



## INDIO POLICE DEPARTMENT

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-Community Outreach Unit-  
-Graffiti Task Force-

**Contact:**

London G.C. Pickering  
Sergeant  
Community Outreach Unit  
Graffiti Task Force  
"Making Our Mark"

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46-800 Jackson Street  
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**GRAFFITI IS NOT ART.  
GRAFFITI IS A CRIME.**



Summary:

**Indio Police Department's Community Outreach Unit (COU) / Graffiti Task Force was conceptualized by Chief Bradley S. Ramos in February, 2008.**

**In July, 2006, COU formed to combat the increasing problem of graffiti vandalism in the City of Indio and neighboring communities. At the time, graffiti vandalism was the number one quality of life issue in the city. It seemed any standing structure; to include places of worship were under siege by graffiti vandals (Tagger's / writers)**

**COU has since grown to include the Homeless Task Force, Crime Free Multi-housing, Quality of Life and the newly created Park Ranger Program. (COU) is further complimented by (2) fulltime graffiti painters using a state of the art graffiti truck with GPS plotting capabilities and color matching software.**

**The Community Outreach Unit is staffed by (5) fulltime Police Officers.**

- **Police Sergeant**
- **Graffiti Investigator**
- **School Resource Officer (SRO) for Indio High School**
- **School Resource Officer for Amistad High School and Wilson Elementary**
- **Youth Accountability Team (YAT) Officer for Jefferson and Indio Middle Schools**

Combating the problem:

- **Heavy reliance on school personnel (Administrators, Faculty and Staff) at every level, including School Resource Officers.**
- **Compliance checks of businesses selling paint and other graffiti related items.**
- **On-going collaboration with juvenile and adult probation departments. Public works and various citizen groups.**
- **Installation of (17) graffiti cameras at community parks and high graffiti areas.**
- **Increased information sharing amongst local law enforcement entities.**
- **Proactive law enforcement, prosecution and restitution.**



## Results to date / July 2006 – June 2008

- (178) graffiti related arrests
- (70) Felony cases
- (50) Misdemeanor cases.
- (152) Health and Safety Code arrests while investigating graffiti related crimes. (Heroin / Methamphetamine / Marijuana)



- A snap shot review of the following dates indicated our enforcement and educational activities are making a difference in the community.

January 2007 – May 2007 (13) adult arrests (26) Juvenile arrests

January 2008 – May 2008 (25) adult arrests (69) Juvenile arrests

- The overall reduction in graffiti related crime has been made possible by continued community involvement and dedicated community policing strategies.

Description:

Once COU formed, the S.A.R.A. problem solving model was used as a tool to learn the following;

**Scanning Mode:**

A comprehensive tour of the City of Indio and neighboring communities revealed graffiti vandalism everywhere. The following (5) types of graffiti markings were present in various forms, sizes and colors.

- Communicative (Political statements)
- Hate (Intimidation)
- Gang (Mark territory)
- Tagging (Defacing property / no permission)
- Art (Muraling with permission)



The graffiti problem in the Coachella Valley was witnessed by stake holders and visitors alike. Since the City of Indio was experiencing incredible growth, it was obvious the blight of graffiti must be addressed through proactive community policing measures. The primary offender group continues to be juveniles 14-18 years of age.

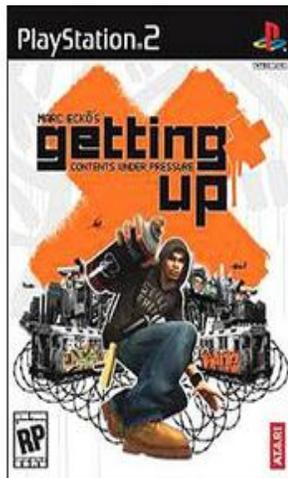
### Analysis Mode:

- It was readily apparent the quickest way to discover the identities of would-be vandals was to scour the various social networks used by teens and young adults. Myspace and Facebook were primarily used and continue to be a valuable tool to discover the identity of those committing vandalism crimes.
- Extensive interviews with those involved in the graffiti culture revealed “Graffiti” or “Tagging” was really about the “thrill” of tagging. Most felt there were no consequences for their actions, and it was simply about personal street fame.



