

The Real Reason Why Oakland's Police Chief Was Fired | East Bay Express

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eastbayexpress.com

2016 Cops and Underage prostitutes - Oakland, CA



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At this morning's press conference announcing the departure of Oakland Police Chief Sean Whent, Mayor Libby Schaaf and City Administrator Sabrina Landreth told a room full of reporters that Whent was resigning for "personal reasons." The mayor said it had nothing to do with a scandal involving rookie police officers who sexually exploited a minor, or the suspicious death of a police officer's wife and his subsequent suicide.

Mayor Libby Schaaf (center) announced this morning that Oakland Police Department Chief Sean Whent resigned — but the Express has learned that he was forced out.

"I'm extremely angry about the alleged

misconduct in this department," Schaaf said.

But the mayor and other city officials are either not being forthright about the extent of OPD officer misconduct and the reasons for Whent's resignation, or they are in the dark.

The *Express* has learned that the sexual-misconduct scandal involves more than just a few rank-and-file Oakland cops, but also high-ranking officials from departments throughout the Bay Area. A few committed statutory rape of the victim, who was an under-age sex worker at the time, and informed her of undercover police operations.

According to interviews with the victim, elected officials, and sources close to OPD, in addition to documents obtained by the *Express*, at least fourteen Oakland Police officers, three Richmond Police officers, and four Alameda County Sheriff's deputies had sex with the girl who goes by the name Celeste Guap. (The *Express* is not publishing Guap's real name because she was a sexually exploited minor when the abuse began.)

Three Oakland police officers committed statutory rape of Guap when she was under-age. She says all of the law-enforcement agents who had sex with Guap knew she worked as a sex worker.

According to text messages between police officers and the victim, at least three OPD officers

leaked her confidential information about undercover prostitution stings. One Oakland cop obtained police reports and criminal histories and shared them with the victim, which is against department policy. Guap also said she slept with cops as a form of protection.

Despite the mayor's claims, multiple city sources say Whent was forced out by Independent Police Monitor Robert Warshaw, who is responsible for overseeing OPD's progress with its 13-year-old federal reforms, and who hand-selected Whent to run the department in 2014.

The monitor recently learned that Whent's wife, Julie, knew of Guap's relationship with officer Brendan O'Brien as far back as June 2015, according to multiple sources.

This March, Warshaw discovered that Whent also knew about O'Brien's sexual relationship with the underage girl. Sources with the city and inside law enforcement say Warshaw put OPD Deputy Chief John Lois in charge of the sexual-misconduct investigation — and ordered them not to report to Whent, but directly to him.

The rapidly expanding scandal has now cost Whent his job — but the blowback in the Bay Area is far from over.

The scandal began in February 2015. Guap was seventeen at the time and working on the streets of East Oakland as a sexually exploited minor.

In an interview, Guap said that one day a pimp chased her down International Boulevard, but she spotted an Oakland police car and approached the vehicle for help. That's when she met officer O'Brien.

"He saved me," Guap said.

Rather than detaining Guap as a sexually exploited minor and turning her over to guardians, Guap said O'Brien released her. "We flirted a little," she recalled, adding that she told O'Brien her mother was a dispatcher in the department.

Two weeks later, Guap saw O'Brien on patrol again in East Oakland and they exchanged numbers. Shortly afterward, O'Brien and the girl began "dating" — a word Guap used to describe their relationship.

Guap said she had sex with O'Brien numerous times while she was seventeen years old.

She says that O'Brien later introduced Oakland police officers Terry Smith and James Ta'ai to Guap. Smith, Ta'ai, and O'Brien worked in the same squad out of OPD's Eastmont Substation. Their supervisor was Sergeant Chan Lee, who is currently on stress leave.

According to Guap and fellow officer Luis Roman, three cops committed statutory rape of Guap while she was still 17.

This week, the Contra Costa district attorney reported that Smith had sex with Guap, but when she was an adult. The DA said there was insufficient evidence to charge Smith.

The Oakland Police Department did not respond to a request for comment on these rape allegations.

