



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

HALL OF JUSTICE

ALEX VILLANUEVA, SHERIFF



November 17, 2021

Brian K. Williams, Executive Director
County of Los Angeles
Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission
World Trade Center
350 South Figueroa Street, Suite 288
Los Angeles, California 90071

Dear Mr. Williams:

LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT'S PARTICIPATION AT CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT COMMISSION MEETINGS

The purpose of this letter is to advise the Civilian Oversight Commission (COC) that the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (Department) will cease its participation in future COC meetings pending an apology or retraction of defamatory and slanderous statements from Commission Chair Priscilla Ocen.

As stated in previous letters to this Commission, I am troubled the COC continues to be manipulated by false narratives and agendas of political activist who are not interested in public safety for the residents of Los Angeles County. Rather than build bridges between the communities we serve, the COC is driving a wedge by making unsubstantiated, reckless statements about the Department. This irresponsible behavior is creating a platform dominated exclusively by anti-law enforcement activists who do not represent the public. As the most transparent Sheriff in Department history, I have enacted many reforms since taking office to better serve the community. The Department is now the most diverse it has been since its creation. The ranks within the Department now mirror the communities we serve.

As a Latino Sheriff who manages a department that is now over 51 percent Latino, I am offended and appalled by Ms. Ocen's statements to the media that, *"We have a problem with white supremacy in the L.A. County Sheriff's Department. We have a problem with white supremacist gangs. And the*

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Sheriff who is tasked with managing the department has looked the other way.” To make such a libelous statement with no facts and no proof of any kind, exposes her and the Commission to liability regarding these statements that she knows are untrue.

Ms. Ocen has stated in the past that, “*We already knew that LASD has a culture of impunity. They lie, they cover up gangs and murders. LASD as a whole is operating as a gang.*” Name one example where the Department operates as a gang. She speaks as though she is an expert and misinforms the public who expect a commissioner to rely on information that is validated and corroborated. Slander is not protected as opinion, where it is stated as fact. She states these extreme comments as facts.

What is true is wherever there has been misconduct, as in any organization, there has been consequences, and for that there is proof. Her conduct cannot go on without consequence. These extremist statements that defile both a dedicated department of deputies that risk their own lives in service to their communities every day is reckless and does not further any goals of the public, which she supposedly serves. I will advise the respective collective bargaining units of her defamatory statements for review by their legal counsel of any and all remedies. Additionally, I will also inform the contract cities inviting them to demand proof from your Commission of these extreme statements, because you increase risk and liability costs to these contract cities by permitting her irresponsible rhetoric and false narrative, to taint potential jury pools who will be tasked with deciding the outcome of lawsuits.

Calling any member of the Department a murderer is reprehensible, slanderous, and completely irresponsible. Referring to the entire Department as liars who cover up gangs and murders is what one would expect to hear from the lunatic fringe and conspiracy theorist, not a sitting member of the COC who is appointed by the Board of Supervisors (BOS).

As a reminder to the COC, the Department does not have gangs. This is a false narrative you are spreading and the lawsuit used as the basis for this lie was thrown out of court due to lack of evidence, absence of triable facts, and the complainant “may not contradict his deposition testimony by proffering different testimony in a later declaration.” You continue to ignore the fact I have been the only Sheriff in Department history to address a problem of subgroups left by past administrations. I crafted a constitutional sound policy

which was implemented on February 14, 2020. In addition, I have created a video which has been shown to all Department members reinforcing my stance on the subject.

I will not allow my department members to attend a COC meeting where the main goal is to undermine the Department and recklessly spread false narratives. Your meetings are not productive and they do not follow any decorum. A responsible oversight body should strive to make positive changes by collaborating with the Department and make realistic recommendations. This is clearly not the intent of the COC.

The COC does not reflect the residents of Los Angeles County and is not a deliberative body. I will not bring legitimacy to this Commission by participating in future meetings until Ms. Ocen retracts her statements and apologizes to the men and women of the Department. I will continue to provide the COC documents which they can legally possess, but will not send representatives to any meetings.

The men and women of the Department work tirelessly every day to keep the communities safe. I will not let them be undermined by reckless statements. Ms. Ocen's statements should be condemned by this Commission and the BOS that appointed her. Her statements are insulting on many levels and they pose serious liability to the County. This type of cancerous rhetoric has no place in a civil discourse.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact my Chief of Staff, Commander Jorge A. Valdez, at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,



ALEX VILLANUEVA
SHERIFF