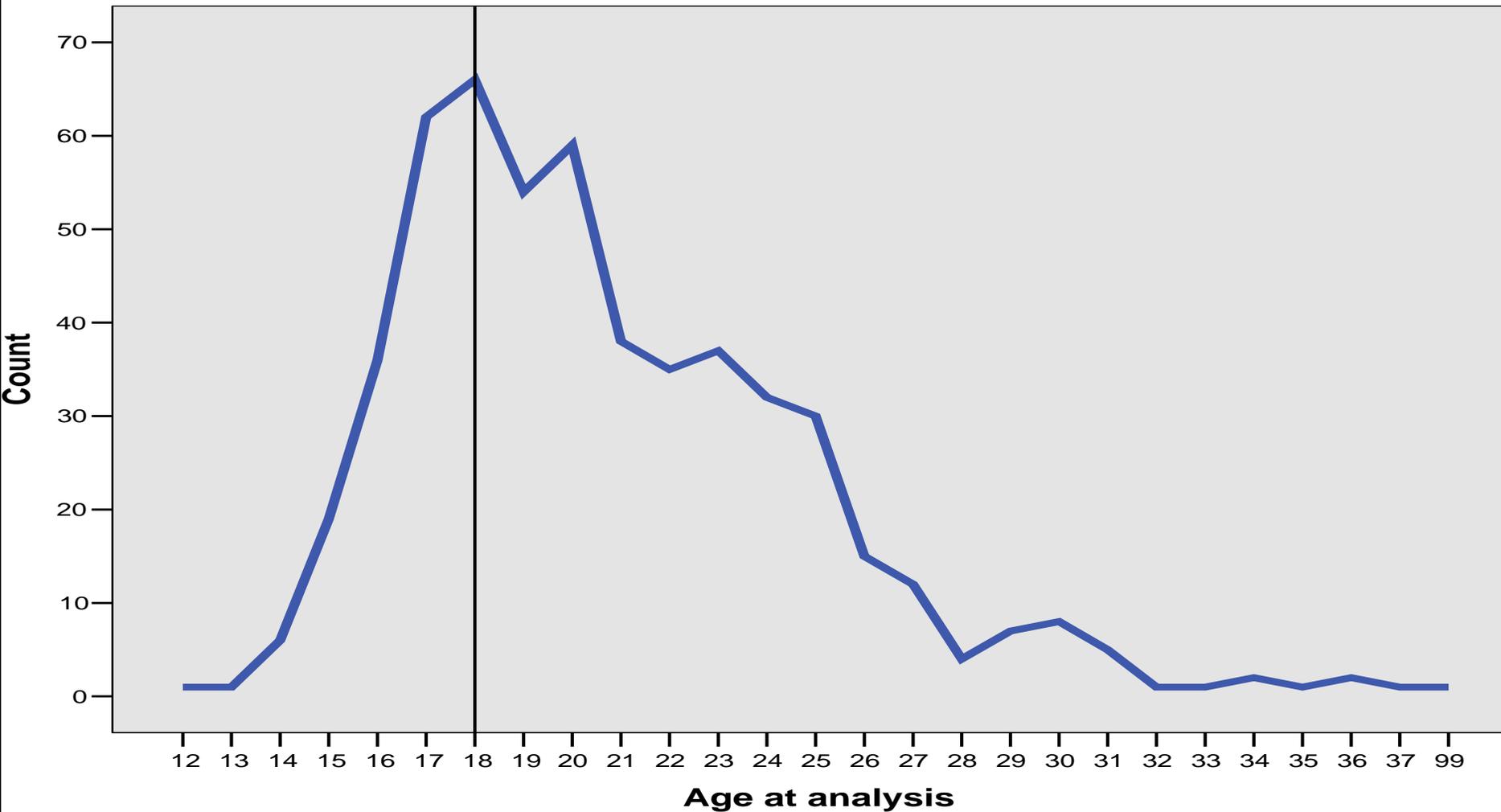
- Male - Caucasian
- 12 to 40
- Other at risk behaviours
- Self centered
- Low empathy
- ODD - conduct disorder
- ADHD - ADD
- Crime mentality
- Compulsive and addictive
- Start in grades 8 - 10
- Most damage from 17 - 20