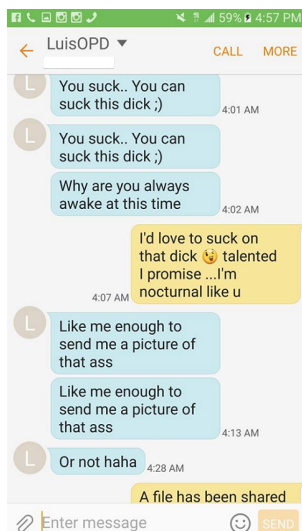
In several interviews, Guap maintained that officers were “tricks” who she voluntarily had sex with in exchange for protection, or because she wanted to.

“I think cops are fine. They’re cute and all, but it’s like one less officer that’s gonna arrest me,” she said.

“I would hook up with [Smith] like every Saturday night for three months straight,” Guap said. “He had a mattress in his back seat and slept in his car in the OPD parking lot, so we would hook up after work.”

Oakland police officer Giovanni LoVerde met Guap through Facebook. She says she had sex with him on multiple occasions when she was 18. LoVerde then introduced Guap to another Oakland police officer, Roman.

According to text messages obtained by the *Express*, Roman and Guap had frequent late-night conversations. Roman would send text messages while on duty, and Guap would respond with naked pictures.



Roman spoke to the *Express* and told us he knew of Guap’s sexual exploitation at the hands of his fellow officers. But he denied any wrongdoing himself.

He also confirmed that LoVerde had a sexual relationship with Guap and is on leave as part of the investigation. After a brief conversation, Roman demanded that we speak to his attorney and hung up the phone.

Guap said that O’Brien, Smith, Ta’ai, LoVerde, Roman and other police officers all knew that she was a sex worker.

Oakland Police Officer Luis Roman “flirts” with Celeste Guap. Roman denied any wrongdoing.

Guap met other officers on the streets. In February of this year, Guap said she was stranded in West Oakland after exiting a BART train from San Francisco. She was drunk and lost. She saw an Oakland police vehicle and asked the officers for help. A tall, heavy-set white officer called her a cab.

“I don’t remember giving him my number,” said Guap. “Next thing I know, it’s 2 a.m., I’m getting home in the cab, I got a text that said ‘I hope you got home safe.’”

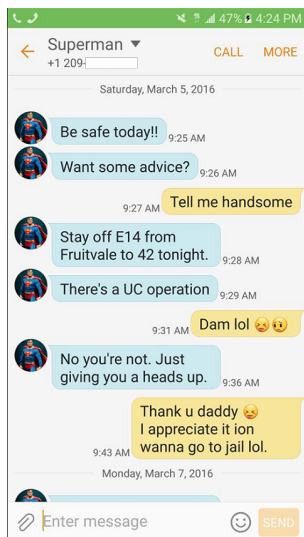
Guap said she didn't recognize the number, but the person texting her wrote: "We just met."

Guap said she gave him the name "Superman."

A week later, she says Superman met her at a room in the Courtyard Marriott Hotel by the Oakland Airport, where the two had sex.

Superman then began leaking confidential Oakland Police Department information to Guap.

"Stay off E14 from Fruitvale to 42 tonight," Superman wrote Guap in a text message on March 5 of this year. "There's a UC operation," referring to an undercover prostitution sting.



An Oakland Police officer, a.k.a. "Superman," discloses undercover operations to Celeste Guap.

"Thank u daddy I appreciate it [I don't] wanna go to jail lol," Guap wrote back.

Guap said that Superman never gave her his name, but in his voicemail message the officer identifies himself as "BJ." This morning, the *Express* called BJ's cell phone number, which is a 209 area code, and an Oakland police officer answered the phone. "You need to speak to public information officer Johnna Watson," he said.

This afternoon, Watson emailed the *Express* to demand that this newspaper refrain from contacting an officer "Bunton." According to OPD's most recent roster, there is an officer named Brian J. Bunton, who graduated from the 171st Basic Academy on April 3, 2015.

At least two other Oakland cops leaked confidential law-enforcement information to Guap. One of them was Smith.

"He frequently tipped me off to stings," said Guap. "He'd be like, 'Don't go out there's an undercover operation tonight.'" Guap said that Smith also obtained police reports including the arrest records of her friends, and would show them to Guap for fun.

