

the GraffitiConsultants

Ten Steps To A Graffiti-Free City

Guidebook 5 of 10 Steps

Tips And Tricks For Catching Graffiti
Vandals.



By: Dave Bonillas and Rick Stanton

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We would like to commend
you for your dedication to
eliminating graffiti vandalism in
your city.

THE GRAFFITI CONSULTANTS

**Rick Stanton, Owner
and
Dave Bonillas**

Dave Bonillas is a 20 year law enforcement veteran. During eight of those years he worked full-time on graffiti cases. The special investigative techniques he honed during those eight years resulted in the arrest of over 1,100 graffiti vandals. He has taught over 75 Talking About Graffiti classes to hundreds of graffiti offenders, has been a featured speaker at several graffiti conferences and seminars and has trained numerous other law enforcement jurisdiction representatives on graffiti-specific investigation techniques.

TEN STEPS TO A GRAFFITI-FREE CITY

By Rick Stanton

Owner of The Graffiti Consultants

We are the only full service graffiti consultation firm. Our proven track record includes:

- Helping our first municipal client reduce their graffiti 62% in one year with almost no increase in their graffiti budget.
- Coaching one city to an 87.9% reduction in graffiti in just one year.
- Training in one city that resulted in a 91.3% reduction in graffiti hotline calls in less than one year.
- Assisting a city in recruiting 1003 new anti-graffiti fighting volunteers in one year.

How can we help you?

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife, Patricia Rolland and my three sons, Garrett, Ethan and Jordan.

Author's Acknowledgments

I would like to thank those who have been of great help along the way. They include Patricia Rolland, Jordan Stanton, Lois Rolland, Dave Bonillas, Adriana York, Traci Tokunaga, Erik Hove and Manny Ruiz.

**GUIDEBOOK 8: LET'S WORK TOGETHER: HOW
TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL ANTI-GRAFFITI
COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP.
TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction	7
Guidebook 5	18
Section 41 Why Should We Care About The Crime Of Graffiti	19
Section 42 Officers Dedicated To Graffiti Investigations	24
Section 43 Philosophy	29
Section 44 Laying The Foundation	33
Section 45 Finding The Writer Of A Known Moniker	37
Section 46 You Have The Vandal's Name. Now What?	43
Section 47 Now It's Time To Pick Them Up	46
Section 48 Wrapping Up The Investigation	53
Section 49 Potpourri Of Graffiti Investigations	56
Section 50 Think Outside The Box To Catch Graffiti Vandals	63
Guidebook 5 Wrap Up	65
Conclusion	66
Bonus Documents	67

INTRODUCTION

TEN STEPS TO A GRAFFITI FREE CITY

My name is Rick Stanton and I despise graffiti. It frustrates me to no end that graffiti vandals eagerly deface the property of others. Given the target market for this information, I'm sure that the vast majority of you feel the same way. By the way, right now, some of you may be reading this and some of you may be listening to this on a CD. Either one is great because they are exactly the same. So, when those of you who are listening to this hear it referred to as a book, don't be alarmed – it is the same as the CD that you are listening to. In any case, how many of you have ever asked a coworker "How do you think they would like it if I wrote my name with spray paint on their car?" According to the United States Department of Justice, the annual cost of graffiti removal in the US in 2010 was a staggering \$12 Billion. I am also pretty sure that many of you have said "Just think of all the good things that could be done in the world if all the money that is needlessly wasted on anti-graffiti efforts was used for the good of the community. Imagine all the additional soccer fields, community centers, and libraries we could have built. Imagine how many fewer potholes there would be". Can we all agree that working full-time (or even part-time) in an anti-

graffiti effort can be frustrating, demanding, exciting, and challenging all at the same time? Most likely, you don't find it easy or boring.

The bottom line is that it is my hope and dream that this book will help you with your anti-graffiti efforts. If you follow the suggestions in this book, you'll succeed in your efforts to reduce (almost to the point of elimination) the graffiti for which you are responsible. The information contained in the following pages is the culmination of my 19 plus years of full-time work in the anti-graffiti field. It also includes the insights of other highly successful anti-graffiti professionals worldwide.

How do you know that it is worth your time to read this book? How do you know that the information (if followed) will lead to what I promise you – graffiti being substantially reduced in your area? Well...the best way to answer these questions is to give you some background of what happened when San Jose employed the systems and strategies that I've spelled out for you in this book. Other cities we have trained also achieved similar results.

First, however, let me identify the primary target market for most of the information in this book: city employees. We will spend most of our efforts explaining how cities should organize themselves and carry out the plans that are described herein. Some of the information does focus on county agencies – especially in regard to the consequences graffiti vandals must face when they are caught. These groups include judges, adult

and juvenile probation departments, and the offices of district attorneys.

I will now attempt to show you why I'm confident that the systems and strategies in this book will greatly reduce graffiti in your city. I was the manager of the City of San Jose's Anti-Graffiti and Litter Program for 10 years. Believe it or not, San Jose is the 10th largest city in the United States with a population of over a million and an area of 177 square miles. During my time there we were able to reduce graffiti in San Jose by 99.88%. Like any successful achievement, this improvement included the ingredients of hard work, learning from mistakes, and good luck. But most important of all was the mayor and city council who were determined to get rid of graffiti and allowed staff to design and follow a strategic plan that will dramatically reduce graffiti in any city that chooses to implement it. I freely admit that a very few cities may never be able to fully benefit from this information simply because they're too large to make improvements in systems that are written too deeply into stone and/or that have severe gang populations i.e. New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago quickly come to mind.

Let me paint a picture for you of the graffiti situation in San Jose when I was transferred into the Anti-Graffiti Program in 1997. The program was not new. It had been established as a multi-faceted anti-graffiti effort (or program) for at least five years. Individual pieces of the program had been in existence even before that. They had embraced the popular "4E's": Enforcement (catching and

prosecuting graffiti vandals), Education (sharing graffiti information with adults and telling youth not to participate in graffiti vandalism), Eradication (getting rid of the graffiti), and Empowerment (recruiting volunteers to remove graffiti in their neighborhoods). The program was well respected – both inside and outside of San Jose. They did an excellent job of promoting their strengths and successes. The staff in the program was very comfortable in their roles and very proud of their efforts. Their marketing materials were first-class. Their oral reports in meetings always put a positive spin on the many anti-graffiti activities that they provided with an immense amount of pride.

The only problem that I saw when I was transferred into the Anti-Graffiti Program was that there was graffiti **EVERYWHERE**. It had become part of the urban landscape. You couldn't drive anywhere without seeing graffiti - lots of it. It was in all corners of the city. It was big and small. It was on sound walls. It was on bridges. It was on freeway signs. It was on utility boxes. It was on buildings. It was on fences. It was on polls. It was on... well you get the idea. There seemed to be a huge disconnect between the image of this respected program and what you saw on the streets. What I didn't know was why this disconnect existed.

When I first started, I asked the staff lots and lots of questions. I assured them that I was not going to come in and make willy-nilly changes. I didn't even tell them that I was thinking of the disconnect that I just described. Remember - they were proud

of what they did and did not think that there was a problem. I felt that I had to tread lightly. During this initial period, I learned quite a bit. I learned that:

IN TERMS OF ERADICATION

- If someone reported graffiti on the Graffiti Hotline it would take an average of 22 days to remove it.
- If a member of the city council (or their staff) reported graffiti, staff would drop everything and remove it immediately.
- If a member of the public complained about the slow response time and threatened to call the mayor...staff would drop everything and remove it immediately.
- The performance measure target for removing graffiti was "48 working" hours. It was explained to me by staff that "48 working" hours was really six workdays NOT two days. They told me that sounded better and that the administration never really asked them specifically what that meant. I knew right away that deception would come back to haunt us some day when the administration figured it out...and boy did it!