# Vancouver Graffiti Suspects

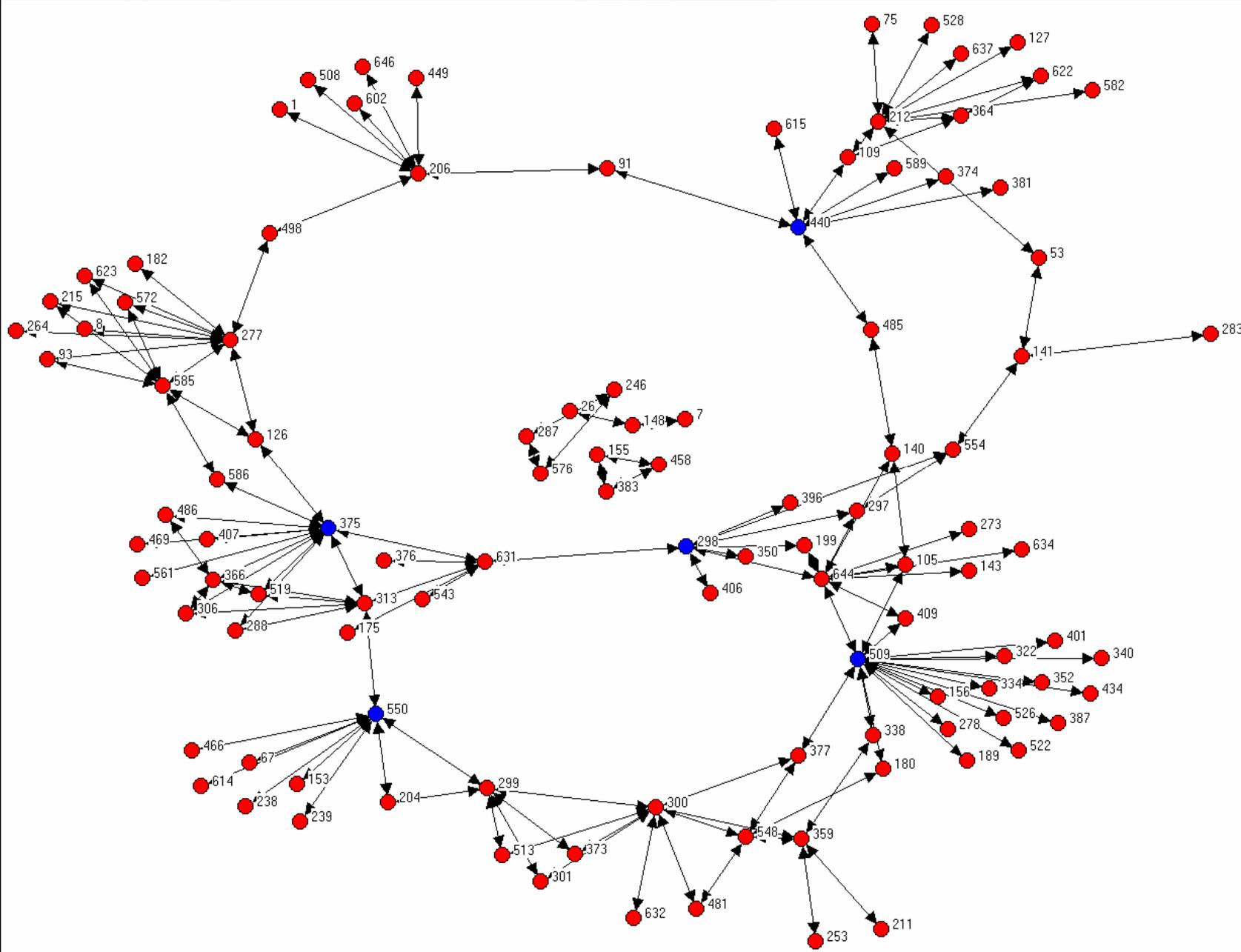
The background image shows the interior of a bus heavily covered in graffiti. A police officer in a dark uniform and cap is standing on the right side of the frame, looking towards the camera. The graffiti includes various tags and phrases, such as 'VISIT THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY' and 'INDUCT'. The lighting is somewhat dim, and the overall scene is a candid shot of a public transport vehicle.

