



“NHI”



“NHI”

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This project is dedicated to the forty-five women who have been brutally murdered in San Diego County since 1985. We were unable to gather photos of all the slain women for the exhibition, "NHI." Special thanks to the women from the San Diego community who have acted as stand-ins for thirty-seven of the women. These stand-ins are local educators, artists, administrators, therapists, social workers, writers, lawyers, homemakers, scientists, ranchers, doctors, entrepreneurs, machinists, counselors, and community activists.

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Dear Artist Group,

First of all, thank you for calling to let me know that this exhibit is coming in February. Sometimes I read about my daughter without any warning.

I wish you well in this endeavor. I have had a lot of questions regarding my daughter's death. She was found in a grove in Valley Center. It was even on the news, but let me say that from the first day until the present I have NEVER had any contact with the police department. They have NEVER come to my house for any questions, such as who were her friends, or what had she been doing, or even what were the events prior to her death.* It's strange because the police or sheriff has come to my neighborhood in a few minutes about neighbor disputes, and even when we complained about a barking dog, yet in the above matter about my daughter I never saw even one.

While I am at it, let me say how we learned about my daughter's death. I came home from work to find a business card stuck in my screen. It was from the coroner's office—hand written, "Please call as soon as possible." When I called they said, "Your daughter Michelle has expired, now when was the last time you saw her." I realized from talking to my neighbor that the coroner was out earlier, but even he must know that Michelle is going to be dead a long time. He could have come back. Leaving a business card in someone's screen is just not very professional. If she had not died from a drug injection would they have been more sensitive? I feel that they did not treat her as they would some "Up-Standing Citizen." But maybe that's how the coroner's office works. Do they leave business cards often?

Anyway, my daughter was an artist also. She has even painted a mural in my younger daughter's room, and has had her drawings shown. She was indeed more than just "NHI."

Pat Riccio

*I called the police one or two years ago, and they said Michelle's death had been ruled an accidental overdose. But on other paperwork, it's listed as homicide.

JANE DOE

"These were 'misdemeanor murders,' biker women and hookers . . . sometimes we'd call them 'NHIs'—no humans involved."

—San Diego police source, *Sacramento Bee*, 7 October 1990

" 'The prostitute,' that's all the San Diego police ever called her."

—Rose Varela, mother of Anna Lucilla Varela
quoted in *San Diego Magazine*, November 1988

Since 1985 at least 45 women have been sexually assaulted and brutally murdered in San Diego County. These women, designated by law enforcement as prostitutes, drug addicts, and transients, have been associated with the police term, "NHI—no humans involved." NHI is an in-house rhetorical discounting of crimes against individuals from marginalized sectors of our society. This nonhuman classification, as well as the personal involvement of police officers with a number of the victims, has hindered public awareness and a full-scale investigation of these murders.

The Yellow Rope

"Prostitutes were marked by the state, both by being forced to wear a certain kind of clothes or markings, like a red shoulder knot, a white scarf and white ribbon, or yellow cords on their sleeves, and by being controlled as to where they could live and move about in cities."

—Joan Nestle

"Lesbians and Prostitutes: A Historical Sisterhood,"
Good Girls/Bad Girls

The 45 women died brutal deaths. A similar pattern characterizes their murders. They were usually slain in one place and then dumped in a remote part of the county, including Pala, La Jolla, and Los Coyotes Indian reservations, Coronado Beach, Sunrise Highway, and rural roads off Interstate-8. Other women were dumped in trash dumpsters on El Cajon Boulevard, or were left on sidewalks.

For thirteen of the women, the cause of death remains unknown because their bodies were in an advanced state of decomposition when found. Of the remaining women, twenty-two were strangled after being brutally beaten. Two were shot, two were stabbed, and two were beaten to death. Five were ruled drug overdoses. Many of the women were raped, mutilated, and dismembered. At least two had gravel stuffed in their mouths, the sign of a "snitch." Ten of the women had their hands bound behind them, often with a yellow rope.

It wasn't until October 1987, after at least nineteen women had been murdered, that Sheriff's homicide detectives reluctantly admitted that similarities in the murders pointed to the presence of one or more serial killers at large in San Diego. A task force to investigate that possibility was not formed, however, until one year later.

Women

"They just group them all together as prostitutes and drug addicts."

—Gayle Moffitt, mother of Diana Gail Moffitt
Phone conversation, 8 February 1992

The series of killings is routinely referred to as "the prostitute murders." Yet the 45 women are not a homogeneous group. Seven are African-American, seven are Latina, one is Asian-American, and thirty are Caucasian. Five remain unidentified. Many of the women were homemakers. Several worked as beauticians, and others worked as a waitress, a registered nurse, a stock supervisor, a hospital kitchen worker, a grocery clerk, a word processor, an oceanographic researcher, and a writer. One woman was on her way home from babysitting for a neighbor when she disappeared. At least eleven of the women are survived by their children.

A number of the women knew each other. Donna Gentile, Cynthia Maine and Rosemarie Ritter were friends. Anna Varela, Sally Moorman-Field and Jodell Jenkins were also friends. According to her mother, Jenkins was seeing a sheriff at the time of her death. Both Gentile and Maine worked as informants for the San Diego Police Department.

In public accounts such as coroner's reports, municipal court records, and news stories, less than half of the women actually have been associated with prostitution. Twenty-two were cited for solicitation or were reported by law enforcement to have been "known prostitutes." Eight of these women were also called drug users. Another eight were listed solely as drug users. Three women were referred to as transients.

Several of the victims' families have disputed these categorizations. Rose Varela, mother of Anna Lucilla Varela, said her daughter was arrested for prostitution while she simply was waiting for the bus. Linda Joyce Nelson had

no record of prostitution; National City police, however, reported that she engaged in sex for drugs, a charge her family has denied.

“Accidental Drug Overdose”

The official cause of death for five of the women is accidental or self-inflicted drug overdose. Many families question this determination. Jodell Jenkins officially died of an accidental drug overdose, although the mortuary handling her body told her parents that there was more alcohol than drugs in her bloodstream. Her mother said that Jenkins never drank.

Rosemarie Ritter, who was last seen by a store clerk getting into a police car the night she disappeared, died of acute methamphetamine poisoning. Her friends and family stated that Ritter was horrified of needles and would never touch IV drugs. Her father said, “If it was an overdose, it was given to her by someone else. She’d never take a needle.” According to her brother, the mortuary that handled her body said she had been shot, a fact detectives never told the family.

In the case of Julianna Santillano, whose naked body was found on Coronado State Beach on 8 January 1987, the official cause of death is a heroin overdose, but a sheriff told her sister Virginia, “It seemed like somebody else did it from the way they found her.”

Tara Simpson was severely beaten, her body soaked in gasoline and torched. The cause of her death, according to the coroner’s report, is an “accidental drug overdose” (*San Diego Magazine*, November 1988).

Missing

“If she had not died from a drug injection, would they have been more sensitive? I feel that they did not treat her as they would some ‘Up-Standing Citizen.’”

—Pat Riccio, mother of Michelle Riccio
Letter, 30 January 1992

“The public needs to realize the girls that have been murdered are not just ‘PROSTITUTES,’ but individuals that were loved very much by family and friends.”

—Gayle Moffitt
Letter, 7 February 1992

Carolyn Sandoval, the mother of Melissa Gene White, told journalist Catherine M. Spearnak that a year before her death Melissa failed to call her for over three months. When Sandoval tried to file a missing person report with the Oceanside City Police, they just laughed at her, she said. “They told me she’d show up.” She believes she received such callous treatment because the police were aware that her daughter used drugs.