IN TERMS OF EMPOWERMENT

- To become a graffiti volunteer, you were required to attend a three-hour class, held once a month, only on Saturday. The class covered the history of graffiti, how to remove graffiti with solvent, how to paint over graffiti and my favorite...how to operate our power

washer – which no one was ever allowed to borrow or use anyway.

- There were a total of 124 on-going graffiti volunteers.
- Staff organized group graffiti paint-outs every Saturday. Members of these groups did not do any additional graffiti removal throughout the rest of the year.
- Staff would go to community meetings to tell the group about the Anti-Graffiti Program and to recruit volunteers. They would usually go first on the agenda to explain the program and tell them about the three-hour class they needed to take to volunteer. They would ask for volunteers, give each a business card, and tell them to “call me at the office and I will tell you when the next class is and sign you up for it”.

IN TERMS OF EDUCATION

- Staff conducted an anti-graffiti classroom skit for second graders with giant puppets.
- The Anti-Graffiti Program sponsored a large annual Graffiti Conference for the public.

IN TERMS OF ENFORCEMENT

- On the enforcement side, very few graffiti vandals were caught and when they were, not much happened to them. The recidivism rate was very high.
- The only police effort involved one officer who was given a small number of overtime hours each week to investigate graffiti crimes.

- There was a group of about ten adult volunteers (cop wannabees) who were given night-vision binoculars and were sent out to do surveillances at locations that were frequently hit with graffiti.

All in all, after talking with everyone concerned, I felt that San Jose's Anti-Graffiti effort was all "smoke and mirrors".

I will delve into the details of the previous highlights (or lowlights) in the later guidebooks and share with you the changes in those areas that ultimately took place and paved the way for San Jose to become a virtual graffiti-free city. What I will do now is share some bottom line results that will illustrate what is possible if a city trusts and follows the plan that I will present to you in this book.

Please keep in mind that I was involved in varying degrees in most, if not all, of the following examples of the fantastic turnaround we experienced. However, so were others. The main point here is that graffiti can be drastically reduced when dedicated and hard working people follow a proven plan that will lead them to great success.

From: No way to measure success, trends, percent of gang graffiti, etc.

To: An annual Citywide Graffiti Survey

From: 124 graffiti volunteers

To: Over 6,400 graffiti (and litter) volunteers

From: A very light penalty for graffiti vandals
To: An effective package of penalties that severely reduced graffiti recidivism

From: No proactive graffiti abatement
To: An extensive, strategic and successful proactive system

From: A hotline response time of 22 days
To: A hotline response time of 48 hours that was achieved 99% of the time

From: A poor system for dealing with graffiti on private property
To: A private property system that really works

From: A miniscule focus on graffiti from the police department
To: An actual police Graffiti Enforcement Team dedicated to graffiti cases

From: 71,541 citywide tags
To: To 129 citywide tags

These types of improvements are possible in just about every city that implements the systems and strategies that you will soon know.

During my last few years as the manager of San Jose's Anti-Graffiti and Litter Program (the mayor added litter to our responsibilities in 2002) word had spread that incidents of graffiti were going down in San Jose. I received over 60 calls from cities all over the world asking what we were doing to get such

good results. Some cities even sent representatives to shadow us. It was obvious that there was a real need out there to help cities that were struggling with graffiti. After I retired, I began working as a graffiti consultant and have successfully assisted other cities in their goal of drastically reducing their graffiti.

I would like to conclude this introduction by issuing a WARNING: The war against graffiti is never-ending. By following the recommendations in this book, the graffiti in your city will go down. Period. However, when it gets to a level that is satisfactory to most people...that is when the danger begins. The danger is that someone will decide that he can now take the "pedal off the metal" a little. He might think that you do not need to do all of the things that you did to get rid of the graffiti in the first place. He might think that it is now OK to cut or move one of the staff positions. He might think it is OK not to replace an old spray rig that can't perform any more. Please don't let this happen! In San Jose the graffiti has risen dramatically over the past few years because the effort has been largely neglected. Vancouver worked hard to be graffiti-free for the 2010 Winter Olympics. After the Olympics, city leaders felt they won the war on graffiti and defunded their anti-graffiti effort. You can all guess what happened – graffiti came back hard and fast. There will always be an undercurrent of graffiti everywhere. It will be there - ready to explode if cities turn their back on it or even water it down just a little.

It is almost time to begin getting into the details of how you can become a graffiti-free city. I just need to share a few housekeeping items with you. First of all, the Ten Steps to a Graffiti-Free City is made up of ten guidebooks. Each guidebook corresponds to one of the ten steps. You may have invested in all ten of the guidebooks or just the one or more that were of the most interest to you. In either case, each CD and guidebook has a different step or chapter on it but each has the same introduction. So, if you have more than one CD or guidebook, you don't need to listen to or read the introduction again. You can skip directly to the next track on the CD or chapter in the guidebook.

Also, (and I hope this does not offend anyone) instead of using "he or she" throughout the book, I will just use "he" for simplicity sake.

If you thought that this book on graffiti would have a lot of pictures of graffiti in it, you would be wrong. I will use pictures to illustrate some key points but I don't see the need to give the vandals any more sense of accomplishment than I need to. Besides, if you are already involved in an anti-graffiti effort, I'm sure that by now you have seen enough graffiti to last a lifetime.

As I mentioned earlier, this introduction is the same in all of the ten CDs and guidebooks. The same can be said for the short conclusion at the end. So if you have more than one of these books, you don't need to read or listen to the conclusion again.

Finally, most of these guidebooks have one or more “Bonus Documents” at the end of it for you read. Also, in the CD case, the CD that is labeled “Bonus Documents” contains the same documents ready for you to plug into your computer and use as needed. These documents will save you hours upon hours of time. So, thank you for taking the time to read this introduction and on with the show.

GUIDEBOOK 5 OF 10

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR CATCHING GRAFFITI VANDALS.

For graffiti to stop, graffiti vandals need to go through a tough “Package of Penalties” as was described in Guidebook 4. Before this can happen, they need to be caught. For this to happen to the extent necessary to make a difference, cities need to have full-time officers dedicated to graffiti investigations. As many graffiti officers have discovered, this assignment usually proves to be very rewarding personally as well as professionally.

The primary focus of this guidebook is for law enforcement personnel to learn proven investigative techniques for graffiti cases that will culminate in the successful arrest of graffiti vandals.

SECTION 41

WHY WE SHOULD CARE ABOUT THE CRIME OF GRAFFITI?

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- Are graffiti and serious crime interrelated?
- What typically happens to serious crime in a neighborhood when the graffiti disappears?
- Is graffiti the only crime that all graffiti vandals are committing?