Throughout 2015, Guap was working as a sexually exploited minor along International Boulevard in East Oakland and out of hotels in Oakland and Richmond. She said that on-duty police officers would see her on the street and solicit her for sex. She met other cops through the internet.

Guap said high-level current and former Oakland police contacted her through Facebook and text messages, apparently seeking sex.

A retired Oakland police captain even contacted Guap through Facebook. Guap said the two began talking over Facebook beginning in 2015, when she was still underage. But she was eighteen years old in December of last year when the retired captain met her in a hotel on San

Pablo Dam Road in Richmond, where he paid \$250 for sex.

The *Express* called the retired OPD captain and he admitted this.

He also said he met her on Facebook and friended her because she was already friends with other retired Oakland cops. The former captain said Guap told him she was twenty when they had sex.

The *Express* is not publishing his identity for medical reasons. "Please don't publish my name. I will die. I have a heart condition," he said via phone. He currently draws a \$125,000 pension from the city.

Oakland police Captain Ricardo Orozco was at one point a friend with Guap on Facebook and also followed her on Instagram, according to social-media accounts obtained by the *Express*. Orozco later retired from OPD, on April 10 of last year. He did not respond to Facebook messages from this paper.

Oakland Police Sergeant Byron Reed, who recently retired, also flirted with Guap on Instagram, according to social-media accounts reviewed by the *Express*. "We did flirt. We were actually getting to it, making googly eyes with each other," Guap said, but added that they never slept together.

She says she told Reed that she had slept with other police officers when she was 17 years old. According to multiple sources close to the department, Reed has been previously investigated by internal affairs for improper conduct toward minors.

This sexual-misconduct investigation also extends to other law-enforcement agencies.

Guap disclosed in several interviews that she had sex with three Richmond police officers, including a lieutenant and sergeant.

The *Express* spoke to the accused lieutenant today, who referred the paper to internal affairs. That Richmond unit has opened an investigation into "several" officers, but has declined to identify any of the officers suspected of misconduct or crimes.

Richmond Police Chief Allwyn Brown spoke to the *Express* and said that he didn't know if the information regarding the officers was true or not. "We are just now learning about the connection between several of our officers and the girl at the center of the Oakland Police Department scandal," the chief said today.

Brown added that his department was informed of this connection by OPD investigators, and Richmond's own investigation began just this week.

Also, at least four Alameda County Sheriff's deputies also had sex with Guap. She said she had sex with one deputy in his personal automobile while his K-9 police dog sat in the back seat.

The *Express* has learned that the sheriff's internal affairs unit has been briefed about the new allegations, including the names of the deputies.

One deputy, Eric Chaloner, was briefly investigated by internal affairs last month, but was cleared of any wrongdoing.

The sheriff's office blamed Guap for not coming forward. "She never came to our agency with any sort of complaint," spokesman J.D. Nelson said. "We had no way of knowing about this sort of conduct."

This scandal first surfaced after the suicide of officer O'Brien in September 2015. A few days before O'Brien killed himself, Guap informed Leroy Johnson, an Oakland police sergeant and close friend of her mother, that she had been seeing O'Brien since she was seventeen, according to multiple city sources. It's unclear if Johnson informed internal affairs about O'Brien's conduct with a juvenile. Johnson, who has since retired from the department, declined to answer questions and referred us to his attorney, who did not return calls.

OPD policy requires supervisors and officers to immediately report any misconduct as soon as they become aware of it.

Guap says she told multiple officers and sergeants, plus Chief Whent's wife, that she had sex with OPD officers while she was underage.

Independent Monitor Warshaw forced Whent to resign after he discovered the chief knew about Guap's relationship with O'Brien months before it was brought to the court's attention.

According to Guap, Julie Whent reached out to her online in June 2015. Guap claims that she told the chief's wife last year that she had been sleeping with O'Brien since she was a minor. Warshaw did not become aware of O'Brien's death, and the relationships O'Brien and other rookie officers had with Guap, until he was tipped off earlier this year.

This morning, Shaaf characterized her department's wrongdoing as "off-duty conduct," and assured that independent investigations would lead to swift justice.

The mayor also tapped BART Deputy Police Chief Benson Fairow as interim chief. Fairow left the OPD in 2011 and will serve while the city conducts a national search for a permanent replacement.