Curtis Funderburk had a similar experience with the police when he reported his daughter, Marsha, missing in September 1985. The officer told him not to worry, that she was probably “shacked up with somebody,” Funderburk told us. His daughter’s body was found three weeks later in a remote area of Pine Valley.

Lynda S. Coleman, whose daughter Cynthia Maine disappeared in February 1986, told the *San Diego Union* (27 September 1990) the police showed very little interest in finding her daughter, “They said, ‘Look it lady, there’s

blacks, there's whites and there's prostitutes," Coleman said. "But this was my daughter, a person who was a good Catholic and a good mother even though she had a drug habit." Coleman is understandably outraged by the police's lack of interest in Cynthia's disappearance—"It's disgusting... this has been so mishandled ... I had to get dental records five different times. They kept losing them," she said (*Union*, 26 September 1990).

Gayle Moffitt, whose daughter Diana was killed in 1987, told us, "I have never been treated as poorly as I have by San Diego police. One particular detective was really bad. Just their accusations. He was very nasty to me. The mistreatment of families from the time the bodies are found, the lack of cooperation with the families—I don't care who they are, it's not right, it's just not right."

The Sandovals hired a private detective to investigate Melissa's death. "I feel whatever type of lifestyle my daughter had, whoever did this had no right to do it to her," Carolyn Sandoval told Spearnak. "It bothers us that he's still out there some place, not paying for what he did, and that she died that way. He brutally murdered her."

"Prostitutes, Drug Addicts, Transients"?

"We all know only too well that any of us at any time can be labeled a prostitute woman, if we dare step out of line in the way we speak and dress, in the hours we keep, the number of friends we have...."

—Rachel West

"U.S. PROStitute Collective," *Sex Work*

"The failure to recognize gender-motivated violence is part of our nationwide pattern of denial. It is easier to blame the victim than to seek answers about why her attacker inflicted such cruelties as battery, rape and murder—'She must have done something to deserve it.' For if we can find some fault with the victim's behavior or demeanor, then we can rest assured that we are invulnerable to such attacks."

—Linda C. McCabe

"Womanslaughter Is a Hate Crime"

Los Angeles Times, December 1991

Police insensitivity and neglect increase the danger every woman faces when out alone for any reason. Nancy Allison White was the twentieth victim. A stock supervisor from Santa Ana, White was on her way home from visiting her husband, a Marine stationed in El Centro, when she was abducted, beaten, raped and strangled on the evening of 26 August 1986, after her car broke down on Interstate-8 east of Lake Jennings Park Road. By inaccurately characterizing the murdered women as "prostitutes, drug addicts and transients," the police divide women from each other and provide a false sense of security for some women that places all women at risk. Police are aware of the danger all women face when a serial murderer is at large.

Detective Tom Streed, the lead investigator in the case, said, "Her clothing was not inconsistent with what would arouse a person involved in the other cases" (*San Diego Magazine*, November 1988). From the perspective of law enforcement, White's casual summer attire of shorts and a tank top on the evening of her murder placed her in jeopardy.

- Does blaming the victim divert attention from the actual causes of violence against women?

The Double Standard

"Don't write that San Diego is the murder capital of the world or anything like that."

—Mayor Maureen O'Conner
Sacramento Bee, 7 October 1990

"The prostitute [sic] series is the second-largest such episode of killings in the nation."

—Frank Klimko
The San Diego Union, 12 February 1989

- Why are so many San Diegans unaware that at least 45 women have been brutally murdered in our community?
- Is the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force, formed in 1988 to solve the murders, in the process of disbanding even though there has been only one murder conviction since the task force's inception?
- Why has there been no organized response by the local community?

A double standard exists in the investigation and reporting of crimes against women labeled as prostitutes, drug addicts, and transients. In 1990, the murders of five middle-class women (who had no apparent connection to drugs or the sex industry) in the Clairemont and University City areas resulted in the biggest manhunt in SDPD history. The department assigned 34 officers to the case, set up a special command post, held daily press briefings, went door to door in search of witnesses, and offered a reward for information. A city councilman also canvassed the neighborhood, warning residents to take extra security precautions. The press and police went to great lengths to

emphasize that one of the victims was a student at San Diego State University who worked in a well known sporting-goods store. They de-emphasized the fact that she also worked part-time as a nude dancer. Nude dancing was not an occupation that fit this particular profile of victims.

The police department applied similar pressure to find a suspect in the case of Cara Knott, a college coed found strangled near Interstate-15 in 1986. In Knott's case, Lieutenant Phil Jarvis, head of the SDPD's homicide investigation unit, told reporter Catherine M. Spearnak, "We wanted to solve that case so badly we put some real pressure on ourselves." California Highway Patrol Officer Craig Peyer was rapidly charged with Knott's death. Comparing the San Diego series of murders to the Knott case, Sheriff's Lieutenant Bill Baxter told Spearnak, "It's hard to evoke as much empathy [for a prostitute] as there is for a pretty little coed."

"Female Dead Bodies"

"I feel some individuals on the San Diego Task Force need to have some training in sensitivity in handling families of murdered victims. The girls had names, and deserve a proper investigation and the families deserve to be treated with respect."

—Gayle Moffitt
Letter, 8 February 1992

Throughout 1986 and 1987, law enforcement agencies denied any connection between the growing number of dead women turning up in remote areas of the county and in dumpsters along El Cajon Boulevard. In July 1987, Sheriff

John Duffy told Spearnak, "There is not a disproportionate number of female dead bodies being found in the county, and any speculation about a 'serial killer preying on prostitutes' is just that—speculation" (*San Diego Magazine*, May 1988).

In September 1987, San Diego papers reported the common factors in the murders, which then numbered nineteen, and suggested that they were linked. At that time Sheriff's Lt. Baxter, supervisor of the Homicide Detail, warned that "People are trying to force us to say there's a series, and we're not ready yet" (*Tribune*, 24 September 1987). In March 1988, after Donna Gentile and 25 other women had been murdered, Baxter told Spearnak, "We think we're making reasonable progress given the facts of the cases, and there's no reason to consider a special team or task force or a more specialized approach" (*San Diego Magazine*, May 1988).

Spearnak's ground-breaking articles in *San Diego Magazine* in May and November 1988 gave the first comprehensive coverage to the series of murders. Her articles created the impetus for the formation of a special task force in August 1988. By the time the Sheriff's Department, the San Diego Police Department, and the District Attorney's Office joined together to form the San Diego Metropolitan Homicide Task Force to investigate the murders, thirty-eight women had been killed.

The Specter of Police Involvement "It all started with Donna Gentile"

—Sheriff's Sergeant Chuck Curtis
San Diego Tribune, 24 September 1987

"Most people think of prostitutes as someone who is hard-core, and that she asked for what she got. But the last time I looked, the sentence for prostitution is not execution."

—Linda Barker-Lawrence
National Victims Center, Dallas
The San Diego Union, 12 February 1989

The Police Prostitute Enforcement Squad, an elite detail of thirty uniformed officers, followed prostitutes day and night along El Cajon Boulevard during May and June of 1984 in an attempt to shut down their business. Police Lt. Carl Black, a twenty-two year veteran on the police force, was the tactical commander of the operation. The crackdown resulted in three hundred and forty-nine arrests of accused prostitutes and their customers before the squad was disbanded in June 1984 and replaced with a smaller part-time detail.