- Additionally, it was learned that graffiti was a gateway crime leading to more serious (part 1) crimes (Broken Window theory).
- ***Historically, the only graffiti on the streets was gang related. In 1996 there were (12) active street gangs in the city. Through years of proactive law enforcement, the number has been reduced to (4) active street gangs. Interviews with numerous graffiti taggers revealed their older family members were street gang members. The interviews suggested the absence (Prison) of gang member siblings kept them from joining a gang. However, they still longed to be apart of something. The “something” turned out to be a graffiti “tagging crew.”***

- *The interviews also revealed a large number of graffiti taggers were “latch key” kids from single parent homes. The juveniles were bored and did not have any other outlet to express their varying artistic talents.*
- *The juveniles also pointed to the fact there really wasn’t any consequences to getting arrested or being on probation for committing vandalism crimes. In fact, it was a badge of honor to be on probation.*
- *Interviews also pointed to the release of a video game called “Getting up.” The release of this game coincided with the increase in graffiti related crime wave (February, 2006).*



- **Contact with neighboring law enforcement agencies revealed we were the only proactive community policing agency actively addressing the crime of graffiti vandalism at various social levels.**

Response Mode:

- November, 2006, COU began educating the public about the impact of graffiti in our neighborhoods, parks and business centers. The main focus of the Graffiti PowerPoint presentation was the message; "Graffiti is not art. Graffiti is a crime." A total of (45) presentations were completed. Once the word began to spread, other valley law enforcement agencies requested information on the program. We began to mentor allied agencies in an attempt to find lasting solutions to their on-going graffiti problems.
- COU also understood the need to educate the community about the real difference between "Street gang" and "Tagger" graffiti since the two are easily confused.
- Indio Police Dept. established the "Graffiti Hotline" so citizens could actively participate with combating graffiti and its removal in a timely manner.
- COU created an informative "Graffiti" tri-fold flyer to assist the community with obtaining help and resources related to graffiti. We also produced a Spanish version based on the demographics (85% Hispanic) of the community. Overall Population - 85,000 +
- Use of GPS enabled graffiti truck to plot out areas hardest hit with graffiti. **(Geographic policing)**
- Probation compliance checks of those people living within the plotted areas on probation for graffiti related crimes.

- Immediate buy in from stake holders in the community. Increased reporting to “Graffiti Hotline” and 911 calls for in progress graffiti.
- **Increased buy in from local District Attorney’s Office (Juvenile Division)**
- **Comp stat process**
- Graffiti presentation to Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) Public Safety Meeting. The group consists of all local and state public safety managers.
- Partnerships established with various Rotary and Lion’s Clubs.
- The Human Services Commission and Coachella Valley Parks and Recreation District are partnered with COU. It is essential to have community parks free from the blight of graffiti.
- Institutionalization at all levels of Police Department. This philosophy starts with the Chief of Police and works its way through every facet of the organization.
- Continuance of long standing Community Oriented Policing philosophy.
- On-going partnership between the police and the community
- Never forgetting our Community Policing “Motto.” “Our Community...Our Commitment.”

**Assessment Mode:**

- ***Decrease in overall graffiti in and around the city. By decreasing graffiti related calls for service, patrol officers were free to concentrate their efforts on other quality of life issues.***
- ***Displacement issues / Increase in graffiti related crimes in neighboring communities. We now see increased collaboration with other law enforcement agencies and sharing of information for the betterment of all. (Problem oriented partnerships)***
- ***On-going monitoring on social networks. “Bragging” about individual acts of graffiti vandalism.***
- ***Better understanding of local government and their expectations.***
- ***Better working relationship with local district attorney’s office.***

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Herman Goldstein / 2008

# Graffiti Task Force

- Created by Chief Ramos to proactively combat graffiti related crimes in the City of Indio and neighboring cities. The following personnel are currently assigned to COU.

YAT Ofc. Gilbert Lopez

SRO Ofc. Rody Johnson

SRO Ofc. Jose Lopez

GTF Ofc. Bryan Traynham

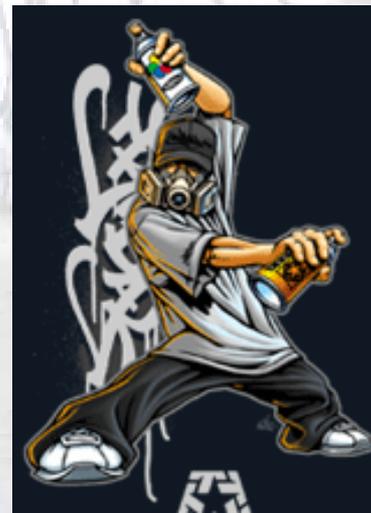
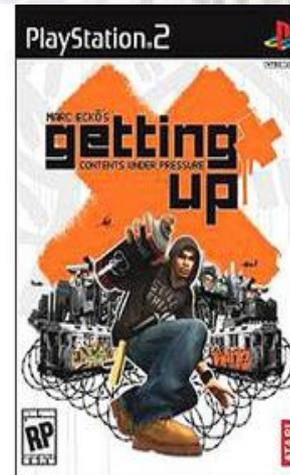
Sgt. London Pickering