- 94% are males
- 77% are Caucasian
- 1 to 73 police contacts with a mean of 7
- 0 to 26 charges with a mean of 2.1
- 55% of first offences are property related
- 46% have graffiti as their first offence
- 0 to 86 associates with a mean of 3.7
- 44% are known graffiti suspects

# Age of Graffiti Offenders







Ties Nodes

ID	Selection
300	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
301	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
306	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
313	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
322	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
334	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
338	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
340	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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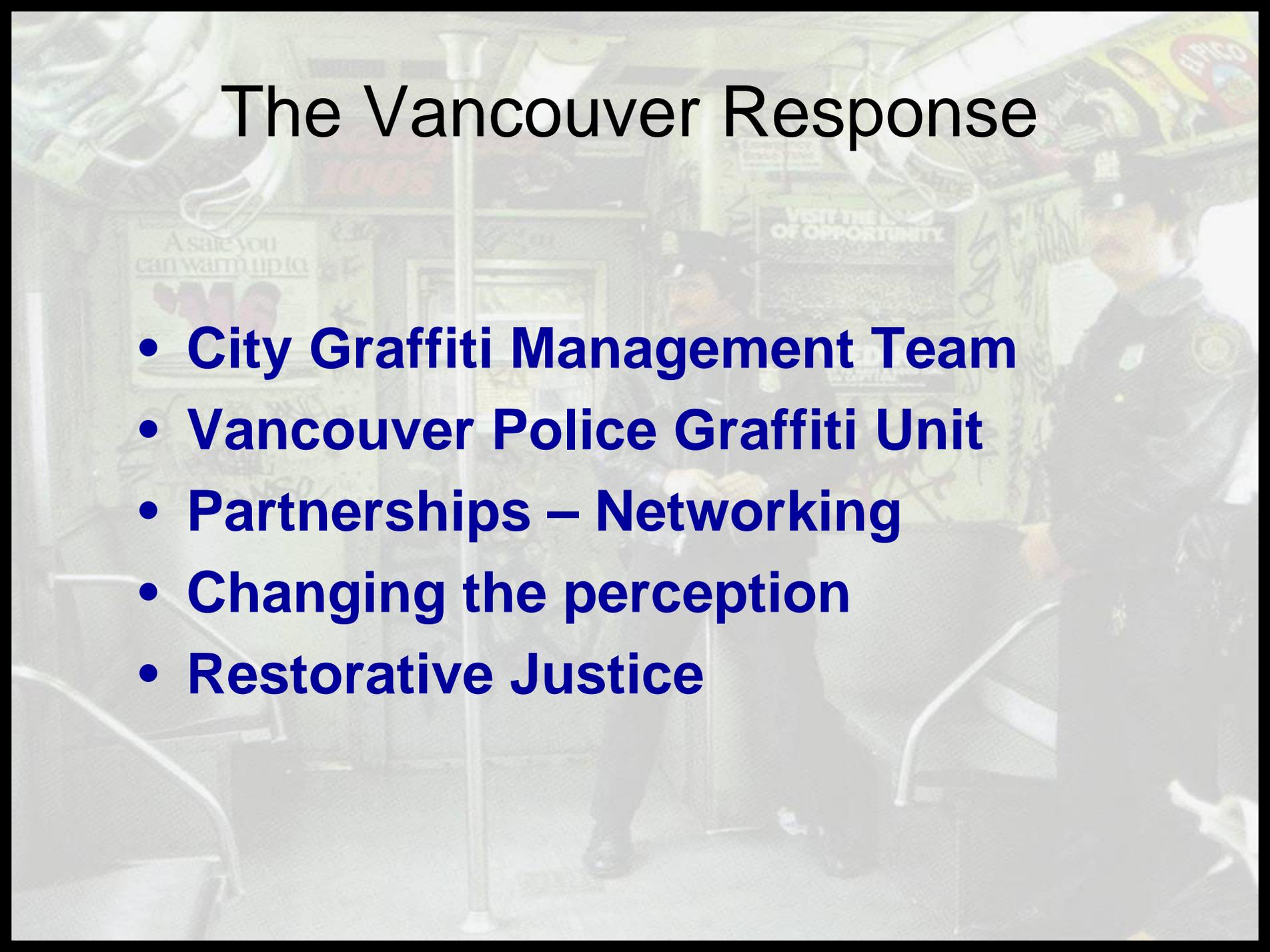
New  And  O