It was during this time that Donna Gentile, a twenty-one year old prostitute who worked on El Cajon Boulevard, became caught up in a conflict between Lt. Black and another member of the vice unit, Officer Larry S. Avrech. Avrech became "bitter" when his bid to join the Police Prostitute Enforcement Squad was turned down by Black (*Union*, 8 May 1985).

Gentile first met Black when he stopped her on the boulevard during the crackdown. From their first meeting

Gentile felt that Black treated her "real nice, like a friend, never like a prostitute," she said. "He offered to watch after me and get me out of the life I was living" (*Union*, 3 March 1985).

Over the next few months Black lent Gentile money to hire a lawyer to appeal a prostitution conviction dating from March 1984, co-signed a bail bond to keep her out of jail, and wrote a letter to a judge on her behalf. He also took Gentile on a four-day trip to the Colorado River along with his woman friend, two other police officers, and the wife of one of the officers.

Officer Avrech's association with Gentile dates to 1981 when he took her on a police department authorized ride-along. He did not know at the time that she had a prostitution record. Other officers recognized Gentile, and Avrech was subsequently interviewed by police internal affairs investigators about the event. Gentile told internal affairs investigators that she and Avrech had sex during this initial encounter, a charge Avrech denied.

Avrech met Gentile again in June 1984 when he was working as back-up for undercover vice officers posing as prostitutes and johns on El Cajon Boulevard. At that time Gentile told him of her friendship with Black and that she was going on a trip with him to the Colorado River. Avrech decided to develop this information in order to report Black for possible wrongdoing. At this point, Avrech began to use Gentile as a police informant to gather information regarding Black's violation of police codes of conduct.

Between June and September 1984, Avrech pursued his relationship with Gentile hoping to come up with significant evidence to present to police internal affairs investigators about Black's involvement with her. However, in August 1984, Donna Gentile reported Avrech to police internal affairs when she learned that he was going to report Black for befriending her. She told her story to Avrech's supervisor, Police Sergeant Harold Goudarzi. She subsequently filed a sexual harassment complaint against Avrech in which she claimed that he continually demanded sexual favors from her. At that time internal affairs investigators gave her a tape recorder and microphone so she could record conversations she had with Avrech. She recorded nine telephone conversations with him.

In-House Investigations

Gentile's complaint resulted in a six-month-long police department internal affairs investigation of Officer Avrech and Lt. Black. On 15 January 1985, Avrech was fired for having an inappropriate relationship with a prostitute. He immediately filed an appeal for re-instatement with the Civil Service Commission. The hearing was scheduled for May 1985.

In March 1985, Lt. Black was suspended from the force for ten days pending a special departmental hearing to determine his ultimate fate. On March 19 he was fired for having an inappropriate relationship with a "known criminal, prostitute Donna Gentile," and for inappropriately

interfering with the criminal justice system by contacting a probation officer on Gentile's behalf.

On 12 April 1985, Black was reinstated with a demotion to the rank of sergeant. The reinstatement came after he appealed his case directly to then-Police Chief Bill Kolender. Black then appealed his demotion to the Civil Service Commission in June 1985.

Between the time of Avrech's firing in January and Black's demotion in April, Donna Gentile went to prison. She had been arrested in March 1984 for solicitation and was sentenced in March 1985. Both Avrech and Black had previously violated police department regulations by attempting to intervene in her behalf with the court system. The judge stated he did not respond to their requests for leniency in her sentencing. Gentile began serving a 90-day sentence at Las Colinas Women's Detention Center on 13 March 1985.

In an interview from jail on March 14, Gentile told a *San Diego Union* reporter that Avrech had sex with her while he was on duty and in uniform, supplied her with times and locations of undercover operations on El Cajon Boulevard to help her avoid arrest, ran licence plate numbers through the police department computer in order to provide her with the addresses of some of her clients, and wrote to Municipal Judge E. Mac Amos in her behalf. Gentile said Avrech told the judge, "I wasn't on drugs and I wasn't the typical hooker and that I shouldn't go to jail."

Avrech also extorted sex from her. He gave her fifty dollars with the letter to the judge, she said. "He was

expecting something in return that night because that was the deal, and when I refused he began to sexually harass me and threaten me."

In that same interview, Gentile maintained that her relationship with Black, unlike her relationship with Avrech, was "purely platonic, not sexual. He wanted to get me off the streets" (*Union*, 14 March 1985).

What's The Difference Between A Good Girl and A Bad One?

The public profile of Gentile that emerged after she filed a complaint against Officer Avrech was enormously contradictory. Vice detectives and beat officers called her a "cheap hooker." A veteran San Diego vice officer said, "She was a hard-core whore. She hated policemen. I wouldn't have used her even as a snitch." Avrech called her "a liar." For these police officers, Gentile was the quintessential "bad" girl, the "whore."

Black maintained that "she was a pretty good person ... There was a lot of potential there you don't see with the hookers you normally see on the street." For Black, Gentile was the "good" girl, the "prostitute with the heart of gold," who could be "rehabilitated" under his paternal largess.

Burn / Burn

The attack on Gentile's character was strongest during the Civil Service Commission appeals hearings on Avrech and Black. Avrech's lawyer Donald Peterson said, "Before

people begin thinking terrible things about this officer, they should consider the source of the charge — a convicted prostitute with an extensive record who is out to burn police officers. My client has been placed under a public magnifying glass by a woman who has very little credibility. [Gentile is] well-known in police circles because she doesn't like cops and will go to any length to burn one" (*Union*, 5 May 1985).

In testimony given to the Commission during Avrech's appeal, Police Sergeant Harold Goudarzi, the officer to whom Gentile first told her story of Avrech's misconduct, stated, "[Gentile] was a known complainer. She didn't like the idea that we weren't letting her work." He also said that many officers had the impression that she was "out to burn a cop if she could" (*Union*, 5 May 1985).

A "Dirty Cop"

Donna Gentile testified before the Commission on 16 May 1985. She called Avrech a "dirty cop" because he sexually harassed her. She claimed that he extorted sex from her in exchange for information regarding vice-squad stake-outs. The Commission did not consider Gentile's allegations of sexual harassment because an earlier police internal affairs investigation had not uncovered enough evidence to substantiate them, and they cleared Avrech of any criminal wrongdoing in his relationship with Gentile.

Hell's Kitchen

At the Commission hearings, the only charges leveled against Avrech by Deputy City Attorney Susan Heath were that between June and September 1984, he violated police department policies by giving Donna Gentile advanced information on where and when the Police Prostitute Enforcement Squad would be operating, by providing Gentile with vehicle registration information about her clients that he obtained from police computers, and by repeatedly deriding fellow officers in her presence. Avrech contended that he had done nothing improper in his relationship with Gentile and was only using her to develop information on Black's violation of departmental regulations.

Prior to the Commission hearings, Avrech had voiced his concerns about pursuing an investigation of a superior officer. "I knew from the very beginning that I was going into hell's kitchen by trying to develop Gentile's information. But I had an obligation to investigate her relationship with Black," he said. "My biggest problem was that she went to internal affairs before I did." Avrech claimed that he kept his investigation secret until he had substantial evidence to present to his superiors because he feared a cover-up and retribution from the department. The effort cost him his badge. "A common criminal has more rights than a police officer brought up on charges by his own department," Avrech said (*Union*, 22 March 1985).