I know that you are concerned about serious crime. There isn't a leader in any city in the world who doesn't want crime to go down for the safety of his residents. Many city leaders however are not aware of the direct link between graffiti and serious crime. Please take a quick second to think about it: Are the areas of your city that suffer with serious crime graffiti-free? Are your graffiti-free neighborhoods plagued with serious crime? When you see graffiti on a TV show or a movie, in what context is it shown? Isn't it usually at a crime scene in a bad part of town? The fact of the matter is that serious crime and graffiti are inter-connected. Please don't take my word for it. I am sure you are aware of the "Broken Windows" theory. Here are two captions from the book to illustrate the phenomenal results that can occur when a city is able to get a handle on its graffiti situation:

"In the early 1990s, a major effort was made to clean up the subways in New York City...highlighted by a zero tolerance policy on graffiti. And while change is clearly evident in terms of quality of life and reduction in low-level crimes and incidents of disorder, a new development is the dramatic reduction as well in index crime, as reflected not only by what citizens experience but also in the crime statistics. Decline in the subway began almost immediately after the institution of an order-maintenance strategy...felonies have declined 75% and robberies 64%. In effect serious crime has ceased to be a major problem in New York subways. At least two factors suggest the order-maintenance activities caused a reduction in crime. First, the onset of declines in crime occurred almost immediately after the order-maintenance activities were introduced. Second...no major anti-robbery or felony tactics were introduced. Are the changes in crime rates solely the result of police efforts? No, not likely. We believe that, most likely, they have come about as a result of the total commitment to order restoration, which included eliminating graffiti, target hardening, assertion of civilian control over territory as well as police efforts."

...and,

"From the earliest efforts to eliminate graffiti in the New York City subway, every department was involved and committed. Restoring order was not merely the responsibility of police, then, but an integrated effort involving a number of different agencies and social service providers, all of which

engaged in a problem solving process to target a specific set of problems. The end result was not only order restored, but crime reduced and most probably, prevented. The fact is that in other settings, when they work in isolation from each other neither the police, citizens, nor today's criminal justice agencies have been able to reduce serious crime. We believe that order-restoration and maintenance attempts are most effective and most likely to lead to crime prevention and reduction when a community mounts an integrated and comprehensive effort involving citizens, police, various criminal justice agencies, social service agencies, business, schools and city officials. When the effort is channeled through a problem-solving process toward a single target (such as graffiti) the splintered tendencies of the criminal justice "system" can be overcome. Where each agency strives not merely to do its job, but to coordinate its actions as part of achieving a common goal, the potential for success increases significantly. Police, prosecutors, correctional agents, and courts must learn to speak with one voice - and that voice should reflect neighborhood interests and controls."

George L. Kelling and Catherine M. Coles, Authors
"Fixing Broken Windows"

Gang graffiti is an especially troubling form of graffiti because of the potential violence that it can incite. Some areas in southern California have had a great deal of success in reducing graffiti. What kind of impact has that made in those locations?

"Graffiti is not a petty crime. Most people do not realize how serious it is and the problems it brings to neighborhoods. My experience has shown me that there is a direct correlation between graffiti and serious crime. When we were able to significantly reduce graffiti in a community, we saw a considerable reduction in violent and gang crime as well."

Commander Michael Rothans
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

Many times, graffiti is not a stand-alone crime. Have you ever wondered if investigating graffiti crimes can lead to solving other, more serious illegal acts?

"Graffiti offenders in Saskatoon I've dealt with over the last nine years have been linked to arson, theft, assaults, break and enter, possession of child pornography, drugs and weapons, grow ops and murder. In the last three years I have seen more and more graffiti writers joining formal street gangs, increasing their involvement with other criminal offences. The bottom line is investing time and resources in investigating graffiti crime will pay dividends in the end because you decrease other, previously undetected criminal offences that the writers are committing"

Lee Jones
Saskatoon Police Department (Canada)

In one large US city, it is estimated that between 30% and 40% of the time, when a graffiti vandal is cited or arrested, there are collateral offences such as

drugs, alcohol, weapons and stolen property involved. One graffiti investigation even led to the solving of a homicide by the suspected graffiti vandal.

Many people tend to think the victim of graffiti vandalism is the owner of the property that was vandalized. While this is obviously true, other victims are all the people who must now be subjected to seeing these ugly marks. Depending on where the mark is located, that number could easily run into the tens of thousands a day. It would not surprise me if many, if not all, have a momentary flash of frustration when they see graffiti. I know I do, as do most of my friends and family. If you count the people who have to see the graffiti as victims (and I do) then you would be hard pressed to find a crime that has more victims than graffiti vandalism.

Does all of this make sense to you? Drastically reducing graffiti has a profoundly more positive effect on a community than just making it cleaner. I have seen it and it is a beautiful thing. A challenged neighborhood comes together over a single bonding issue - getting rid of graffiti. After they achieve that goal, they use their momentum as a springboard to make other positive improvements in their neighborhood. Every city that has more graffiti than it wants should make a concerted effort to wipe it out. A clean and safe city is a quality of life issue that all your residents deserve.

SECTION 42

OFFICERS DEDICTED TO GRAFFITI INVESTIGATIONS

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- What has to happen to get the vandals to stop tagging?
- What do the police departments in cities with too much graffiti need to do in order to actually have success in catching graffiti vandals?
- What are some of the important traits that officers doing graffiti investigations should possess?

Hopefully Section 41 convinced you that it is good for your city to reduce its graffiti. There are many things that cities need to do to make this reduction possible. Some are more important than others. So, let's simplify things. In order for graffiti to stop, vandals need to stop doing graffiti. As I mentioned in Guidebook 4 "Getting Graffiti Vandals To Stop: How To Establish An Effective Package Of Penalties", vandals stop tagging when the consequences they experience when they get caught is at a level so that they don't want to do it again. Finally, the vandals only experience the consequences when they get caught. So, the first step in actually getting rid of graffiti in a city once and for all is catching the vandals. This is where it all starts. The bottom line is if

you don't catch graffiti vandals and they don't experience a tough package of penalties, your graffiti will not go away, regardless of how many city staff, contractors and volunteers you have cleaning up the mess. You will just be spinning your wheels. Finally, as you know, not everyone can catch these vandals. That responsibility is squarely on the shoulders of your local law enforcement agency. In most cases it will be your city's police department. If they are citing and arresting a high number of graffiti vandals regularly, that's great! However, if they are not catching graffiti vandals, as a result, you probably have too much graffiti in your city.

I have heard many police departments say that graffiti offences are unacceptable and they treat graffiti crimes seriously. They have informed me that they have told all their officers this, and everyone on the police force is responsible for graffiti cases. Unfortunately, what usually happens in these cities is that when graffiti is everyone's job, in reality it turns out to be no one's job. That statement is usually proven correct by their low number of graffiti citations and arrests year after year. Fortunately, it does not need to be that way and there is a solution. The cities that have had the most success in generating an effective level of citations and arrests have assigned police officers to investigate graffiti crimes as a full-time assignment.

As an example of how a targeted graffiti team can really make a difference in a police department is in San Jose, CA where the whole police force averaged one graffiti case a month. Not only is this

a small number in a city of over a million people, in the vast majority of those cases the vandal was charged for only the one incident that was witnessed or reported. Virtually none of those cases was enhanced through more investigation that could lead to additional graffiti incidents being attributed to that vandal. When the specialized graffiti team was installed and all of the gears were turning in concert, the results drastically improved. The graffiti officers would average 20 solid graffiti cites and arrests per month and they were also able to enhance about 90% of the cases that came their way from the rest of the police force.

The graffiti officers were successful because they were able to invest the time to learn the ins and outs of the graffiti sub-culture. They were also able to develop the relationships necessary to become the go-to people for all graffiti related crimes. As in almost everything, the more experience you have in a specific area the better you become. If you have the right officers in the job, there is no doubt that they will be successful in their graffiti investigations.

Being a graffiti investigator is probably not for all police officers. If you don't currently have anyone in this role in your city, what are some important qualities to look for when assigning an officer to graffiti cases?