# Coachella Valley Tagging Crews

- AKM ARTIST KREATING MADNESS
- BTS BOMBING THE SYSTEM
- CE CATCHING EYES
- DCB DESERT CITY BOYS
- **DFK DOWN FOR KREW**
- IBK INFAMOUS BOMBING KINGS
- IHC INK HEADS CREW
- KSO KRONIC SMOKERS ONLY
- NW NOTORIOUS WONS
- STK SHOOT TO KILL
- UAK UNIQUE ART CRIMES
- UWK UNDER WORLD KILLERS
- WNC WHY NOT CREW
- WTPK WE THE PEOPLES KREW
- ICB INDIO CRAZY BOYS
- BST BAD SICK TAGGERS
- SMG SICK MADE GANGSTERS
- **DAG DIRTY ASS GRAPHERS**
- **ARK ALWAYS ROLLING KRONIC**

The release of this game started a graffiti revolution in the Coachella Valley



MARC ECKO'S  
**getting up**  
CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE

# 5 Types of Graffiti

TYPE:

COMMUNICATIVE

HATE

GANG

TAGGING

ART

PURPOSE:

POLITICAL STATEMENT

INTIMIDATION

MARK TERRITORY

DEFACING PROPERTY

MURALING -W/ PERMISSION



RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE



# Gang and Tagger Graffiti

## ***MOST COMMON / MOST CONFUSED***

**BROKEN WINDOW THEORY** – MINOR CRIMES SUCH AS GRAFFITI, LITTERING, UNTIDY PROPERTIES LEAD TO AN INCREASE IN MORE SERIOUS PART ONE CRIMES. LACK OF ENFORCEMENT OF MINOR CRIMES LEADS TO AN INCREASE IN MAJOR CRIMES.



THE AVERAGE CITIZEN CONFUSES THE TWO AND THEREFORE BELIEVES ALL GRAFFITI IS GANG GRAFFITI. THIS LEADS TO FEAR AND A LOSS OF BUSINESS, THUS DIMINISHING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES IN OUR COMMUNITY.



- **STREET GANG GRAFFITI NORMALLY USED TO IDENTIFY AN AREA WHERE GANG MEMBERS CONGREGATE AND/OR TO INTIMIDATE THOSE LIVING IN THE AREA.**
- **TAGGER GRAFFITI IS ABOUT PERSONAL FAME**

**fame**  
 THE MOST COMMON  
 DRUG OF MODERN  
 SOCIETY

**THIS IS WHAT fame LOOKS LIKE**



**YOUR MAKING  
 ME FAMOUS**

Coachella Valley native going to art school in LA.



# GANG GRAFFITI



Oldest Street Gang in Indio

No respect for property



31/05/2006



# TAGGER GRAFFITI



Most prolific tagger "Emirc" 25 yrs. Old. Originally from LA...

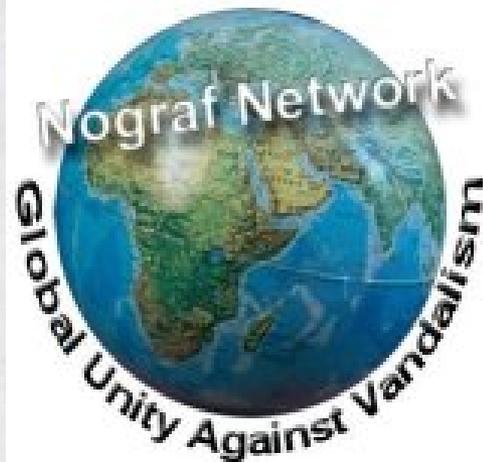
# GANG GRAFFITI



Gang graffiti has been on the decline for several years.