A "Naive" Cop

Black's appeal to have his rank of lieutenant restored was heard on 25 June 1985. At the hearing he was described as "naive" and as someone who did the right thing in trying to reform Gentile. Deputy District Attorney Nina Deane described Gentile as "a manipulator. She was somebody who used him. He was simply naive. He believed her" (*Union*, 26 June 1985). Black stated that "She [Gentile] was the only prostitute I ever came across who I felt was so close to the borderline that she could step over it" (*Union*, 26 June 1985). He said his only interest in befriending her was to rehabilitate her. Gentile was not subpoenaed to testify at Black's hearing.

"Street Prostitutes Don't Usually Make Headlines, But Donna Gentile Did. She Got A San Diego Police Officer Fired and His Lieutenant Demoted. Then She Died."

—*The San Diego Union*, 30 June 1986

Two days before Black's hearing began, Donna Gentile was murdered, but her body remained unidentified for eleven days. On 23 June 1985, a Pine Valley couple walking their dog near the "Lover's Lane" turnout off Sunrise Highway in East San Diego County discovered Gentile's naked body. Her clothes were neatly piled on top of her. She had been severely beaten around the head and strangled. A fact not made public until well after her death was that rocks and gravel had been stuffed in her mouth. On July 1 her landlord contacted the coroner's office to report that she was

missing. On July 4, fingerprints on file with the police department were used to establish her identity.

- Why did it take eleven days to identify Gentile's body?
- Why was gravel stuffed in her mouth?

When Gentile's lawyer Douglas Holbrook learned of his client's death, he released a tape recording she had made before going to jail on 13 March 1985, to Channel 10 television news reporter Bob Donley. In the eighty-second recording Gentile said, "I have no intention of disappearing or going out of town without letting my lawyer know first. Because of the publicity I have been given in the police scandal, this is the reason I am taping this.... I feel that even someone in uniform and a badge can still be a serious criminal. This is the only insurance I have."

Good Cop / Bad Cop

On 10 July 1985, the Civil Service Commission ruled on Black's and Avrech's appeal. The Commission upheld Black's demotion to sergeant for one year, ending on 10 July 1986. They found that Black violated two department regulations—unbecoming conduct and associating with a convicted criminal. In reference to the Commission's decision to limit Black's demotion from lieutenant to sergeant to just one year, Black's lawyer Ed Dillion told the *San Diego Tribune*, "This is an unusual decision. It's the first time I've seen this kind of decision" (11 July 1985).

In Avrech's case the Commission ruled that he violated seven department regulations, including unbecoming

conduct, abuse of his position as a police officer, failure in the performance of duty, neglect of duty, and dissemination of police information. The Commission upheld the police department's decision to fire Avrech. Avrech contends that he was fired because the information he developed was too sensitive and against his superior in the department. "I was an expendable cop," he said (*Union*, 11 July 1985).

Dark Clouds Over The SDPD

In the years since her murder, information about the circumstances leading to Gentile's death and the depth of her involvement with law enforcement officers has slowly emerged. Retired Sheriff's Detective Tom Streed, the lead investigator in her case before he was removed from the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force in 1989, said he could trace her movements to within seven minutes of her disappearance. Yet seven years have passed and her murderer still remains at large.

On 26 April 1991, the *Tribune* published an interview with a former prostitute and friend of Donna Gentile. The woman, who requested anonymity out of fear of police retaliation, told *Tribune* reporters that in May 1985, she overheard Lt. Black arrange with three other men to eliminate a "problem," a reference she understood to be a plot against Gentile's life. The conversation took place in a room at the Hitching Post Motel on El Cajon Boulevard. The woman said she went there with two men she had been introduced to by Donna Gentile. She agreed to provide them both with sex for \$130. When they got to the room the men injected heroin and made a phone call. A few minutes later

Gentile, Black and another man knocked on the door. After Gentile left to go to Mission Valley to look for customers, the four men discussed the need to eliminate a problem. The woman said the men ignored her presence in the room, but that "she was scared and didn't want to hear [their conversation]."

In autumn of 1985, she told the same story to Tom Streed. He came across the woman at the Las Colinas Women's Detention Center when he went there in search of witnesses who knew Gentile. The woman had been picked up and jailed for prostitution shortly after the incident at the Hitching Post Motel. It was at that time that she identified Black as one of the men in the room from photographs Streed showed her. Detective Streed began to investigate Black based on the woman's story.

His investigation led him to an interview with Randy Gonzales, a teenager being held in Juvenile Hall in the fall of 1985. After seeing TV coverage of Gentile, Gonzales reported to his probation officer Barry Wohrle that he knew her and that in June 1985, he had been at a drug party in Poway attended by both Gentile and a tall heavy-set man with a moustache whom he later identified as Carl Black. Wohrle passed the information on to his superiors who contacted Streed.

Streed said his investigation of Black revealed other sources, both prostitutes and police employees, who were aware of Black's involvement with drug activity and with Gentile. Streed brought all of this information before the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force, but other investigators failed to pursue it. Streed said that the task force doubted the

credibility of the woman because she had worked as a prostitute and of Gonzales because he was a juvenile criminal. Before Streed could go further with the investigation, he was removed from the task force.

Thomas Streed The "Loose Cannon"?

Although Homicide Detective Thomas Streed has a Ph.D. in behavioral psychology, is considered a nationally recognized expert on serial killings, and frequently is consulted by forensic scientists, the Sheriff's Department removed him from the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force in 1989 saying he was a "loose cannon" and a "maverick." But two years earlier, this same loose cannon had been named Sheriff's Department Employee of the Year. He also had been awarded the Sheriff's Distinguished Service Medal. Catherine Spearnak reported that criticism of Streed was widespread in the MHTF because of his insistent investigation of the Gentile murder (*San Diego Magazine*, November 1988).

In March 1991, Streed told the *Tribune*, "The reason I was taken off the task force was primarily because I was in a position to do some real damage. I think I was close. I think someone may have thought I was even closer than I knew I was" (2 March 1991).

Running Scared

Gentile spoke with her lawyer Douglas Holbrook three days before her death. They spoke about her outstanding \$1,000 bill. She told him she had lost her job as a security guard, was having financial problems, and was behind on her rent.

In 1990 *The San Diego Union* reported that on the eve of her death, Gentile was one of several women paid to attend a beach party thrown by Vernon Savings and Loan executive Don R. Dixon in Solana Beach. Two sources told a reporter they saw Gentile at the party. During the mid-1980's, Dixon hosted fund-raisers for politicians, including Rep. Bill Lowery, R-San Diego (*Union*, 4 November 1990).

After the failure of Vernon Savings and Loan, Dixon was charged with embezzling investors' funds to finance an extravagant lifestyle that included yacht cruises, political contributions, a two-million-dollar beach home in Del Mar, and a leased party house in Solana Beach where he hosted lavish parties staffed by prostitutes. Karen Wilkening, San Diego's infamous "Rolodex Madam," supplied the women for many of his parties. An ex-Wilkening employee identified Gentile as one of the women at Dixon's party on June 22, the day before Gentile disappeared (*Union*, 12 October 1990).

On the day of her death Gentile telephoned about an ad for a cook at the Canyon Inn, a restaurant in a remote section of East San Diego County. She told the owner Tony McNamara that she had to get out of town because the police were harassing her. She said she was unable to keep a

job because they continually followed her. She scheduled an interview with McNamara on the afternoon of June 23, after she finished an appointment with a client. She referred to the client as a "top gun" in the police department in her phone conversation with the restaurant owner (*Union*, 4 November 1990).