- Someone who is a self-starter – especially if no graffiti unit exists and he is being asked to build it from scratch.

- Someone who is ambitious and wants to move up through the ranks.
- Someone who can multi-task and manage a large caseload.
- Someone who is competitive.
- Someone who wants to make a name for himself.
- Someone who is well-spoken in groups.
- Someone who writes well.
- Someone not intimidated by social media, computers, digital cameras, cell phones, etc.
- Someone who can relate to youth ages 14 – 20.
- Someone who can take direction but does not need much supervision.
- Someone who will be dedicated to the cause and passionate about reducing graffiti.
- Someone who can develop many new relationships in a short amount of time.

Please notice that having knowledge about graffiti was not listed. The person's skill set and personality traits are much more important. In time, they will be up to speed in their knowledge of graffiti.

I doubt that any police officer in America got into law enforcement because he wanted to work the graffiti detail. As a matter of fact, it wouldn't surprise me to find out that most officers would actually be less than enthusiastic about the idea of being in a graffiti crimes unit. However, most officers I talk with who have been in this position are actually glad they got the opportunity. When you take a step back and analyze the position of being a graffiti

investigator, you begin to see the many positive sides to the job. Some of them are:

- You don't need to wear a uniform.
- You are able to organize your own schedule – unlike beat officers.
- You are not confined to a specific area. You actually serve the whole city and some cases require you to spread out to the county, neighboring cities and maybe even beyond.
- You will become the police department's "graffiti expert" and will have direct contact with the chief of police, the mayor, many city council members, and community and business leaders.
- You will grow professionally because of the large volume of citations, arrests and interrogations that you will handle.
- You will also be giving many verbal and written reports to city staff and community groups.
- For the most part, you will be working week days and the day shift.
- You will learn a great deal about the justice system because of your interaction with county attorneys, probation officers and the courts.

All of these experiences allow graffiti officers to put themselves in an excellent position for future promotions.

SECTION 43

PHILOSOPHY

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- What type of graffiti case should be your highest priority to solve?
- Why are gang graffiti cases especially hard to solve?
- When you are first starting out as a graffiti investigator, what kind of cases are the easiest to solve?

You will soon find out that as a graffiti investigator, every day is different. Requests and tips will come at you from all angles. Before you actually begin, we thought it might be helpful for you to know what we feel should be your highest priority targets. Unfortunately, you will not always be able to work the cases you want due to outside demands such as from politicians, your command staff and especially loud squeaky wheels. However, when you are able to focus on your targets, here are some that we feel are very important:

PRIORITIES

Here are the top three graffiti vandals that we recommend you target:

GANGS – In general, gang graffiti cases are very difficult to prove because large gangs can have literally hundreds of members who tag the same gang name or symbol without any personal moniker that would identify a specific person. Consequently, investigating gang graffiti rarely bears fruit. However, if any police officer on-views a gang member tagging his gang's name, he should work that case with tenacity because gang graffiti is always the most important graffiti to control for obvious reasons.

LEADERS OF LARGE TAGGING CREWS – You've heard the saying "If you cut off the head of a snake, the body will die". Well, although that might not be entirely true when you convict the leader of a large tagging crew, it certainly puts a severe hitch in that crew's get-along! Remember, tagging crew leaders have successfully been prosecuted with "gang enhancements" that has substantially increased their penalties. Typically, when you take out the leader of a tagging crew, many of that crew's members drastically reduce their level of tagging or even quit altogether. The shot callers of that crew may even begin an internal battle for control that can have a negative impact on the crew as a whole. If that crew doesn't dissolve completely, they are definitely dealt a severe set back.

VANDALS OF HIGH VISIBILITY LOCATIONS – When high visibility targets such as freeway signs, bridges and walls get hit with graffiti, many times it is admired by other vandals and it is also looked upon as a challenge to mark on other high visibility

targets. It is not only important to clean graffiti off these locations immediately but it needs to be a priority of law enforcement to catch these particular vandals. Word will spread quickly when these vandals are caught and held accountable for their actions and that will go a long way toward keeping these highly visible targets graffiti-free in the future.

HONORABLE MENTION

Here are some additional priorities on which to focus:

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICTS – Every city has a downtown business district. These areas not only have a lot of cars driving by but they also have extremely heavy foot traffic. Because of this, they are popular target areas for taggers. Catching vandals who tag the buildings, walls, signs, etc. in downtown business districts should be a high priority.

POLITICIANS – There is no way around it. You will get word through your chain of command or from politicians themselves that they want you to catch the writer of a certain moniker. These requests are inevitable and sometimes you need to put these at the “top of the list” – even if they are not your own personal priority.

Even though we recommend that you focus on these priority targets when you are first assigned to graffiti investigations, making immediate inroads to these targets may not be possible. It takes time and experience to successfully handle some of the

groups mentioned above. Because of this, when you first are assigned to the graffiti detail, it is usually a good idea to get your feet wet by going after the "low hanging fruit". You can work your way up the food chain by working with schools on the younger graffiti vandals who may be somewhat new to tagging. We will go into specific detail in future sections of this guidebook on how to conduct graffiti investigations. But for now, we just want to point out that the young taggers are usually easier to catch and they give up information faster than their more experienced peers. These taggers can still be very destructive and may be responsible for many tags on signs, poles, utility boxes and bus benches in their neighborhood and around (on in) their school. Working these cases will give you the experience and "intel" needed to progress to higher level cases.

SECTION 44

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- With what groups do you need to develop a professional relationship?
- Why is it important for you to meet with school staff regularly?
- What are some of the questions that you need to ask the district attorney when you first start investigating graffiti cases?

You have just been hired to investigate graffiti crimes and you know the types of targets on which you should focus. What do you do first? Well, you need to get out of the office and talk to some people. Developing professional partnerships with residents, community groups, law enforcement, school administrators, district attorneys, probation and parole, city council members and mayors is the foundation to successful graffiti abatement and prosecution. Working together for the common goal of ending graffiti will have to come from all these groups. Here are the people you should talk to right away and a few of the things you should talk about.

SCHOOL OFFICIALS – Start with the head of discipline at the middle and high schools. Bring the custodian into the conversation.

- Explain the different types of graffiti to them (this is discussed in detail in Section 91 of Guidebook 10 "Treasure Chest Of Graffiti Related Topics").
- Show pictures of graffiti found in the area around the school and even at the school (if possible). It is also a good idea to drive administrators from schools in graffiti-laden areas around the neighborhood surrounding their school to show them all the tags that are of most concern and what investigations are most important.
- Ask the custodian to photograph any graffiti before he cleans it and ask the head of discipline to share the information at a staff meeting (or to invite you to their next staff meeting) and to ask anyone with information about a tagger to call you.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY – Explain your new assignment to them. Bring them your “Hero page” that documents your experience, classes, certificates, awards, education, etc.

- Ask who will be your contact in the future.
- Ask if they have had any graffiti cases recently and if so, who from the DA's office and the PD handled the case so you can talk to them for ideas and suggestions.
- Ask exactly what they need from you as you make cases in the future.

GRAFFITI ABATEMENT STAFF – Meet with the person who supervises the graffiti abatement staff and all the staff who actually abate the graffiti.

- Schedule a full day ride-along with the abatement staff.
- Ask them to outline the whole graffiti hotline process for you from start to finish.
- Ask them what areas of the city are currently being vandalized with graffiti the most.

RESIDENTS – Invite yourself to the next neighborhood association meeting in areas of your city that have high levels of graffiti.