Color  Size

Shape



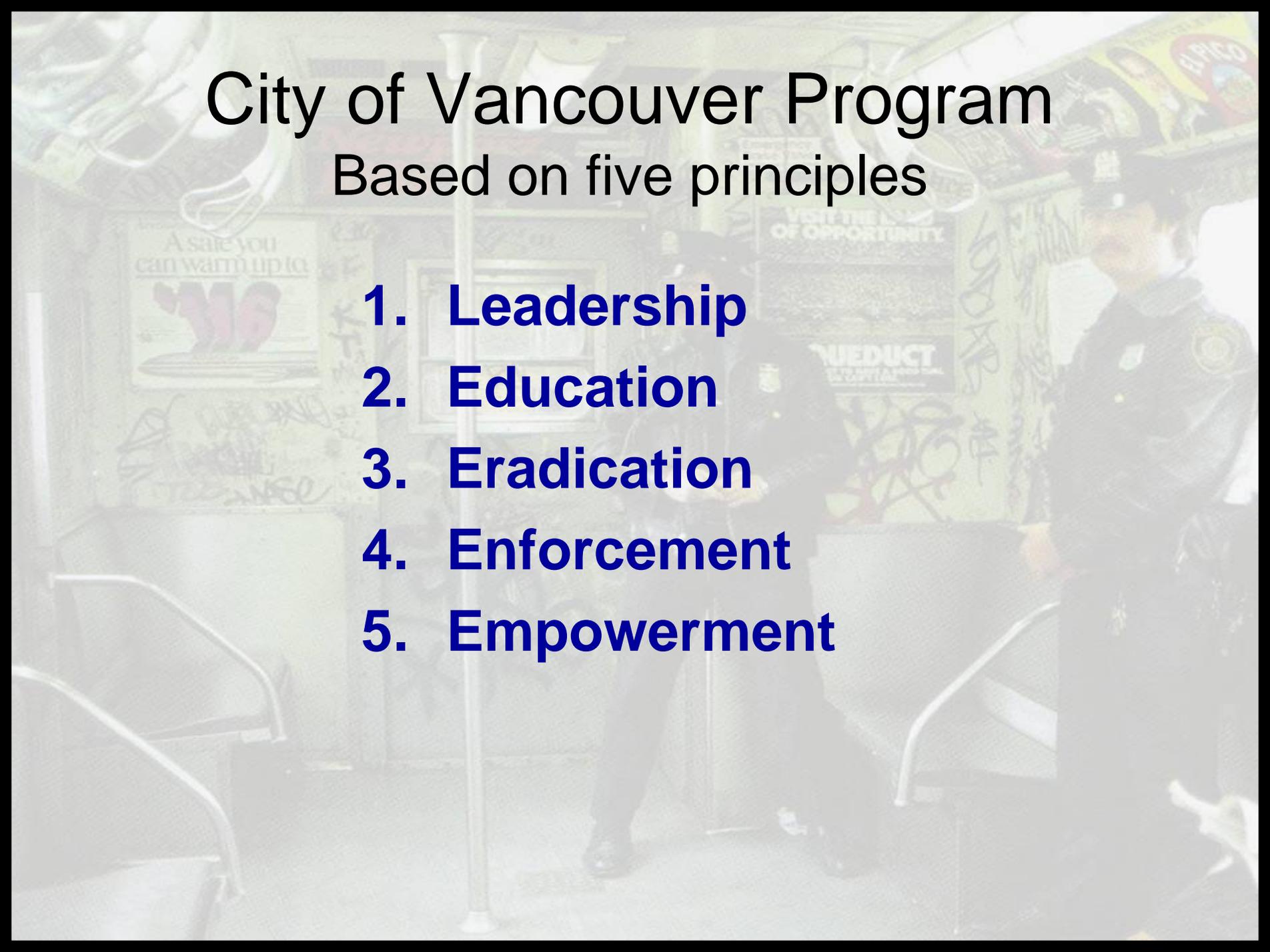
# The Vancouver Response

A photograph of the interior of a Vancouver transit car. The walls are covered in graffiti. Two police officers in dark uniforms and caps are standing in the aisle. One officer is in the foreground on the right, looking towards the camera. Another officer is further back in the center. There are signs on the walls, including one that says "A safe you can warm up to" and another that says "VISIT THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY". The lighting is bright, and the overall scene is somewhat dimly lit due to the overlay.

- **City Graffiti Management Team**
- **Vancouver Police Graffiti Unit**
- **Partnerships – Networking**
- **Changing the perception**
- **Restorative Justice**

# City of Vancouver Graffiti Management Program





# City of Vancouver Program

Based on five principles

- 1. Leadership**
- 2. Education**
- 3. Eradication**
- 4. Enforcement**
- 5. Empowerment**

# Vancouver Police Department

Based on 5 core policing strategies

- 1. Education**
- 2. Enforcement**
- 3. Partnerships**
- 4. Intelligence Management**
- 5. Restorative justice**

# 1- Education: Changing Perceptions

## BEFORE

911 call for graffiti



B.O.L.F. – Suscir.