A Dead End

Shortly after her death, investigators claimed they had obtained significant clues from the Pine Valley area where she was found, and from her Normal Heights apartment and car. But seven months later in February 1986, Sheriff's Homicide Lt. Baxter told *Tribune* reporters that the investigators were near a dead end.

Gentile's parents, John and Ellen Schneider of Levittown, Pennsylvania, believe their daughter's case will never be solved because she worked as a prostitute. "We were told they had leads. So what happened?" Gentile's mother, Ellen Schnieder, asked. "I know we're not being told some things," she said. John Schneider, Gentile's stepfather said, "I think because of who she was they have just dropped the case" (*Tribune*, 3 February 1986).

Internal Affairs

A Case Of The Fox Guarding The Chicken Coop

Speculation about police involvement in Gentile's murder has grown because of police actions that may have hampered the early investigation into her death. Immediately after her slaying, San Diego police officers were told by

their patrol sergeant not to cooperate with Sheriff's detectives. Their interference was documented in a twenty-page letter written in 1987 by Sheriff's Detective Tom Streed, lead investigator in the Gentile case, to Sheriff John Duffy. The police department denied Streed's allegations, stating that an internal affairs investigation proved the allegations to be without substance (*Union*, 19 August 1990). Yet Assistant Chief Norm Stamper later conceded, "there should have been better cooperation (between the Sheriff's department and the SDPD) before that task force was put together" (*Union*, 19 October 1990).

A 1989-1990 grand jury report inspired renewed interest in solving the Gentile case. Under pressure because of the grand jury's findings of police involvement with prostitution, Police Chief Bob Burgreen assigned Stamper to review the Gentile files at the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force. Burgreen called the Gentile case a "dark cloud hanging over his department," and said, "I want to find out who killed these people and I want them in jail. I want all those rumors put to rest" (*Union*, 29 June 1990).

When Burgreen announced that he was sending Stamper to the MHTF, ex-police officer Larry Avrech was interviewed by the *San Diego Union*. At the time he was working as a private detective in Chula Vista and had been hired by the District Attorney's office to gather information in the Gentile case. He was also providing information to the MHTF. Avrech called Stamper's presence at the task force "a case of the fox guarding the chicken coop" (29 June 1990).

In the interview Avrech also revealed for the first time that Gentile worked for the police department as a paid

informant in cases against pimps and drug dealers. He said that police department supervisors did not want this information made public. The SDPD had successfully covered it up for five years.

- Why?

In August 1990, Gentile's lawyer Douglas Holbrook confirmed Avrech's statements regarding her work as a paid police informant. On August 19, the *Union* reported that Holbrook stated Gentile wore a hidden microphone "two to four times" in drug and prostitution cases to try to obtain leniency from authorities. Her work as an informant and as a prostitute caused her to become increasingly concerned about her safety, Holbrook said. She began to fear that an officer or someone she turned in might harm her.

Mixed Messages

"Every American city that has proclaimed the loitering law to be valid and ordered street sweeps has seen a serial murderer emerge from the woodwork within a couple of years—Seattle, Portland, Oakland, Los Angeles, [San Diego]."

—Margo St. James, Prostitutes Rights Activist
"The Reclamation of Whores," *Good Girls/Bad Girls*

"Police feel they can do to a prostitute what they please with impunity."

—Delores French
Working, My Life as a Prostitute

In 1984 police officers stopped Gentile sixty times and arrested her five times for prostitution. On 14 March 1985, three months before her death, she filed a harassment suit

against the city of San Diego, accusing seven police officers of 'malicious prosecution' by harassing her on the streets. The complaint covered a period from 2 May 1984 to 2 January 1985 when she also received thirteen traffic tickets. Six tickets were issued in May and June 1984, and seven were issued in a two-hour period in December (*Union*, 6 July 1985). She was cited for infractions such as parking more than eighteen inches from the curb and not stopping on the white line at a stop sign. She was also issued two tickets within five minutes of each other.

Gentile was disturbed by the harassment and felt betrayed by law enforcement. According to her lawyer, "What confused her was that she worked with police as an informant, and here the same agency was harassing her" (*Union*, 27 October 1990). "They would just follow her from the time she left her house. They claimed they were following her because she was a prostitute, but I don't know if they have the facility to follow every prostitute," Holbrook said (*Tribune*, 6 July 1985).

The officers cited in her harassment suit were Sergeants Michael Blakely, Curtis Meyer, Richard Draper, Robert Candland, and Detectives Frank Christensen, James Brooks, and Jeffrey Dean. Dean is a member of the task force investigating her murder.

The Specter Of Police Involvement Cynthia Maine I

"Cops don't see anything wrong with prostitution. They use the service like any other men. But they also extort prostitutes for street information, sex, and money. It becomes an entangled, symbiotic relationship."

—Norma Jean Almodovar
quoted in "Crimes and Misdemeanor"
Lies of Our Times, September 1991

Cynthia Maine was a friend of Donna Gentile's. Like Gentile, Maine worked as a prostitute and police informant. She disappeared in February 1986. According to Lori Helle, Maine's sister, she had worked as an undercover narcotics informant for four San Diego police officers—Officer John Fung, with whom she also had a "romantic" relationship, Sgt. Dennis Sesma who worked with Fung on the Narcotics Street Team, Detective Leslie Oberlies, and Sgt. Alfonso Salvatierra. Beginning in 1984, Maine worked as an informant for Fung setting up street drug buys and as an undercover informant in drug investigations at Solar Turbines, Inc., where she was employed. According to Lynda Coleman, Maine's mother, Fung asked Maine to wear recording equipment for the undercover operations.

Helle told *Tribune* reporters that her sister "had sex with several members of the department's vice unit" (25 September 1990). Her brother Mark Maine, a former San Diego police officer, told reporters that she "had been giving sex to cops in exchange for staying out of trouble" (*Tribune*, 4 March 1991).

Cynthia Maine didn't stay out of trouble.

In September 1985, she was jailed on two counts of writing bad checks. To get out early, according to her sister, she testified to the Internal Affairs Division about police who "actively solicited sex from prostitutes on El Cajon Boulevard." In a letter to the district attorney's office dated 5 November 1985, San Diego police Captain M. E. Tyler, who supervised the Narcotics Street Team, wrote that "Maine is an active police informant who recently provided information that places her safety in jeopardy." He asked for "modification" of her 120-day sentence, which was cut in half for her testimony linking police and prostitutes.

In a *Tribune* report, Helle said that after Maine's release from jail she was "terrified" that police officers would retaliate against her for her incriminating testimony. "She was afraid of cops" (22 March 1991). She "narced (informed) on several of these police officers to get out early," Helle added. "She was terrified. She realized after that it probably would have been easier to stay in jail than to narc on cops" (*Tribune*, 25 September 1990).

Three months later, Cynthia Maine disappeared.

She was reported missing by her mother on 21 February 1986. It was not until four and a half years later, however, that her disappearance became widespread public knowledge. Even Thomas Streed, a member of the MHTF from the Sheriff's department, was not told of her disappearance until two years after her mother first reported it. He found this highly unusual, given the fact that she was a friend of Gentile's, whose murder he had been investigating.

Cynthia Maine II

“I always tell my guys, ‘Treat informants like rattlesnakes.’”

—A law enforcement source
The San Diego Union, 11 March 1991

In September 1990, according to *San Diego Union* reporters, task force investigators searched Sgt. Alfonso Salvatierra’s home, car, and police locker, and found sexually explicit photographs of Cynthia Maine. Salvatierra, a homicide detective, had recently been assigned to work in internal affairs, the unit that investigates allegations of police corruption (26 September 1990).