- Educate them about graffiti.
- Listen to their concerns and take notes.
- Ask them to contact you with any graffiti related information.
- Hand out your business card to everyone at the meeting.

Go door-to-door in neighborhoods with high levels of graffiti.

- Introduce yourself and give them your business card.
- Explain to them how to document and report incidents of graffiti.
- Let them know how to volunteer if they are interested (if your city has an active anti-graffiti volunteer effort).

PROBATION – Contact the probation department and ask to meet with any probation officer who supervises any youth who committed graffiti-related offences.

- Ask for their search and seizure list.
- Choose someone from that list and go his home and search his bedroom.

- Ask the probation officer to inform the other probation officers that they can contact you for any graffiti related issues or ask if you can go to one of their staff meetings and introduce yourself.

OFFICERS IN YOUR CITY – Attend a patrol officers briefing.

- Tell them about your new assignment.
- Explain what you want them to do if they have a graffiti case.
- Give them your contact information.
- Ask if they have any graffiti problems or contacts in their area of the city.

OTHER AREA LAW ENFORCEMENT JURISDICTIONS – Contact the other local law enforcement watch commander or sergeant.

- Ask if they have anyone dedicated or assigned to graffiti investigations or if any of their officers have recently had any graffiti cases. If so, meet with them.
- Make it a goal to pull a representative from each of these organizations together for a monthly meeting to discuss graffiti cases that cross city boundaries. Be sure to invite representatives from the probation department and the district attorney's office.

“GOOGLE THE TAG” – Run an internet search of the tag.

- You would be surprised how many graffiti vandals post their work on the internet.

SECTION 45

FINDING THE WRITER OF A KNOWN MONIKER

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- Where do you start your search for the writer of a known moniker?
- Why is the specific "style" of a specific moniker important?
- Where should you look for additional tags from a specific writer?

One of the primary ways a graffiti case begins is when you are looking for the writer of a certain tag or incident of graffiti vandalism. This situation may have come upon you as a request from a community member, a school administrator, a politician, someone in the graffiti abatement program or you could have taken the initiative to find this vandal yourself. However this tag or incident came to you, there are certain activities that have proven to be successful in finding the person responsible for this damage. By following the steps below, there is a good chance that you will be successful in your pursuit:

- If you have a database of graffiti incidents, start there. Look for the tag in question (I will use "ABC" as an example of a tag). Take note of how many there are and where they are located. Remember to "Google" the tag!

- If you don't have a database, hit the streets. Go to where the tag was reported and drive around to find as many of them as you can. Document all of these incidents with photos and turn them in to your graffiti abatement staff to clean. There is a good chance that you will find many more incidents of this tag near to where the original one was reported to you.
- Look carefully at all the photos. You are trying to determine if the same person wrote all of the tags or if there are multiple writers of the same tag. Focus primarily on the style that "ABC" was written in. If all the tags are in the same style and all in the same area, there is a good chance that they were all made by the same vandal. It is possible that you may notice "ABC" written in a slightly different style or styles. If that is the case, you probably are now looking for a tagging crew of two or more.
- "ABC" could be a crew but one of its members is causing havoc in a certain area, such as his neighborhood or school. If you can identify that crewmember's style of "ABC", continue your hunt for that specific tagger.
- When you are at the locations of the damage, ask the property owner (private individual, city or management company) to give you a realistic estimate of the cost to repair the damage for the purpose of restitution. Both labor and materials can be included in this estimate. It needs to be

realistic because the case may end up in court and a good defense attorney will use an inflated estimate against you. The damage also needs to be repaired and the repair verified before a case goes to trial or restitution will not be granted. If city staff remove graffiti from city property, they can give you proof of the repair and the actual cost of the repair after they clean it and before it goes to trial.

- Add up the total of the estimates or actual repair costs and determine if the total damage amount reaches the threshold for a felony in your state.
- If many of the tags are near a junior high, middle or high school, take the pictures to the school and show them to the administration and the custodian. Ask them if they have seen the tag "ABC" and if so, do they have any records of it. Also ask if they know who writes that tag. If there are any "ABC" tags currently on the school, document them. Finally, ask the administration to share that information with the rest of the faculty and staff and ask them to contact you if anyone sees or reports any information on "ABC".
- As a general rule, a good proactive move is to make a graffiti binder for each school that is in an area that has a lot of graffiti. In the binder, you will put photos of tags that are common in that area as well as information on how to record, remove and report the graffiti they find on the school and how to

reach you when they have graffiti related news for you.

- If the “ABC” tags you found were in a neighborhood and not near a school, you should go into that neighborhood and walk the streets. Look for “ABC” tags that you can’t see from your car. These will be on the sidewalk side of utility boxes and streetlight poles as well as on the sidewalks themselves. If a park is in the neighborhood, “ABC” may be on the playground equipment, garbage cans, benches, etc. The more concentrated the “ABC” tags are, the closer you probably are to the vandal’s home. You might get lucky and find the “ABC” tag right at the vandal’s residence, perhaps on his mailbox, gate, or basketball hoop.
- If you zero in on an address where you think a graffiti suspect resides, run the license plates associated with that residence. Then go to the neighborhood middle, junior high or high school and see if anyone from that school resides at that address and if the last name from the license plate matches a student’s name.
- Other popular neighborhood spots for taggers to hit are convenience stores and fast food restaurants. Go to these local hangouts in the subject tagger’s neighborhood and look for tags there. They will more than likely be right outside the building on a bus bench, light pole, trashcan, and garbage bin or even etched into the window. Ask the managers of these establishments if they have seen the tag

you are looking for. Also, ask if you can view their surveillance footage. Focus your time on any cameras that are aimed to the outside of the building. If you see someone tagging, ask the manager to save that image for you and not to reuse that tape or disk. Also ask if they know who is making the mark. Ideally, it is the person tagging "ABC" but it also may be someone else you can pick off. If the manager does not know the name of the tagger, he might be able to tell you if he is a regular and when he usually comes in.

- If you are having a really difficult time finding an especially elusive and prolific tagger and you know he is very active on a certain street, you can set up a city surveillance camera, if you have one available, at a location that you expect him to hit - or even set up a surveillance and wait for him to vandalize something.
- You can also ask the briefing sergeant or watch commander to read information about the case to the other officers and ask them if they know anything about this tag and to contact you if they have any helpful information.
- If the neighborhood where you expect your suspect resides is close to a neighboring city, check in with their police force and see if they may have any information for your case.
- The neighborhood in which the suspect lives may have some "underground" graffiti locations such as tunnels or walls under bridges and overpasses. These locations are

favorite locations for large graffiti “pieces” as well as for taggers. They are usually full of graffiti and may have the tag you are looking for.

- Stop and talk to postal carriers, utility meter readers and other service and delivery people who may know the neighborhood well and might have some key details for you.
- This is a solid list for graffiti officers to pursue but you may know of some additional steps that also might lead you to your mystery tagger.

There is a good chance that one of these activities will unearth your mystery tagger right away. There are times that all of this effort does not pay off right away and in some cases, you will never find who you are looking for. Obviously, a good graffiti investigator is always multi-tasking. You are never working only one case at a time and just sitting around waiting for something to happen. You will always be working multiple cases and you will be at a different stage in each case. Usually, however, a few days or even weeks will pass and then you get the information that you finally needed to make an arrest. Without all your previous legwork, that arrest would never have been possible.

SECTION 46

YOU HAVE A VANDAL'S NAME – NOW WHAT?

