Result of University of California Police Department internal review process:

"A finding of "Exonerated" was made in the allegation that one of our Officers struck you. The Board found that the incident did occur but that the Officer's actions were proper, lawful and justified and consistent with Systemwide Policies and Procedures."


COPWATCH has found that the UCPD review process is a sham. Investigations are done entirely by UCPD's own officers and there is essentially no opportunity for community input throughout the process. At this point COPWATCH encourages victims of police abuse to file complaints in order to exhaust the review process and not because of any serious expectation of disciplinary action being taken against a particular officer.

Stop the War Against the Poor

Even though the War in the Persian Gulf only officially began Jan. 16th, the war against poor people has been raging and intensifying against poor people in this country for the last few months. The following examples of Establishment Warfare will illustrate our point.

Osha's Beating: (Nov. 4, 1990)

Berkeley Police Review Commissioner Osha Neumann was assaulted in Peoples' Park by two U.C. Cops, (#37) Situentes and (#44) Braunecker, when he attempted to get their badge numbers. He was seized and charged with "interfering" with a Police Officer. After several demonstrations of outrage organized by COPWATCH and Berkeley Union of the Homeless, the D.A. still has not officially declared whether he intends to press charges.

Meanwhile several witnesses to the attack on Osha have been harassed and attacked by police. One was even taken to jail for riding a bike without a license. At this point, Osha is waiting to hear from the D.A. as to what, if any, charges will be brought against him.
Manager Brown Declares War: (Nov. 8, 1990)

City Manager Michael Brown was quoted in the Berkeley Voice saying that he has organized a program to get rid of what he calls Telegraph Avenue's "generally seedy atmosphere working to the negation of Berkeley's economic growth." He says he will use city Departments of Police, Fire, Licensing, Health and Mental Health, and that the program will "target street people and street vendors, and will go on forever if that what it takes." COPWATCH notes this as a Declaration of War Against the Poor. Michael Brown has enlisted public city services in this war; tax-payers should be outraged.

Berkeley Inn: (Nov. 8, 1990)

The same night that 11 anti-police violence demonstrators were arrested for trespassing on the steps of the U.C. Police Department, an arson fire devastated the Berkeley Inn. U.C. Police indicated to media and others that they suspected that the blaze was related to the demonstration before firefighters had even finished putting out the fire. Logic insists that groups who are advocating civil rights for homeless people would not destroy the very building they had been working on for years to make serve the needs of poor people.

Anti-Loitering:

A motion to make it illegal to loiter within 100 feet of a laundry mat, abandoned house or liquor store was narrowly defeated by the City Council on Dec. 21, 1990. The ordinance would have allowed police free-range to detain and search anyone they "suspected" might have the "intention" to buy or sell drugs. With the help of COPWATCH, Uhuru House, The Coalition for Human Rights and Basic Needs and the ACLU, the issue was laid to rest (for the time being).

Departmental Order 1080: (Recently referred to as 90-0026)

This police policy was designed by City Manager Michael Brown and Chief of Police Daschell Butler. It instructs police to discourage public sleeping by charging or threatening to charge people with various "blocking" sidewalk ordinances. It has been voted down at Police Review Hearing Meetings more than once, but somehow it keeps resurfacing as police kick people around every night on the streets of Berkeley. On Tuesday, Jan. 29th, 1991 the matter was once again brought before the PRC. This time the City Manager rescinded the Special Order rather than have it go to City Council for a vote with a negative recommendation from the PRC. The PRC voted to recommend that: 1) all officers be informed that the order was rescinded; 2) possessions of homeless people in custody be preserved, including shopping carts; and 3) that Berkeley Police officers be informed that sleeping is not, in itself, illegal. The City Manager also agreed to form a task force of people to further explore the issue.
Hank:

On January 1, 1991 a homeless man was beaten and killed near Strawberry Creek on the U.C. Campus. He was struck with a blunt object and his money was taken. Since U.C. Police spend so much of their time writing petty citations, one can only wonder what useful police work they were engaged in on Telegraph Ave. while Hank was being beaten to death on campus. No one has been charged with the murder and many people fear that the police won't treat this investigation with the seriousness it demands. Until Hanks murderer is found homeless people continue to live in fear for their lives.