One year later in September 1991, Salvatierra and Fung were given 20-day unpaid suspensions and transfers to patrol duty for their involvement with Cynthia Maine. Even to certain police officials, the light sentence did not hold the officers accountable, considering the severity of the evidence against them (*Times*, November 1991).

In the *Los Angeles Times*, a high ranking police official who requested anonymity said, “There’s a real lapse of time here. Some of these allegations are five years old. We can’t say we’re going to forget about everything. But it’s also tough to get rid of people based on this happening so long ago” (November 1991).

- Police, it seems, “can do to a prostitute what they please with impunity.”

Police Involvement Cynthia Maine III

“And as far as violence is concerned, I feel that the stigmatizing, the whore stigma, is what legitimizes violence.”

—Margo St. James
Good Girls/Bad Girls

“There appears to be more potential police corruption spinning off the Maine case than the Gentile case.”

—Police source
The San Diego Union, 28 September 1990

- Is there a statute of limitations on police misconduct?
- Why did it take five years for the police department to bring action against the two officers, Fung and Salvatierra, who were involved with Maine?
- What was the nature of the relationship between Oberlies, Sesma and Maine?

In July 1991, the task force concluded that police misconduct was rampant within the narcotics street team—“pervasive mismanagement, misconduct, and unprofessional activity”—characterized the division. A source told *Union* reporters, “Maine had contacts with lots of cops. There are links to more players” (28 September 1990).

The Metropolitan Homicide Task Force

“We determined, because of the enormous caseload and the complicated cases, it (the task force) was tremendously understaffed to do a proper job.”

—Police Chief Bob Burgreen
The San Diego Union, 6 October 1990

The effectiveness of the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force has been impeded by secretiveness, underfunding and a lack of personnel, inattention to forensic details and the destruction of evidence, a focus on police corruption, and mistrust among the agencies making up the task force—the San Diego Police Department, the Sheriff's Department, and the District Attorney's office. A "code of silence" and general fear of retribution among police officers, as well as an unwillingness to call in outside help from agencies such as the FBI, has not helped improve the MHTF's performance.

In December 1988 local law enforcement officials told *The San Diego Union* that the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force had turned down two requests by the FBI for their agents to become members of the task force.

- Why?

From its inception, the agency has operated under a veil of secrecy, withholding information from both the public and the media. Until recently the secrecy extended to information such as annual operating budgets generally considered to be within the public domain.

Police Chief Burgreen admits that he assigned too few detectives when the task force was first formed in 1988. At its inception the task force was assigned only nine investigators for the 38 women, a ratio of 4.5 investigations per detective. In other serial killings the ratio of cases to homicide detectives has been much lower. In the Los Angeles investigation of the Hillside Stranglers, over two hundred detectives were assigned to the case, a

ratio of .4 to 1. In the Seattle Green River series, 45 detectives investigated the murder or disappearance of 48 women, a ratio of 1.1 to 1 (*Union*, 22 January 1989).

According to a *Tribune* article (17 September 1991), law enforcement officials acknowledge that the MHTF was formed "too late"—crucial evidence had vanished and the bodies of several victims had deteriorated. But Burgreen also acknowledged to *Tribune* reporters that the task force previously had "paid very little attention" to the physical evidence they did have (5 November 1990).

Evidence Ignored?

"From the first day until the present I have NEVER had any contact with the police department. They have NEVER come to my house for any questions, such as who were her friends, or what had she been doing, or even what were the events prior to her death."

—Pat Riccio, mother of Michelle Riccio
Letter, 30 January 1992

Evidence, physical and otherwise, seems to have been deliberately ignored. Several families are both incredulous and outraged that they have not been contacted by the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force. Curtis Funderburk says that only now are detectives following up on suggestions the family made about who killed his daughter, Marsha. Lynda Coleman, mother of Cynthia Maine, told *Union* reporters, "For them to say they are actively investigating her (disappearance), I want to throw up" (26 September 1990).

The Specter of "Accidentally Destroyed Evidence" The Coroner's Office

In 1985, then-Coroner David Stark initiated a controversial policy, which conflicts with common practice nationwide, of withholding autopsy reports until a suspect has been arrested or until police close a case. Autopsy reports are public records. Other coroners and defense attorney's accused Stark of trying to cover-up inaccuracies and of cooperating too closely with the police and prosecution. In a *San Diego Tribune* article (8 November 1985), Milton Silverman, Jr., a prominent San Diego attorney, said, "I'm afraid that they will make their reports match with what the police investigation turns up. That's not their job."

Stark refused to release the autopsy report on Donna Gentile.

Death reports and autopsies written by the Coroner's Office were sketchy, according to journalist Spearnak, until April 1987, when a new forensic pathologist was appointed. Since then the Coroner's Office also has been criticized for destroying evidence crucial to task force investigations. In 1988, Stark acknowledged cremating four of the women's bodies before they could be identified. Until 1989, the Coroner's Office allowed samples of body fluids that could be traced to individuals to be destroyed only one year after they were taken.

In Gentile's case, evidence that could have been used to identify the man with whom she had sex within one day of her death was "accidentally destroyed" (*Union*, 2 December 1990).

Grand Perjuries

"Sources said jurors wanted to seek indictments for perjury but that deputy district attorney Brian Michaels counseled against it, claiming that there was insufficient evidence and greater issues were at stake."

—*The San Diego Union*, 23 December 1990

- What more serious issues than allegations of perjury against police officers were at stake?
- What issues are of greater importance than the public's right to accurate information about the conduct and practices of law enforcement officers?

The final report of the 1989-1990 San Diego County grand jury raised serious allegations of police misconduct, including officers' involvement with prostitutes in connection with the murder of Donna Gentile and the call-girl ring operated by Karen Wilkening. Six months before disbanding, the grand jury reviewed a secret "interim report" prepared by the district attorney's office that suggested there was significant evidence to support many of the allegations of police misconduct (*Union*, 14 April 1991). Grand jurors repeatedly asked for more information on the allegations but prosecutors often rejected their requests. They feared "it would infringe on a parallel Metropolitan Homicide Task Force investigation into possible police involvement with prostitutes," sources close to the grand jury said (*Union*, 14 April 1991).

During their investigation the 1989-1990 grand jury heard testimony from 53 witnesses, including 44 police officers. The final report stated, "Several (police officers

and officials) gave incredible testimony. That testimony outraged many grand jurors even though perjury charges have not been filed" (*Union*, 15 July 1990). "They knew we knew they were lying but there was nothing we could do about it," grand jury foreman J. Phil Franklin told the *Union* (15 July 1990).

The jurors' outrage, combined with concern that the truth would never be told, led to leaks of confidential grand jury testimony to *The San Diego Union* reporters in July 1990. The reaction to the paper's publication of the testimony was acrimonious. District Attorney Edwin Miller charged the *Union* with placing a "chilling" effect on the 1990-1991 grand jury by scaring off potential witnesses. He further stated that the *Union's* disclosure of secret testimony "made the normal methods of grand jury investigation impossible" (*Union*, 22 June 1991). Yet in reference to the leaks, 1990-1991 grand jury foreman Rene Testolin stated, "We've seen no indication that the grand jury system has been destroyed" (9 April 1991).

San Diego-Gate

"They [the police and district attorney] expected with time this whole thing would just blow away."