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- Typically, you want to talk to a school representative who has what responsibility?
- Why would you physically go to the places where your suspect hangs out at the school?
- What personal information is available to you about your suspect if he is an adult as opposed to a minor?

Another common incident that will initiate a graffiti investigation is when someone gives you a tip that a specific person (by name or address) is a graffiti vandal. Here are the primary investigative steps to take in this scenario:

- Talk with the school staff, specifically the dean of discipline to get as much background on that suspect as possible. You want to find out where he lives, who his friends are, where he hangs out at school, information about his family as well as if there have been any discipline issues in the past. Ask the dean to check with all his teachers to see if he has any tags on his desk, backpack, books, gym locker, etc. If there are reports of tags in, on or around these locations, ask the dean to contact you with the information.

- Go to where he hangs out before school, during lunch and breaks and after school and look for tags in those areas. Photograph all that you find and put them in a new case file. You may or may not know his tag but at some point down the line, he may be able to identify the writer of the other tags around the ones that end up being his.
- Contact Juvenile Probation and see if he is in their system. Also, check if his peers and family are in the system. If any of these people are in the system, especially for graffiti offences, then there is a good chance that you are on the right track. If any of these people, especially your suspect, are on searchable probation, pay them a visit and see what turns up.
- Check out their neighborhood and see if there is graffiti there. If you find any, again take pictures for your file. Also, knock on some doors around your suspect's home and ask the neighbors if they have seen any suspicious activity, especially if it was graffiti related. Also, check out the suspect's route to school and look for his tags. If he takes the bus, check the bus stop and the bus itself.
- If your suspect has a job, check the suspect's route to his job as well as the job site itself. Check the building at his place of employment as well as the bathrooms, the back of the building and the dumpster area. If you feel it is appropriate (and sometimes it is not) talk to his supervisor.

- If he doesn't have a job, find out what he does after school and on the weekends. Does he hang out at the park or a friend's house? Does he go back to the school? Then check those spots for tags. Again, if you find them, take pictures, document the information and keep updating your file.
- If your suspect happens to be an adult (18 years old or older) you now have the added benefit of being able to verify his driver's license status right off the bat, which may help you with information such as if his driver's license is expired, his address and if he has any outstanding warrants out on him. You can also run his name through adult probation or parole.

Usually, when you are given the name of a tagger, it is a very solid lead. By going through the investigative steps listed above, you will usually end up with a successful outcome.

SECTION 47

NOW IT'S INTERROGATION TIME

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- Where is the best place to meet with your suspect?
- Why is meeting your suspect at his home not an ideal location?
- What is the first thing you do when you meet with your suspect?

At some point during the investigation, you will be confident that you have a strong enough case against a graffiti vandal that you will decide it is time to act. When this time arrives and you are ready to pick up the graffiti vandal, here are some things to keep in mind.

- If possible, it is always best to meet with your suspect at his school. This is because it is usually fairly easy to pull him out of class and you also have a neutral environment to talk to him. If that is not possible, try to meet with him anywhere else you can. However, his home should be your last resort. That is because there are too many distractions with which to deal there. It is not uncommon for parents to become a big obstacle that can make this process difficult.

- If your suspect is a student, call the school on the day you plan to meet with him and ask if he is at school that day. If he is, ask if you can come to the office at a specific time to meet with him. Also ask the school for a quiet place to talk with the student and for the student to bring all his belongings.
- School staff can perform an Administrative Search on the student or his belongings (i.e.; backpack or locker) if they have suspicion that the student is possessing contraband. However, a police officer cannot ask the school staff to do this. In some cases, the school staff has already done this search and has discovered graffiti implements before you even get there. In some cases, the school has not performed this search and when you arrive, the student will be waiting for you in a room with his belongings. Also, some schools will require a school administrator to be in the room while you are talking with your suspect. One of the reasons for this is that there is a good chance that the school may also be levying their own punishment on the student such as suspensions or Saturday School in the event your interrogation turns up unlawful behavior. At times, having a school administrator in the room can be an advantage for you because the school staff usually knows the suspect better than you do and can help keep him honest during your investigation if he tries to mislead you with some of his answers.

- Now that you have the suspect in the room (with or without a school representative) the first thing to do is to identify yourself as an officer and that you are there to talk with him about his involvement in a graffiti case. Then ask him if you can look through his belongings (if the school has not already done an Administrative Search). If he says that you can, then go through his things and see if you can find illegal contraband. If he says you can't look through his things, then proceed with your interrogation.
- If the suspect immediately becomes uncooperative and will not answer any questions or even attempts to leave, you have a decision to make. You can let him take his belongings and walk. However, most likely, you are at the stage in the investigation where you know he is guilty. If this is the case, and you should have already been prepared to do this if this situation arose, you can arrest him on probable cause right on the spot and issue him a citation. Now you can inspect his belongings. First, take a picture of him with all his belongings next to him to document that these are actually his. Then take a picture of the items in the backpack with the zipper open but before you take anything out. Then, as you inspect the contents of the backpack, take a picture of any items next to the backpack that are pertinent to the case that are now evidence. Confiscate all the evidence (including his cell phone if appropriate) and return the rest of his

belongings to him. Then release him to the school, parents or a responsible adult. In some cases due to special circumstances, you may be taking the youth to juvenile hall.

- Again, you are with a graffiti suspect at a school. Obviously, you will not be at this point unless you had a great deal of intel in your file for this suspect. When you begin asking questions, it is not uncommon for the suspect to play dumb or lie to you. This is because he does not know how much you already know and he hopes you are just “fishing”. But as you go through your evidence he will soon discover that you have a pretty solid case against him. Usually, at that point, he will do either one of two things: he will admit to his involvement in the graffiti vandalism or he will become uncooperative and stop talking altogether.
- There may be cases where your suspect doesn't shut down but he is not totally cooperative either. Let's just say he is semi-cooperative. Let's also say that you think he has more information on his case or that he has information that could help you in another case. One thing that has worked very well in situations like this is to contact the parents (which you need to do anyway if you arrest your suspect) and explain the situation to them. Then ask them if they can come to the school now to deal with this. If the parents can get to the school in a reasonable amount of time, wait for them. When they get there, explain the situation to them. Point out to

them the benefit of their child's cooperation. Then ask them to talk to their child in private for a few minutes. Then, sit down with the parents and your suspect together and ask the questions again that you did not get full answers for the first time. Quite often, the parents will influence the suspect to be more forthcoming with information that can help you.

- If he confesses, then you need to read him his Miranda Rights. At that point, he will either continue to be cooperative or he will inform you that he is not willing to discuss the case further. Obviously, if he invokes his Miranda Rights, your interrogation is over. At this point, in most cases, you would issue a citation to the graffiti vandal and release him to the custody of the school, or parents if he is not at school. Some severe cases may warrant that you take custody of the vandal and bring him to a juvenile detention facility (or jail if he is over 18).
- If the suspect continues to be cooperative after you have read him his rights, continue to ask questions and build your case. Make sure he knows that you will note how cooperative he was in your report that goes to the district attorney and judge.
- You should have pictures of all the tags for which you think this suspect is responsible. Ask him to circle the tag and initial and date the photograph. Also ask him the names of all his graffiti associates. This will be good information for you to use to start to build your

next case. Also let him know that you want to make sure all of his tags are combined in this one case because if you find more of his graffiti after this initial interview, you will come back and arrest him again and that will not be in his best interest. Then ask him to go for a ride with you and for him to show all of the tags he wrote so you can include them all in this one case. After he shows you all of his tags (that you have not already shown him) bring him and the camera back to the school and print out the pictures and have him circle, initial and date these new photographs. Then report this information to your graffiti abatement crew for clean up and for them to figure out restitution amounts.

