

Berkeley Copwatch

January 16, 2024

Contact: Avi Simon
Phone: (510) 542 4233
Email: avisimon06@gmail.com



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Copwatch Releases Report: "Purging the Poor: Arrest Quotas, Racist Texts and the Role of City Leadership in the 'Textgate' Scandal"

Berkeley Copwatch has completed an investigation and released its final report entitled "Purging the Poor: Arrest Quotas, Racist Texts and the Role of City Leadership in the 'Textgate' Scandal." The investigation concludes Copwatch's investigation into allegations of an illegal arrest quota operating in the Berkeley Police Department's (BPD) Downtown Bike Taskforce after [authenticated text messages](#) between BPD officers were released to the public in November 2022. In addition to demonstrating illegal arrest quotas, these messages showcase racism and anti-houseless sentiment within the department.

With careful analysis of police data in collaboration with the Human Rights Data Analysis Group and information from numerous California Public Records Act requests from the previous District Attorney's office under Nancy O'Malley, Copwatch has created graphs and descriptions of misconduct by Berkeley Bike Force officers. Arrest records and the messages themselves **show that the Bike Taskforce specialized in predatory policing tactics which resulted in the arrest of hundreds of individuals who were never charged with a crime.** This illegal policy was spearheaded by Berkeley Police Association President Darren Kacelek, an officer who degraded Black and unhoused residents in the leaked text chain.

We emphasize the role of city manager Dee Williams Ridley, mayor Jesse Arreguin and the city council in ignoring serious misconduct within the BPD, undermining the process of a transparent investigation by the Police Accountability Board and protecting the careers of its racist police officers. We are demanding that the city comply with California law, hold its police department accountable, and end the ineffective and cruel criminalization of houselessness.

Some key findings are as follows:

1. One in two people arrested by the BPD between 2018 and 2022 were Black.
2. Officers in the Bike Force were incentivized by an illegal arrest quota motivated by Sgt. Kacelek.
3. Arrests climbed drastically in the Fall of 2019 and Winter of 2020, and Bike Force officers made a disproportionate contribution to this trend, as alleged by Officer Shedoudy.

4. Since 2020, every year, more than 15% of arrests made by the Bike Force were dropped by the District Attorney. In 2020, that figure exceeded 35%.
5. The actions of the officers were part of a citywide strategy of forced removal and harassment of unhoused people.

Some of our recommendations are as follows:

1. Dismiss Sgt. Darren Kacelek for violations of law and duty to the people of Berkeley.
2. Fire City Manager Dee Williams-Ridley for failure to address discrimination against unhoused people and racist police practices.
3. Review Jen Louis' appointment as Chief of Police due to her meeting with Sgt. Kacalek despite her claim to not have been aware of specific Bike Force activity.
4. Lower the enforcement priority of petty infractions.
5. Provide independent counsel for the Police Accountability Board.
6. Implement the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force [recommendations](#).
7. Stop BPD's abhorrent pattern of unnecessary arrests.
8. Remove the Ambassador program from the oversight of the Downtown Business Association.

[Read the full report](http://www.berkeleycopwatch.org) at www.berkeleycopwatch.org