—Source close to the 1989-1990 grand jury
The San Diego Union, 14 April 1990

The subsequent 1990-1991 grand jury final report cleared San Diego police officers of all allegations of misconduct with the exception of involvement with Donna Gentile's murder, which the jury did not consider. The

jurors' only recommendations were to amend the California Shield Law to limit journalists' ability to protect their sources and to discourage police officers from attending parties where "exotic" dancers are present.

- Why the wide discrepancy between the findings of these two consecutive grand jury investigations?

According to *Union* reporters, the 1990-1991 grand jury did not conduct an independent investigation. They did not interview a single witness. Rather, the jurors based their conclusions solely on evidence provided by the state attorney general and the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force. "The grand jury placed blind faith in an investigation of the police by the police" (*Union*, 15 June 1991).

Two months before the 1990-1991 grand jury issued its final report, Police Chief Bob Burgreen commented, "If the task force finds wrongdoing among officers in the mid-to-late 1980's it raises questions about the diligence of the department's own internal monitoring" (*Union*, 14 April 1991). The failure of the 1990-1991 grand jury to carry out its mandate as an independent government watchdog has left serious questions about the integrity of law enforcement unasked as well as unanswered.

The Diverted Investigation

"Are we actually giving a higher level of service to one class of victims—prostitutes—than we are to the rest of San Diegans who may become murder victims?"

—Police Chief Bob Burgreen
San Diego Tribune, 18 July 1991

In 1990, the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force added nine new investigators and one member from the state attorney general's office to investigate allegations of police corruption and misconduct stemming from a 1989-90 grand jury report that accused officers of perjury, improper relations with prostitutes, covering up drug use and shootings, involvement with "Rolodex Madam" Karen Wilkening, the murder of Donna Gentile, and the disappearance of Cynthia Maine. The investigation of the murders of the women was diverted.

Officials acknowledge that the MHTF's focus on police corruption "severely compromised their main mission, investigating murders." Deputy Attorney General Gary Schons conceded that the task force "should not have been involved in a police corruption investigation while it was trying to conduct a serial-killing probe" (*Union*, 15 September 1991). In 1991, Sheriff Jim Roache stated, "Ninety-five per cent of the task force resources were going to (investigating) police corruption. Nothing was happening with the killings" (*Tribune*, 18 July 1991).

After solving only one murder, Roache's spokesman, Dan Greenblat, told the *Tribune*, "It's sucking staff resources down a black hole" (18 July 1991). Even Maureen O'Connor was unhappy with the Task Force—"No one is satisfied with the investigations so far," she told the *Sacramento Bee* in October 1990.

- If this is the "high level of service" that the San Diego Police Department and the San Diego County Sheriff's Department provide to the communities they serve, then aren't we all in deep trouble?

The Specter Of Retribution

"According to a police department survey, the majority of the 980 officers responding are convinced that speaking out will result in retribution."

—*The San Diego Union*
5 May 1991

"If law enforcement was involved, it could be a tough nut to crack."

—Steve McMillan,
legal affairs director for the Police Officers Association
19 July 1990

Chief Burgreen assured Mayor O'Conner that "he will stay on it [solving the murders] until answers are produced, even if we aren't going to like the answers." But if those answers involve police officers, Burgreen may have a great deal of trouble producing them. According to the *Sacramento Bee*, a source close to the task force investigation said, "it is really hard to get charged up about taking down another cop."

On 24 December 1990, *San Diego Union* reporters wrote that they had "found many instances of officers who say they were intimidated, harassed, forced out of their job or even threatened with death for speaking out against other officers or the department." "Again and again in recent years," reporters wrote, "the 'code of silence' allegation has surfaced against the San Diego police; officers are pressured to not speak out or testify against a fellow officer or the department."

The Bad Apple Theory

In spite of this reluctance, Burgreen was apparently hopeful that the task force would find the few "bad apples," and thereby put an end to the isolated incidents of police misconduct or the regrettable excess of a few officers. "I think the public needs to be as confident as I am that this task force is really well structured and is heading in the right direction," Burgreen said. "I look for them to make things happen in 1991." But by January 1992, there had been only one conviction since the task force's formation.

The Specter of Harold Goudarzi She Got What She Deserved Because She "Deserved What She Got."

In May 1991, Police Sergeant Harold Goudarzi was fired from the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force for having sex with one of his informants, Denise Loche. Goudarzi acknowledged having sexual relations with Loche, loaning her money, and arranging for her to wear a hidden microphone to an interview with a *San Diego Tribune* reporter he believed had information about the killer of Donna Gentile. Goudarzi also asked Loche to wear a microphone into FBI headquarters to discover if the agency was investigating Gentile's murder. Loche accused Goudarzi of drugging and raping her and performing bizarre rituals (*Union*, 11 March 91).

Goudarzi's informant Denise Loche stated that he had told her that Gentile "deserved what she got" (*Tribune*, 21 November 90). And yet it was Goudarzi who in 1984 first

encouraged Gentile to inform on Larry Avrech. Goudarzi's critical opinion of Gentile was revealed when Goudarzi testified at Avrech's Civil Service Commission hearing in 1985 that Gentile was "one of the more diehard" prostitutes working El Cajon Boulevard. In 1988, Goudarzi, with less than six months homicide experience, was assigned to supervise the highly sensitive investigation of Gentile's murder for the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force.

The San Diego Police Department obviously thought Goudarzi was an exemplary officer. He was chosen by his superiors to be spokesman for the San Diego Police Department in the 1988 television special on the serial murders in Seattle and San Diego, "Manhunt ... Live! A Chance to End the Nightmare." Then-Sheriff's Homicide Detective Tom Streed also was interviewed on the program.

In 1989, Streed accused Goudarzi of thwarting the investigation into Gentile's murder. Streed contended that Goudarzi prevented him from pursuing leads that indicated police involvement with Gentile's death (*Union*, 17 May 1991).

The Settlement Package; Or, How To Sanitize The Record

On 13 February 1992, Goudarzi gave up his right to appeal his firing from the SDPD in exchange for back sick pay, full retirement benefits, and a clean law enforcement record. The *Union-Tribune* stated that the police department wanted to prevent his public appeal before the Civil Service Commission because of the fear of "exposing

the innermost workings of the secretive” Metropolitan Homicide Task Force.

The short articles in the *Union-Tribune* and *Times* did not mention Goudarzi’s relationship to Donna Gentile, nor did they address the following questions:

- Sexual relationships between police and their informants are clearly against department policy. The SDPD gave Goudarzi a clean record after he was fired for having a sexual relationship with an informant, Denise Loche. If there was no wrong-doing, then why was he fired in the first place?
- Goudarzi was fired for allegedly having sex with a police informant. Why was Goudarzi fired, while John Fung (who allegedly had a “romantic” relationship with Cynthia Maine) and Alfonso Salvatierra (who allegedly had erotic photographs of her) merely were given short unpaid suspensions? Who determines the severity of the disciplinary measures?
- It was reported that police internal affairs compiled a 500-page report on Goudarzi. What was in that report?
- Why are the innermost workings of the MHTF so secret?
- Whose tax dollars are going to pay for Goudarzi’s back sick pay and full retirement benefits?
- What happened to Denise Loche’s \$100,000 lawsuit against the city, the SDPD, and Goudarzi charging the police officer with drugging and sexually abusing her (*Union*, 11 March 1991)?

The Specter Of A Specter

“Eight members of a special task force investigating a series of 44 prostitute [sic] murders will return (to the police department) after the operation shuts down in the spring.”