# TAGGER CULTURE

- TAGGER DEDICATED TO HIS/HER PERSONAL “**FAME**”
- GENERALLY 10-18 YEARS OF AGE (OLDEST 29)
- ALL ETHNICITIES, ECONOMICAL, SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS
- MANY ARE DISCOURAGED AFTER FIRST NEGATIVE CONTACT
- THOSE WHO CONTINUE-COMMIT OTHER CRIMES.
- LOW SELF IMAGE AND WANT TO BELONG
- ASPIRE TO BE “PIECERS” (INTRICATE GRAFFITI ARTISTS)
- CARRY BACKPACKS, HATS, & SHOES THAT ARE TAGGED



# Is your kid a Tagger?

## Is your child a tagger?

Most likely, your child will not leave the home looking like this. But if you find two or more of these implements among his or her things, your child is probably writing graffiti in your neighborhood.

Backpack – Graffiti on backpack, art supplies inside

Hood, hat and bandana – used to conceal face from witnesses/hidden cameras.

Stencil – for quick tagging

Carrying around fat markers – not for test taking

STENCIL

Gloves – to keep paint off fingers

Black book – for practice



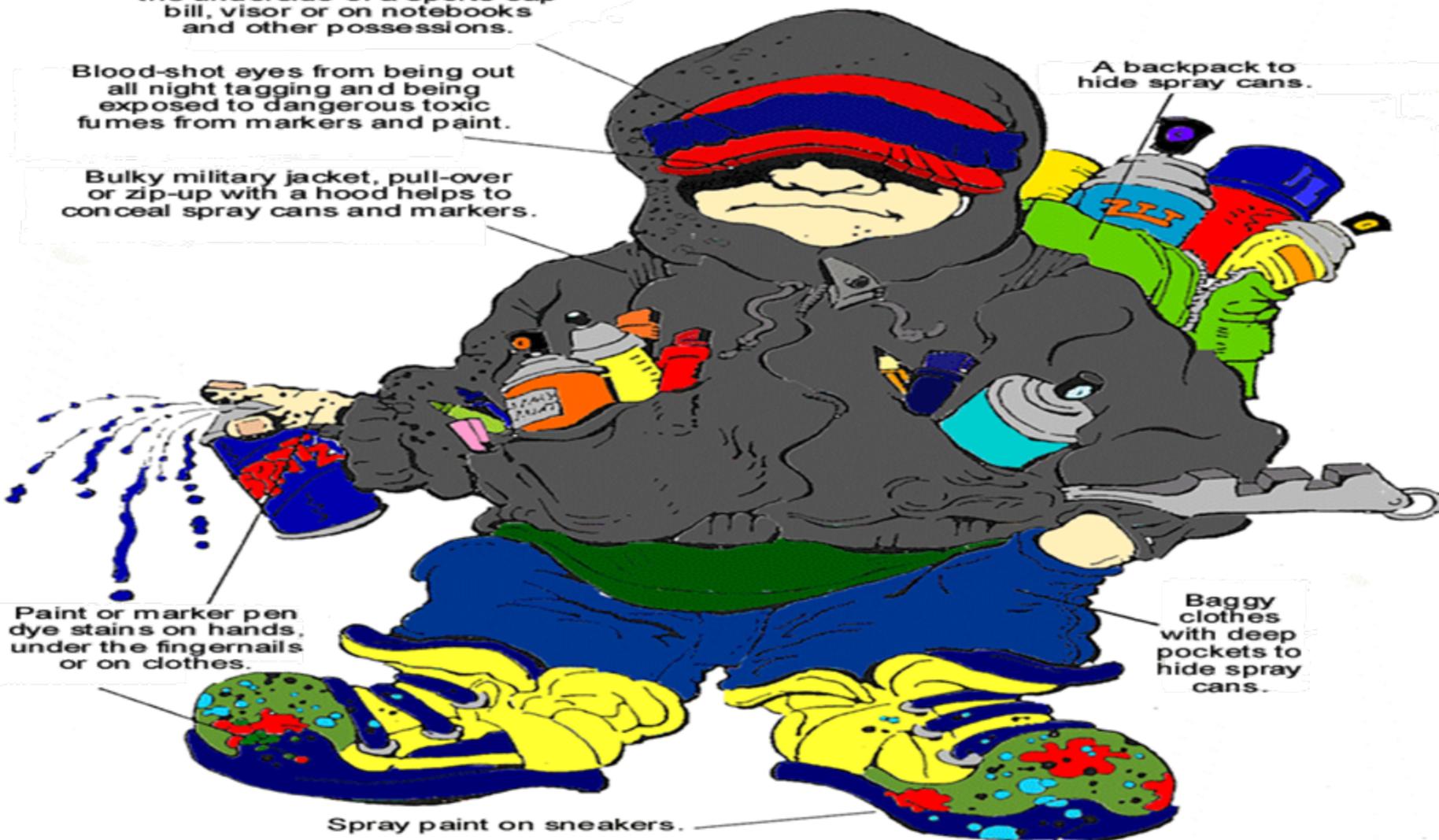
# HOW TO SPOT A TAGGER

Tag names might be written on the underside of a sports-cap bill, visor or on notebooks and other possessions.