Low priority



Patrol attendance



Graffiti suspect **gets away**

## AFTER

911 call for graffiti



Mischief in progress



Higher priority



Patrol attendance



Graffiti suspect **gets caught**

## 2- Enforcement: Beyond Arrests

1. Patrol education
2. Obtaining good release conditions
3. Graffiti ordinance
4. Relating to the subculture
5. Generating fear of apprehension
6. Talking to mom and dad

# 3- Partnerships

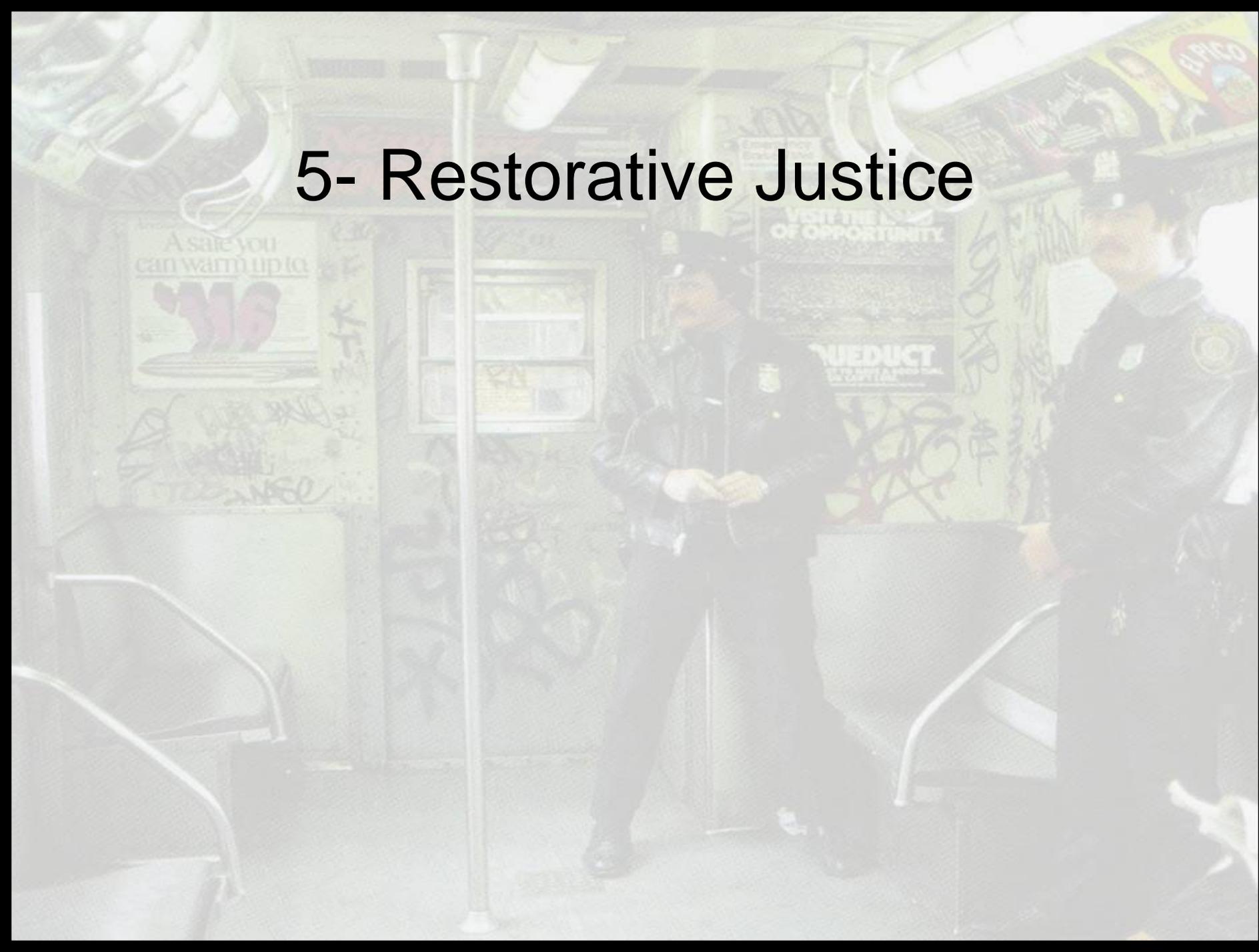
The background image shows the interior of a bus with extensive graffiti. Two police officers in dark uniforms and caps are visible. One officer is standing on the right, looking towards the camera. Another officer is partially visible in the center, looking towards the left. The graffiti includes various tags and phrases, such as 'VISIT THE L... OF OPPORTUNITY' and 'CONDUCT...'. There are also posters and advertisements on the walls, including one that says 'A sale you can warm up to'.