—*Los Angeles Times*
17 January 1992

“ ‘...the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force has no plans to close up shop anytime soon,’ said Task Force coordinator Dick Lewis.”

—*The San Diego Union*
20 January 1992

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the Task Force will disband in the spring of 1992. According to the *The San Diego Union*, the task force has no plans to disband. When we asked about the impending dissolution, task force Lt. Curtis stated, “No one really knows if that’s true.” And according to the Sheriff’s Homicide Department, “Rumors are floating around” and “no one knows what’s going to happen.”

- Forty-five murdered women, and no one on the task force knows the status of their own special group of investigators brought together to solve their murders?

The Specter Of “Inappropriate Conduct”

“What good is having power if you don’t abuse it?”

—San Diego police officer quoting department “higher-ups,”
The San Diego Union, 23 December 1990

“The question of inappropriate conduct—like who killed Donna Gentile—still hangs over the department,” Police Chief Burgreen stated after the 1990-91 grand jury report was released (*Union*, 14 June 1991).

- As a man in Burgreen’s position should know, murder is a question of criminal, not merely “inappropriate,” conduct.

Media

“Indeed, the specter of so many unsolved, poorly investigated murders compels the conclusion that the press has succumbed to a double standard allowing one class of women to be seen as less valued, less newsworthy, and less in need of protection than others.”

—Ann Nocenti, writing about the San Diego murders
“Crimes and Misdemeanors”
Lies of Our Times, September 1991

“Crimes against prostitutes will go uninvestigated and ignored by the press, as long as there’s a law against women using their bodies as they please.”

—Norma Jean Almodovar
quoted in “Crimes and Misdemeanors”
Lies of Our Times, September 1991

Before the Metropolitan Homicide Task Force was formed, the “reality in San Diego was that no one—not the police brass, not the politicians, not even the news media—seemed to care about the murders,” according to the authors of *The Search for the Green River Killer*. “The news media in San Diego had consistently underplayed the crimes ... each of the murders was reported as an isolated incident,

usually in two to three paragraphs. The crimes only rarely made the television news.”

But when the task force was formed, it operated under an “almost impenetrable veil of secrecy” and has continually “stonewalled press inquiries.” When reporters have asked questions about the series of murdered women and allegations of police corruption, the task force answer is always: “No comment” (*Union*, 25 December 1990).

One month before the report on media stonewalling appeared in the *The San Diego Union*, Police Chief Burgreen told reporters that he wanted the MHTF to develop a “more forthcoming, open attitude toward the public and the press.” Burgreen said he believed in “freedom of the press. ... It’s one of the changes in the task force that is more consistent with my personal style” (5 November 1990).

But two weeks later when Harold Goudarzi (one of the original members of the task force and officer in charge of the Gentile investigation) was reassigned, reporters once again found that “police and task force officials remained steadfast ... in refusing to comment on task force business” (*Union*, 21 November 1990).

The location of the task force headquarters in Mission Valley remains a secret. When we called the police department for the task force telephone number in order to verify a report, we were told the police department did not have the number.

- So much for a more forthcoming, open attitude toward the public.

America's Finest City

"Had forty-three middle-class housewives been murdered in one town in a six year period, with a strong suggestion the local police were involved, it would be an international scandal."

—Ann Nocenti

"Crimes and Misdemeanors," *Lies of Our Times*
September 1991

- Why haven't the Mayor and the City Council taken a greater interest in solving these murders and overseeing the alleged corruption in the San Diego Police Department and the Sheriff's Department?
- Why have they allowed the foxes to guard the chicken coop?

It is unfair to blame police alone for the prejudice directed towards women working in the sex industry. Police often merely reflect the attitudes of the communities they serve. San Diego Supervisor Susan Golding told a *San Diego Union* reporter (12 February 1989), "If the victims had been from middle-class homes, I think there would have been a greater level of fear and that would have translated into a louder community concern about the killings."

- But is fear the appropriate response to violence against women?

A more appropriate response is community concern and anger over the fact that women, **any** women, are being slaughtered. But when the police deny the existence of a series of murders for over two years, their delay in announcing the link between the murders prevents community organization and outrage.



I Am Down On Whores

"It seems as if there were no progress in the human race, but only repetition. We can almost hear them, if we listen, singing the same old song ..."

—Virginia Woolfe
Three Guineas

"I am down on whores and I shan't quit ripping them until I do get buckled."

—Jack the Ripper
in a letter to the Central News Agency in London
18 September 1888

"She was a hard-core whore."

—A San Diego vice officer

"I am down on whores ..."

"However, to vice detectives and street cops who had contact with her, Gentile was nothing but a 'cheap hooker' ... Gentile is portrayed by some veteran cops as nothing but a street corner whore."

—David Hasemeyer
San Diego Tribune, 12 July 1985

"I am down on whores ..."

"'The prostitute,' that's all the San Diego police ever called her."

—Rose Varela

Who Are Prostitute Women?

"Like the 'witch,' the prostitute is an archetypal projection of the patriarchal bad woman. The symbolic meanings of each are similar—female carnality, deception, manipulation, and evil."

—Jane Caputi
Age of the Sex Crime

"The victims are universally described as runaways, prostitutes, or drug addicts who 'deserved' to die because of how they lived."

—Barbara Smith,
"Twelve Black Women: Why Did They Die?" *Fight Back*

Patriarchal Truisms

We deserved it because we lived alone.

We deserved it because we forgot to lock our doors.

We deserved it because we went out alone at night.

We deserved it because we said no but really meant yes.

We deserved it because of the way we dressed.

We deserved it because we were not afraid.

We deserved it because we refused to shut up.

We deserved it because we always get what we deserve.

Women

"Although some groups of women are branded as especially vulnerable, all women are meant to internalize the threat and message of sexual terrorism."

—Jane Caputi
Age of the Sex Crime

Who Are Prostitute Women?

"We are mostly single mothers with children to support, women on welfare, women helping to support elderly relatives on fixed incomes, secretaries and other office workers supplementing low wages, students putting themselves through school, full-time housewives, nurses, teachers, juvenile runaways refusing to be raped and battered emotionally at home, and other women refusing the low wages available to women in the straight job market. In other words, there is no real stereotype of who a prostitute woman is—she can be any of us."

—Rachel West
"U.S. PROstitutes Collective," *Sex Work*

Women

"My daughter was an artist also. She has even painted a mural in my younger daughter's room, and has had her drawings shown. She was indeed more than just 'NHI.'"

—Pat Riccio

Gayle Moffitt, mother of Diana Gail Moffitt, wrote to us. Her letter expressed her pain and outrage at the insensitivity of the detectives' investigation of her daughter's murder. "I feel some individuals on the San Diego Task Force need to have some training in sensitivity in handling families of murdered victims," she writes. "The girls had names, and deserve a proper investigation and the families deserve to be treated with respect. These families are trying very hard to get through their grief process; however, the mistreatment some families have had to deal with is uncalled for and brings added stress." She also commented on the lack of community awareness regarding the murders. The "public

needs to realize the girls that have been murdered are not just 'PROSTITUTES,' but individuals that were loved very much by family and friends. ... It is time for people, families and friends to speak out on this INJUSTICE."

Change The World

"I will call out their names until the day comes when sex means something *else* besides women's dead bodies. I live for that day. On that day, I will be silent. I will remember those sisters who have been permanently silenced. Then, I will thank those who changed the world."

—Annie McCombs
in *Lesbian Ethics*, 1985

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