- When you write the citation, be sure to make a note in it that there will be more information in a supplemental report that will follow. Before you release the suspect to the school, contact his parents. Introduce yourself and tell them that you have issued a citation to their child and the citation will have your name and badge number and the case number on it. If no one answers the phone, leave a voice mail message with that information along with a way to get in touch with you if they have any questions. Then document that you left that message.
- There will be times that a school calls and tells you that a staff member witnessed an act of graffiti vandalism by one of the students on school property. When this happens, go to the school and investigate the incident. In

some jurisdictions, the police are required to take the juvenile into custody and in some they are not. In any case, if the witness gives you a statement that they personally saw the suspect vandalizing the school with graffiti, you should proceed with this as a Private Person's Arrest and issue a citation to the youth in question.

SECTION 48

WRAPPING UP THE INVESTIGATION

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- How should you organize your case file?
- What do you need to ask the victims of each incident of graffiti vandalism?
- Why do you have to have both before and after pictures of each incident of graffiti?

As you know, you still have a lot of work to do after you have arrested your suspect. If you ended up charging your suspect with just one or two counts of graffiti, organizing your file, interviewing victims, completing your research and writing your report still need to be completed. However, some graffiti vandals can easily rack up several dozen counts of graffiti against them. As you can imagine, it can take quite a long time to wrap up these investigations.

- Review everything in your file and put everything you did in chronological order from your first step to your last step. Ideally, you have cleaned up all of your notes for each case at the end of each day so writing the final report is relatively easy.
- Make sure the case meets the elements of a crime:

- Ask all the private property owners whose property was vandalized by your suspect if they gave permission for the suspect to vandalize their property with graffiti. This is not required for public property as it is always assumed that no permission was given for graffiti on schools, libraries, recreation centers, etc.
 - Get in writing all legitimate estimates for each repair for the purpose of restitution from all private property owners and public property representatives.
 - Make sure each incident was within your state's statute of limitations period for the appropriate level of the crime – misdemeanor or felony.
 - Make sure that each victim wants to participate in the investigation by considering himself a victim and that he is willing to go to court and testify that he did not give the suspect permission to vandalize his property and also to provide and justify the repair estimate in the event that the case goes to trial.
- Make sure you have pictures of each incident of graffiti as well as the same location after it was cleaned along with the number of square feet and cost to repair the damage so you can prove the repair work was completed and also for the purpose of restitution.

- Recording conversations with the victims (with their permission) can make it easier to write the report at the end of the day.
- When you are finished with the report, review it one last time from the beginning to the end to check for any omissions or errors.
- Submit your report per your department's guidelines for your supervisor's review.

SECTION 49

POTPORRI OF GRAFFITI INVESTIGATIONS

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- Why is it important to have a monthly collaborative meeting?
- Do most graffiti surveillances usually result in an arrest?
- Why is it critical to have a graffiti-specific database?

So far, we have addressed the need for cities to focus on graffiti crimes and the steps needed to investigate them. Additionally, it is important to know about several different topics that will help all graffiti investigators such as monthly collaborative meetings, surveillances, surveillance cameras, social media, data bases and search warrants to name a few.

MONTHLY COLLABORATIVE MEETINGS

An officer should consider having monthly meetings with all involved parties to share information about current issues and investigations. These meetings were discussed in great detail in the Ten Steps To A Graffiti-Free City Guidebook 8 “Let’s Work Together: How To Build A Successful Anti-Graffiti Collaborative Partnership”. Many officers sometimes get into the habit of keeping information to themselves. This can create problems for the officer and all others

involved. Graffiti investigations need to be shared because the officer may find that sharing will greatly enhance the outcome of his investigation.

SURVEILLANCES

Most surveillances designed to catch graffiti vandals in the act are usually frustrating, time consuming and not very cost effective because they are usually not successful. However, if the surveillance is well planned, you can have some success. Speaking with your local district attorney could help you in developing plans for surveillances because you may need permission to place your own graffiti on moving vans, walls etc. in areas that will be too tempting for a rival gang or tagging crew to resist retaliation. To avoid frustration on surveillances the officer should have enough resources to cover all escape routes of the potential vandal. This is important because most graffiti vandals are teenage males who are pretty adept at running, climbing, crawling and hiding in order to avoid getting caught. Officers should be familiar with local graffiti hot spots in their jurisdictions and have a good working knowledge of when these spots are being hit. The officer can easily learn this by working with their abatement crew on cleaning a known area then watching the area until it's hit again. This may have to be done several times to get a clear understanding of when vandals are in that area.

SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS

There are many options available for high quality surveillance cameras. The ability to take night shots or at least low light shots and still get detailed

images is a must in order to identify graffiti vandals in action. There are several low cost cameras that you can monitor via smart phones as well. If the images are not recognizable they will serve no purpose in court. Cameras can be placed in known hot spots to try to capture a graffiti crime in progress. Motion sensors and voice warnings attached to cameras are also useful to deter would-be vandals before they actually write on the walls. Be sure to place cameras in well-hidden areas so they are not stolen or damaged. The officer should review the data from these cameras often to learn when they are being activated and to collect any new evidence they may capture.

GRAFFITI SPECIFIC DATA BASE

A graffiti database is critical to the success of any graffiti enforcement effort. The system will need to track, compare, map, and communicate with other jurisdictions. Officers will need to develop or obtain this database and it must be capable of handling large amounts of digital photos. These photos will need to be compared with open cases, or new cases the officer may be working. Other agencies will, on occasion, have a need to look at the officer's database for comparisons of their open cases. This data base collaboration can often be critical in the successful closure of large-scale cases. It also helps build modes operandi cases. There are many commercial graffiti specific databases available and some cities have developed theirs in-house with the help of their IT staff.

SOCIAL MEDIA

If you use the Internet effectively, you will gather huge amounts of intel that will help you in your graffiti investigations. Get to know your local media and Internet outlets that taggers use to communicate and share their information. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and 12ozProphet are just a few examples of such websites. Underground newspapers and magazines are also a wealth of information about upcoming events, parties, bombing runs, or other events being planned.

SEARCH WARRANTS

Search warrants are one of the best tools for gathering new evidence on additional criminals and obtaining intelligence on tagging crews. Sense most taggers start their work at home by practicing in piece books or on their own property it makes since to obtain these types of warrants. Once the search has been completed, you can follow up with additional warrants or make an arrest if appropriate. To complete the search warrant, just follow the template or style that is typical for your jurisdiction. The vandals' computers can be especially helpful in finding incriminating evidence. In addition to computers, there are several items that should be listed on your search warrant and we have included those in a separate document.

**PLEASE SEE BONUS DOCUMENT:
TIPS AND TRICKS FOR CATCHING GRAFFITI
VANDALS
ITEMS TO REQUEST IN A GRAFFITI SEARCH
WARRANT**

PAGES 68 AND 69

GETTING RECORDS FROM THIRD PARTY ENTITIES

There will be times when you will need information from companies that you feel strongly will enhance a case against a graffiti suspect. You may have possession of a cell phone or a computer that belongs to your suspect and you may want to examine its contents but it is password protected. Another example is that you may want to get information that your suspect has shared on social websites such as Facebook, Twitter or Myspace. You can get this information but you will need a warrant. Each of these companies (and others like them) will release the information requested on your warrant. They will want specific language in the warrant to meet their requirements. When you need information from one of these companies, contact them first and find out exactly what they need included in the warrant. The subsequent warrants for each individual company will be easier to write because you now have a template.