Blood-shot eyes from being out all night tagging and being exposed to dangerous toxic fumes from markers and paint.

Bulky military jacket, pull-over or zip-up with a hood helps to conceal spray cans and markers.

A backpack to hide spray cans.



Paint or marker pen dye stains on hands, under the fingernails or on clothes.

Baggy clothes with deep pockets to hide spray cans.

Spray paint on sneakers.

Graffiti tool bag.....



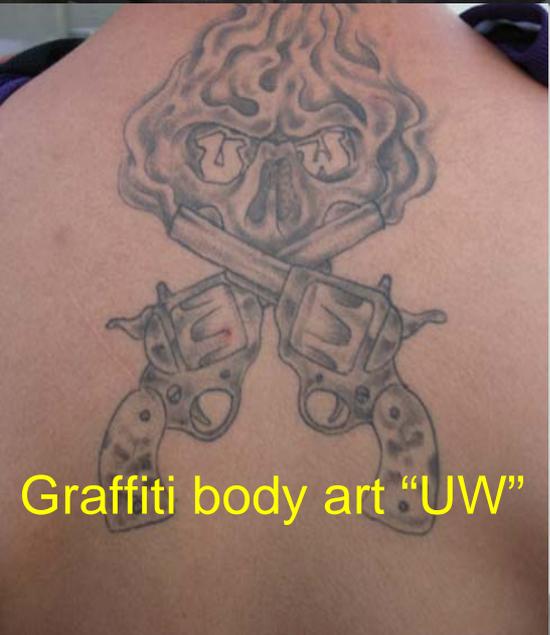
Great evidence!



Mailing labels "Slap Tags"



Graffiti body art "UW"



# REALITY VS. IMAGE

- **NOT ABOUT ART OR IMAGES**
  - **ABOUT THRILL OF TAGGING**
  - **FEEL THERE WILL BE NO CONSEQUENCES IF CAUGHT**
  - **NO CONCERN FOR VICTIMS**
  - **SELF CENTERED-ALL ABOUT THEIR “FAME”**
  - **LEADS TO MORE SERIOUS CRIME**
  - **“BROKEN WINDOWS THEORY”**
-

# STENCILS



# Graffiti Camera



**NOTORIOUS TAGGER CAUGHT BY  
GRAFFITI CAMERA**



# Tagger names/ Graffiti

- EACH WILL HAVE OWN UNIQUE NAME TO ENSURE “FAME”
- HIGHLY EVOLVED ORIGINAL SPELLING
  - *FLEX = FLEKZ/FLE CZ/PHLEKZ*
- BACK UP NAME-CHANGES WHEN CAUGHT





**ROLL CALL**



Even rocks are targets



**SLAP TAG**



Roll calls are important investigative leads



# Markers and Paint

- MAGNUM 44 IS FAVORED MARKER
- ACRYLIC PAINT AND PAINT STICKS
- NON-AEROSOL PAINT (CAN/BUCKET) WITH ROLLERS
- FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

***— NO LAW STATING JUVENILES CANNOT BE IN POSSESSION OF CANNED PAINT AND ROLLERS.***



# PARAPHERNALIA

Tools of the trade



Slap tags rapidly becoming choice of taggers. Easy to carry / conceal / discard. They contain messages if read correctly.



These easily fit inside backpacks



# Slap Tags

- A TAGGER WILL SLAP TAG ANYTHING...*CHURCH, BUSINESS, RESIDENCE, WALL OR WINDOW...IN SECONDS.....*
- “**FREE**” AT POST OFFICE / “**FREE**” OVER INTERNET
- HARD TO REMOVE AND LEAVES RESIDUE