Freebox:

On January 4th, the U.C. Police seized the Peoples' Freebox out of Peoples' Park. Chancellor Tien thought that the box was untidy so, it goes; he ordered it removed. Actually, it was a direct power struggle by which the administration was measuring opposition to a U.C. takeover of Peoples' Park. After replacing 7 boxes, 2 arrests and 15 days of sleeping-in / vigiling the U.C. has agreed to notify various community people and schedule a meeting before removing the box in the future. The U.C. also agreed to allow the box to stay for now as long as it remains "clean". The action was a powerful organizing opportunity and it had a lot of participation and support from homeless people. Generally it was empowering, except when the Sergeant walked up to us on Friday night and told us that she had a bus ready to take us to Santa Rita and that we wouldn't be released until Tuesday, since Monday was Martin Luther King's birthday. We decided to move across the street, instead of spending three days in jail for illegal lodging. Observing throughout the night, we saw U.C. cops roust a man for sleeping in his car, kick people sleeping on the grass, and tell a homeless man who was folding clothes that he couldn't clean up the Freebox area until 6:00 am when the park "opens". One interesting feature of the action was in the large number of Black men who gave their support and encouragement, but were unable to participate for fear of police reprisals against them after the action was over. Even still, their presence was made known.

Protest and Free Speech -

On Jan. 16, 1991 when anti-war demonstration sprung up spontaneously, Berkeley was no exception. Even Loni Hancock joined the march down University Ave. to I-80. Everyone noticed how peaceful the Berkeley Police Department was relative to the frenzied California Highway Patrol, who beat several protestors on the freeway and intentionally concealed badge numbers. The BPD was calm because, as Chief Butler explained, the Berkeley police also oppose the war. While we are pleased that the police are against the war, their agreement or disagreement should not even influence whether or not demonstrators are beaten and dispersed, or allowed to proceed. On the San Francisco side on 101 a few days later, CHP were even more violent and prevented a takeover of 101 only by breaking a leg and hospitalizing two protestors. In another incident, UC cops used 12 riot cops and a water hose to prevent a free speech "sleep in" on Biko (Sproul) Plaza by demonstrators Jan. 22. While the police maintain that laying in a sleeping bag with your eyes closed constitutes "illegal lodging", protestors believe that the act in itself, taking place on the steps of the Administration - in protest - is a protected form of speech under the constitution.
Defiance of Unjust Laws:

It is apparent that officers of the city as well as the university feel free to arbitrarily enforce certain laws in very selective ways. It is also clear that the city and the University have developed certain "guidelines, rules and city ordinances" which are also selective and are therefore unjust. Laws regarding public sleeping, panhandling, blocking the sidewalk, bringing shopping carts into the park, etc. are examples. COPWATCH is in solidarity with those people who defy unjust laws and resist illegal arrests. If you find, or have found yourself in such a situation, contact us. We are organizing class action suits and we need to hear from you.

STOP THE WARS AGAINST THE POOR!!!

The ruling class is openly moving toward subjugation and extermination of poor people both in America and the Middle East. By creating a repressive legal system as well as a police "culture", the state has been able to press a huge number of people into the service of the state. We police each other. We distrust each other. We suppress each other. The victims of police repression become cops of a different type. The oppressed are encouraged to oppress themselves and each other.

In the Middle East War, the victims of unemployment, classism and racism suddenly find themselves on the front line in defense of that same system.

As we have seen from the way protests against the war have been handled, we are now living under a rule of coercion and force rather than democratic values and ideals. At several different demonstrations, individuals have attempted to make officers accountable for their actions. However, the strategy of accountability as a deterrent to police crime only works if police violence is regarded as a departure from departmental policy. If brute force and intimidation is the policy, then the concept of "copwatch" becomes irrelevant.

URGENT - We Are Losing Our Office!

This month COPWATCH was informed by its landlord that we would not be having our lease extended. For some reason our landlord wants to transform our office into storage space. We believe it is possible that this action could have been instigated by U.C. police who occupy the building next to us and have been surveying us for some time. All of this is to say that we need help. Please contact us if you can make a contribution toward a down payment on a new office or if you know of accessible office space in the Southside area. We need you. Work a shift; do office work or research; come by - the Channing Way office is still in operation until mid-March.

Released: Jan. 31, 1991

COPWATCH Office

Phone: 548-0425

COPWATCH has moved to 2022 Blake in Berkeley as of 3/16/91

(Same phone)