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR CITY, COUNTY OR DISTRICT ATTORNEY

There will be times when you will need to touch base with the legal entity that will eventually need to prove the guilt of a graffiti suspect of yours. It is important to know when you need to check in with them and when you don't. Basically, it all boils down to how watertight your case is. If you are sure that your case is solid then you probably don't need to talk with the prosecutors prior to arresting your

suspect. However, if you have any doubts about how strong your evidence is, then it is best to play it safe and talk with them to make sure you are on the same page. If you are new on the graffiti detail, you will be spending more time with the prosecutors to make sure you have done everything needed so they can do their job. As time goes by, you will know what they will need and it will be necessary to check in with them only on touchy cases.

AVOIDING TRIAL

If you are a police officer who is investigating graffiti crimes, it is almost inevitable that you will need to appear in court to testify in a graffiti trial. If you have followed proper law enforcement techniques during your investigation, have thoroughly documented all of your steps and have completed a well-written report, you should have no trouble answering questions by a defense attorney. Be prepared to state why you are an expert in graffiti. This is where you will discuss your training, special certificates you have earned, any awards you have won and your experience with graffiti cases along with the number of graffiti related arrests you have made. Also include any graffiti-specific education you may have picked up along the way by attending graffiti conferences, reading graffiti books, watching graffiti documentaries, etc. It is also important that whoever supplied you with the restitution formula is able to defend it in court.

GET SOME EXTRA HELP

One of the things that can really limit the success of a graffiti investigator is the high volume of paper

work that is required for each case. It may not always be possible, however if the graffiti investigator can have some assistance with paperwork that can be done by someone else such as clerical staff of another officer on a restricted physical duty assignment, many more graffiti cases will be successfully closed because the graffiti officer can spend his time on more actual investigations.

SECTION 50

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX TO CATCH GRAFFITI VANDALS

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- Why is it usually not necessary to initiate a major anti-graffiti operation?
- Why would graffiti writers be interested in being in a graffiti documentary?
- How can you use the Internet to catch graffiti vandals?

What you will find doing graffiti investigations is that information from one case will lead you directly into another one due to the nature of the graffiti sub-culture. Basically, graffiti vandals hang around with other graffiti vandals. When you catch one, a domino affect kicks in. The one you catch may be cooperative and give you the names of several additional taggers. Maybe the phone you take off one vandal has pictures of other vandals with their tags in the background. It is not hard to show those pictures to the school administrators. Now you have several more suspects and away you go. However, at some point you may want to do something a little differently. Here are some "outside the box" tactics that have been successful for some graffiti investigators:

- Many years ago (before the internet) one city put a couple of young officers undercover and had them pose as a hip film company doing a film documentary of urban graffiti. They even were able to use a vacant downtown store as a front for the fake production company. They put up flyers in popular graffiti haunts asking talented graffiti “artists” to bring them samples of their work for review. Finally, they planned a live filming session where all interested graffiti writers could come and participate in front of the camera for the film. Graffiti writers came out in bunches because they wanted to get fame and notoriety. After the filming, there was a mass arrest.
- In another city, a creative police officer set up fake personal profiles on some social media sites that are popular with teens such as Facebook and Myspace. He would gather great intel from his exchanges with taggers and would eventually set up a bombing run with them and...well, you probably know how the story ends.

GUIDEBOOK 5 WRAP-UP AT A GLANCE

- There is a significant link between graffiti and more serious crime.
- For most cities, it is critical to have at least one police officer assigned to focus all his time on graffiti investigations.
- If you can, prioritize the graffiti vandals on which you are going to focus.
- You will need to develop relationships with a lot of individuals and groups to be successful.
- Searching for the writer of a specific moniker can be difficult but there are several investigative techniques at your disposal.
- If you know a graffiti suspect's name, his school can provide you with a wealth of information.
- A strong interrogation can often reward you with many good leads on other taggers.
- Your documentation for the final report on each graffiti case needs to be very thorough in case it goes to trial.
- You will use many skills in your run as a graffiti investigator.
- You can get creative in your graffiti investigations.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for letting me share my experiences with you. I truly feel honored that you trusted me enough to listen to my story. I sincerely hope that you found something in this guidebook and CD that resonated with you and that you can use to improve the graffiti situation in your city. If this does happen, and I really hope that it does, please let me know. I would love to share your success with others!

If you would like more information on strategies that will drastically reduce graffiti in your city, please check our website at www.thegraffiticonsultants.com. There, you can find out more about our innovative Phone Training Program where you have direct access to me and we can work together, one-on-one to correctly and successfully implement any of the recommendations that have sparked your interest from this book and CD.

And finally, also in our website, is information on our full-service consulting packages that are designed to meet the needs and budgets of each individual city. This is really the best way to be sure that your graffiti will go away and stay away.

So, call today and watch your graffiti disappear. Thank you for taking the time to check out the information in this book and CD. I sincerely look forward to your city becoming graffiti-free!

BONUS DOCUMENTS

BONUS DOCUMENT PAGES 68 AND 69

ITEMS TO REQUEST IN A SEARCH
WARRANT

CITY NAME

**ITEMS TO REQUEST IN A GRAFFITI
SEARCH WARRANT**

Books
Binders
Brief cases
Backpacks
Folders
Grease Pens
Spray cans and spray can tips
Shoe polish
Etching tools or polish
Disposable gloves
Paint splattered clothing
Breathing apparatus
Slap tags
Drawings or writings containing any graffiti
symbols or monikers

Any media such as thumb drives, hard drives, CDs, cell phones, Cameras and computers
School notebooks or folders
Piece books
Permanent markers or paints
Paint rollers
Paint guns
Shaker pens
Address books of any kind
Any other type of item used for graffiti vandalism
Supersoakers and fire extinguishers

Note: Items may vary city-to-city or state-to-state.

Rick Stanton is the owner of The Graffiti Consultants. He has a great track record in the development and implementation of highly successful graffiti reducing strategies. He led the City of San Jose's effort that resulted in a 99.88% reduction of graffiti before his retirement. Now as a consultant, Rick and his firm have been working with various cities with amazing results. He can do the same for your city by providing you with tailor made plans that fit not only your city's needs but your budget as well. Call today and watch your graffiti start to disappear!

Rick Stanton, The Graffiti Consultants Ten Steps To A Graffiti-Free City

THE GRAFFITI CONSULTANTS

**Dave Bonillas
and
Rick Stanton, Owner**

Don't forget these powerful programs designed to help you drastically reduce graffiti in your city:

- Just How Bad Is It Anyway? How To Conduct A Citywide Graffiti Survey.
- How To Recruit A Volunteer Graffiti Fighting Army.
- The Best Solution For Graffiti On Private Property: Graffiti Ordinances That Work.
- Getting Graffiti Vandals To Stop: How To Establish An Effective "Package of Penalties".
- Tips and Tricks For Catching Graffiti Vandals.
- State Of The Art Graffiti Abatement Strategies For Success.
- Save Money In Your Graffiti Program: What Not To Do.
- Let's Work Together: How To Build A Successful Anti-Graffiti Collaborative Partnership.
- Let's Stop It Before It Starts: Graffiti Prevention And Alternatives.
- Treasure Chest Of Graffiti Related Topics.

ASK ABOUT OUR PERSONALIZED GRAFFITI FREE INITIATIVE FOR YOUR CITY!

ASK ABOUT OUR FULL SERVICE GRAFFITI CONSULTING!