## Three Home Town Remedies for Law Enforcement

## Accountability

Until such time as Sonoma County establishes fully empowered civilian police oversight boards, here are three remedies we're certain will begin to make a difference.

If you agree and would like to participate in getting these measures established, give us a call at (707) 575-3150, or email TaylorAnderson-Stevenson at tandersonstevonson@gmail.com.



That All Sex Crimes Cases Reported to Police and Sheriff Must Be Sent to the DA for Review!

No other serious violent crime gets more systematically ignored and ditched by law enforcement than sex crimes.

The full barbarity of our local law enforcement response to sex crimes can be seen in the compilation of public record statistics we did in the Spring if 2012.

## That the Sonoma County Law Enforcement Chiefs' Association meetings be conducted on the public record, open to public attendance and input, under Brown Act type rules!

Every month the Sonoma County law enforcement chiefs - the police chiefs, Sheriff, DA, Probation chief, and more - get together to hammer out law enforcement issues and policies for the county. Astoundingly, they do so completely off the public record, behind closed doors. For a tangle of legal arguments, law enforcement is exempt from Brown Act open meeting requirements.

However, the key point here is that there is no law anywhere that prohibits the chiefs' meetings from obeying any or all of the Brown Act rules. All it would take would be a mandate from our local city councils and board of supervisors to put this in force.

It is unconscionable in a democracy that the debate and forging of our law enforcement polices is carried out in secret. With all the enormous behind-the-scenes powers already built into law enforcement activities, no community can afford to be so completely shut out of the process. As things stand now, citizens can, of course, individually or in groups meet with authorities, but that so atomizes citizen power, and so shields law enforcement response, as to make the input virtually powerless.

Women's Justice Center Centro de Justicia para Mujeres (707) 575-3150 \* www.justicewomen.com In brief, over 75% of all sex crimes reported to police and Sheriff in Sonoma County are never even sent to the DA for review. They are buried in the police departments. Furthermore, the rape prosecution rate in our county hasn't improved in over 20 years, despite protests, trainings, and more protests.

The full solution to this problem will require a radical dismantling of the patriarchal structure, culture, and composition of our law enforcement. But insisting that all cases be sent to the DA for review should begin to remedy some of the most flagrant refusals to investigate.

That civilian committees with veto power be established to participate fully in all recruitment, interviewing, hiring, and promotion of law enforcement officers in their communities, at the police academy, and in the District Attorney's office as well.

This third point begins to get at the origin and root causes of our law enforcement problems. Internal police culture is notoriously resistant to change. White male control of our police powers will continue to clone themselves and their defects until communities reach in and break up the mold.

It starts with recruitment! And with some fairly obvious steps, such as changing recruitment messages, eliminating

advantage points for military service, or abolishing the infamous wall which serves mainly to wash women out. The critical point is that the community's consciousness is already far out ahead of police thinking, and the community will drive the change.