- 1. City agencies**
- 2. Police sections**
- 3. Other police departments**
- 4. Community agencies**
- 5. Local universities**
- 6. Legal graffiti writers**

# 4- Intelligence Management

- **Networking**
- **Graffiti sources**
- **Internet**
- **Database – 800 suspects listed**
- **Dictates surveillance**
- **Guides specific projects**

# 5- Restorative Justice

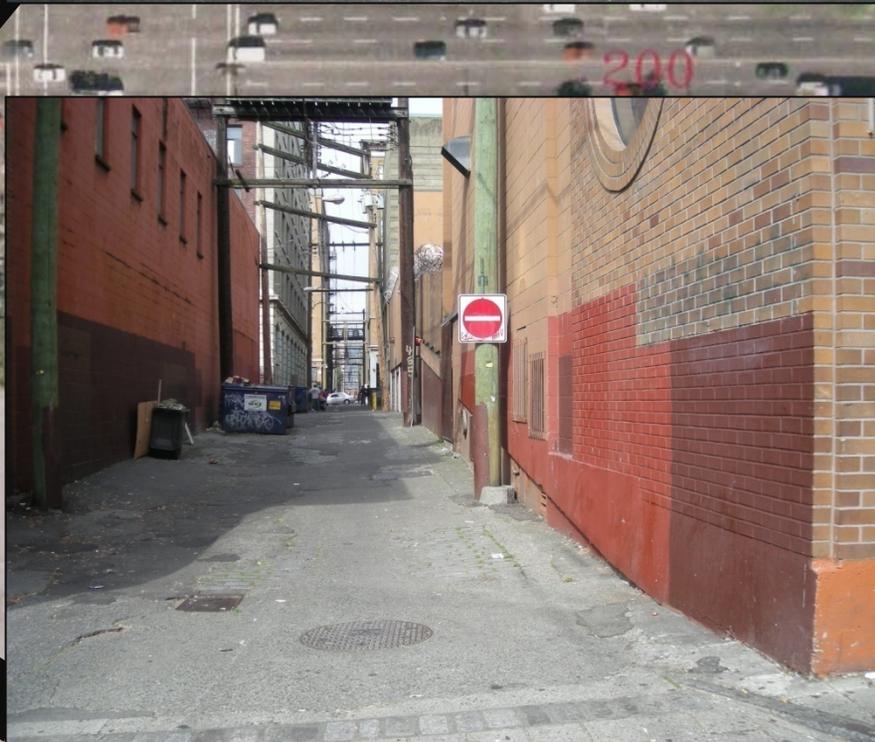




**REST ART**

# Results

- **80% reduction of graffiti after 3 years**
- **Over 800 vandals identified**
- **Radical change in perception**
- **Over 50 murals implemented**
- **Other municipalities now on board**
- **Graffiti investigator conference**







*Continental* **BARBERS**

SQUEEGEE HAS PRIDE  
FREE MUMBAI  
EPPA # 0.000329  
BRAT  
DIEZ  
WAS PAT  
RAT



*Cont*

*ital*

**BARBERS**



# Graffiti Is Everywhere

A photograph of a subway car interior, heavily covered in graffiti. The walls and ceiling are decorated with various tags and drawings. A person in a black jacket and a police officer in uniform are visible. Advertisements for McDonald's, IBM, and Pepsi are also present.

