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**The "New" William H. Parker Center Controversy:
Revisionist Views Can't Override Long Racial Legacy
Between The Lines**

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The City of Los Angeles is about to unveil its brand new "state of the art" world-class headquarters for what it considers its world-class law enforcement agency. Just know there's one too many "world-class" attributes in that last sentence, and given the latest controversy—the public should decide where the "world-class" attribute should actually go. A month ago, our city's resident narcissist, former LAPD Police Chief and current Eighth District City Councilman. Bernard Parks, motioned that the new LAPD headquarters carry the same name as the old LAPD headquarters, that of former police chief, the late William H. Parker. Yes, go ahead and blink twice on that one. It's as ridiculous and outrageous as you read it.

Parks rationalization, if you want to call it that, was that Parker was responsible for transforming LAPD into a "world class" law enforcement agency. Uh-huh. Despite efforts to romanticize the Parker era, which ran from 1950 to 1966, almost anybody who lived in Los Angeles during that period remember what it was like to have an encounter with LAPD. The first time I ever saw my father disrespected by another man in was a white LAPD officer on a so-called routine traffic stop because we were on the "wrong side of town." Over forty years later, I still have an aversion to police officers-based on that experience. Revisionist history aside, how William H. Parker was is not what Los Angeles, or LAPD, wants to be known as today.

Who was William H. Parker? Yes, he did "transform" LAPD. From an urban western, up-south "Mayberry" police force, to a para-military organization based on his own military. William H. Parker was an urban segregationist, no different from Bull Connor or Jim Clark down in Alabama. Parker enforced racial protocols and Los Angeles' race caste system that held until the early seventies (some say the mid-80s as far as the valley areas go). Los Angeles didn't have the outright de jure segregation (separation by law) that the South had, but it did have racial restrictive covenants that prohibited blacks and others from renting and buying in certain areas long after the courts ruled

them illegal in 1948. Where do you think "getting caught on the wrong side of town" came from in Los Angeles? It came from Parker's willingness to enforce unwritten racial boundaries that kept blacks from going too far west of Western Ave., or above the 10 Freeway after dark, and the worst encounter a black or Latino could experience was not from white ruffians but from the police enforcing racial boundaries.

Parker recruited marines and army personnel after tours of duty and he recruited Southern white males who had a certain racial view of the world, then he put on the streets of Los Angeles. The mentality was pervasive and abusive, and corrupt to its very core. Police beat black and Latino residents, assaulted their women, and governed by fear and intimidation in the same way they did in the South. South Central and East L.A. became known for where blacks and Latinos lived, not because they wanted to-but because of de facto segregation (separation by social norms and residential patterns) that was desired by the "city fathers" and enforced by the Chief of Police, kept minorities "in their place" (geographical boundaries). Parker was "their man" and his racially distorted views of blacks didn't allow for promotions in the department and a culture that was as discriminating within as it was without. "To protect and serve" only applied to white people and he didn't have a problem saying that as long as blacks and Latinos stayed "in their place," they would be served too. Most of the time, they were served up.

It was a politic corrupt at it's very core, and Los Angeles burned twice in 27 years because of its lasting mentality. Even FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover, stated he had "no use" for the man (and few had any use Hoover at that point) because Parker refused federal intervention when his policing policies were called into question. Parker was the symbol for western "Jim Crow" and both his successor, Daryl Gates, and obviously Gates' mentee, Bernard Parks, wanted to be like Chief Parker when they grew up. It's a badge they both wore proudly, to have been mentored by Parker. History having proven the abusiveness and corruptness of LAPD's policing politic and codes of silence, there's something to be said for that. Now they want to put that badge on the new headquarters. It might be a badge of pride for them, but it's not for the rest of us. We remember a totally different William H. Parker. One who couldn't even call black people, Negroes. He called them "Nigras" in public-so you know what he called them in private--what his officers called them in the streets of Los Angeles. Revisionist views can't over-ride the racial legacy of LAPD.

The transformation of LAPD into a racially abusive para-military organization is the legacy of William H. Parker. If LAPD is really trying to establish a "new" image, the "new" police headquarters will not have William H. Parker's name on it. It's an insult to any minority who lived in Los Angeles during the Parker years. It's insane the proposal is even being considered.

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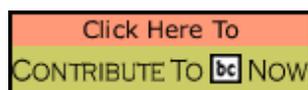
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