Hidden messages



# COMBATING THE PROBLEM

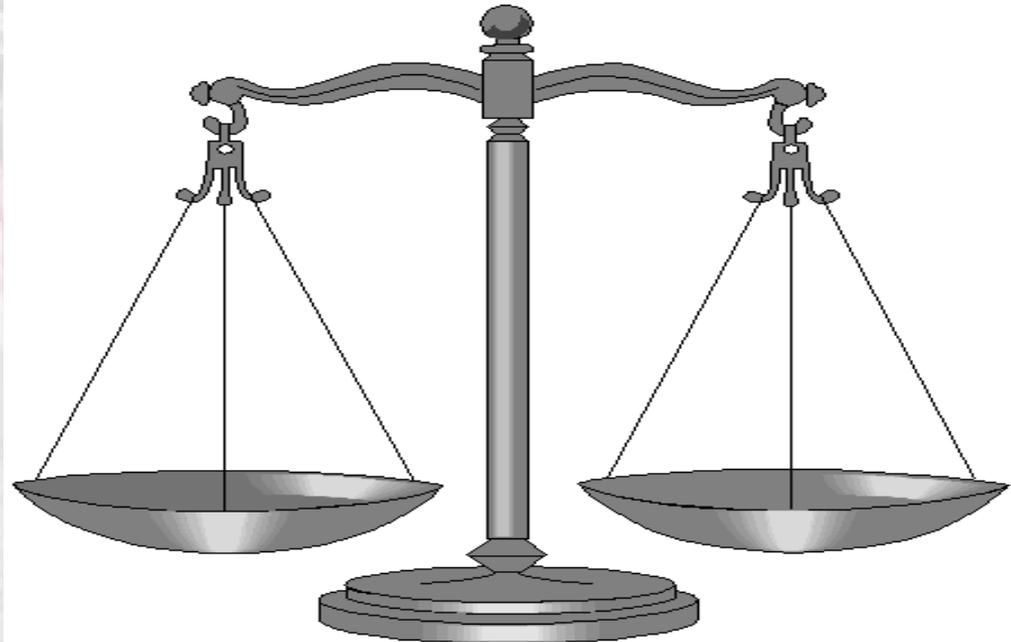
- **SCHOOLS (SRO's)** FOR INTELLIGENCE ON IDENTIFYING TAGGERS/GANG MEMBERS
- **RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADMINISTRATORS, FACULTY AND STAFF**
- **COMPLIANCE CHECKS OF LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR SELLING PAINT AND OTHER GRAFFITI TOOLS TO MINORS**
- **PROBATION, PUBLIC WORKS AND CITIZEN GROUPS**
- **STATE OF THE ART GRAFFITI TRUCK**
- **(17) GRAFFITI CAMERAS**
- **INFORMATION SHARING**



# TWO PRONGED ATTACK

- 1) Proactive Law Enforcement
- 2) Prosecution

Restitution is a must!



# ARREST SUMMARY



JULY 2006 TO JULY 2008

**GRAFFITI ARRESTS: 178**

**SEARCH WARRANTS: 40**

*Community Chest*

**GET OUT  
OF JAIL, FREE**



**THIS CARD MAY BE KEPT UNTIL NEEDED OR SOLD**

# Graffiti removal



# TAG - BANGERS

Some tagging crews are acting like street gangs. The major emphasis is still on tagging, but members are carrying guns and other weapons. Some tagging crews are “jumping” in new members. Some Tagging crews are aligning themselves with well established criminal street gangs for various reasons.



# RESOURCE NUMBERS

- Emergency 911
- Indio Police Non-emergency (760) 391-4057
- Riverside County District Attorney's Office (760) 863-8216
- Graffiti Hotline (760)-391-4143
- Juvenile Hall (760) 863-7600
  
- **Remember...Graffiti Vandalism is.....**
- "Detrimental to property values"
- "Blighting factor"
- "Obnoxious"
- "Negatively impacts the Coachella Valley"
- "Causes an increase in crime"



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*"Our Community... Our Commitment"*

**Bradley S. Ramos**  
*Chief of Police*

May 30, 2008

**Mark V. Miller**  
*Captain*

Rob T Guerette, Ph.D  
School of Criminal Justice  
Florida International University  
University Park, PCA 366B  
11200 S. W. 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Miami, FI 33199

**Joseph J. Roberts**  
*Captain*

**Richard M. Banasiak**  
*Captain*

Dear Dr. Guerette:

I would like to nominate the Indio Police Department's Community Outreach Unit for the 2008 Herman Goldstein Award. Our success in preventing graffiti related crime and prompt apprehension of criminals is directly related to citizen interest and participation. Our educational effort within the school system and the community continues to be our number one priority. Our dedication to the community and the partnerships we develop are to maintain the quality of life for all to benefit. The City of Indio Police Department strongly stands devoted to its motto "Our Community Our Commitment..."

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bradley S. Ramos", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**BRADLEY S. RAMOS**  
**CHIEF OF POLICE**