- MacDonaldds
- IBM
- Pepsi
- IPOD
- Fugi Film
- Walmart
- Video Games
- Movie backdrops
- Clothing

# An Aggregate Study of Vancouver Graffiti Suspect Network

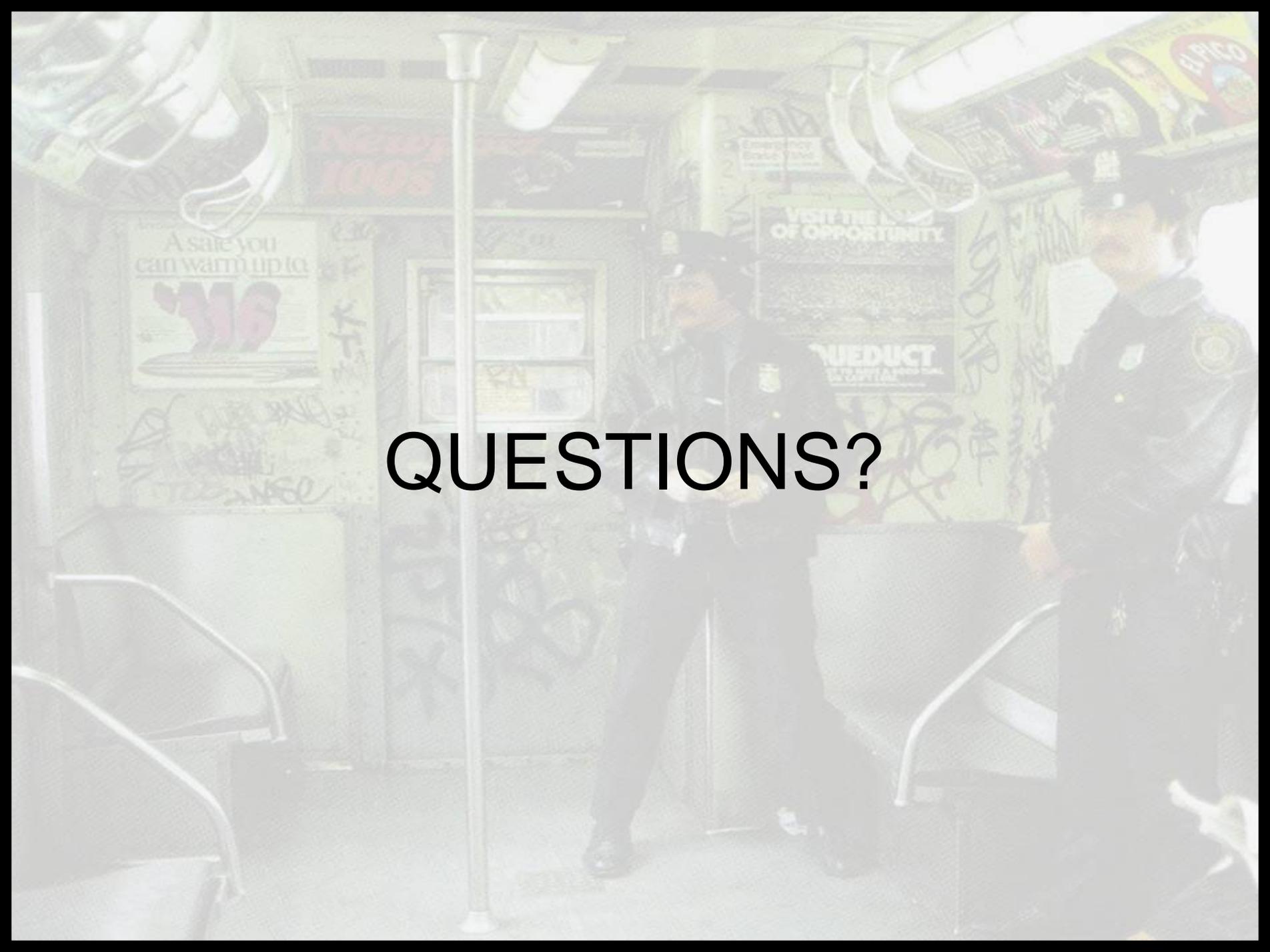
[www.sfu.ca](http://www.sfu.ca)

Go to SFU Library

Enter: Spicer, Valerie in the author field

Constable Valerie Spicer  
Vancouver Police Department  
(604) 717-3349 ext 1905

[valerie.spicer@vpd.ca](mailto:valerie.spicer@vpd.ca)

A photograph of the interior of a bus, heavily covered in graffiti. Two police officers in dark uniforms and caps are standing in the aisle. The walls are covered in various graffiti tags and posters. One poster on the left says "A safe you can warm up to" with a picture of a hot dog. Another poster in the center says "VISIT THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY" and "DUNEDUCT". The ceiling has fluorescent lights and some hanging wires. The overall scene suggests a law enforcement presence in a heavily vandalized public space.

QUESTIONS?