Letters

Tues 1-28-14 Daily Breeze

Ridley-Thomas editorial based on 'spurious reports'

Re "Ridley-Thomas should not have accepted work at his home" (Editorial, Jan. 23):

Your editorial is based solely on spurious reports from a competing newspaper. You should have done your own reporting.

I refused to speak to your competitor on this matter because the Los Angeles Times chose to spurn generally accepted journalistic standards and practices in publishing their reckless stories. Their work contains not only innuendo but basic errors of fact, which will become apparent.

Rather than independently evaluating your competitor's reports, you put me in the same category as a man facing federal criminal charges, saying I have allegedly become the latest politician to take arrogant advantage of the public's tax dollars. What allegation is there, other than reports from your competitor?

Regarding when I paid for the work done at my house, you wrote I don't say when. You did not ask me. Had reporters from your organization approached me in good faith to seek the truth, I would have agreed to an interview, as I did with journalists from KCRW and KFI radio.

Instead, you adopted a harassment tactic: throw out abusive, false reports, then pillory the subject for not responding. One of your points is that the salary paid to Board of Supervisors members should be enough for them to pay for their own security systems. Existing board security policy and practice advise otherwise — and has for many years.

For the record, I paid for personal items included in the recent security upgrade at my home.

— Mark Ridley-Thomas, Los Angeles

The writer represents the Second District on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

WED 1-29-14 Daily Breeze

L.A. COUNTY APPOINTMENT

OC official to replace Sheriff Baca

By Christina Villacorte and Kelly Goff
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The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday picked Orange County undersheriff to head the L.A. Sheriff's Department on an interim basis until voters choose a replacement for retiring Sheriff Lee Baca.

Orange County Undersheriff John Scott spent 36 years working for the LASD, according to his resume, starting as a deputy in Lakewood in 1969 and working his way to head of the Custody Operations Division before retiring in 2005. He became undersheriff in Orange County in 2008 and is second only to Sheriff-Coroner Sandra Hutchens.

Baca, who took office in December 1998, is stepping down amid investigations and heavy criticism about his department's handling of the county jail system. He submitted his official resignation letter on Tuesday, saying it would be effective at noon on Thursday.

The primary election to choose his successor is June 3.

Baca spokesman Steve Whitmore praised the choice of Scott.

"The board has made a solid decision that will ensure that the department will continue with the reforms that are underway," Whitmore said. "He not only has the perspective of being an outsider but also a strong perspective of being an insider. So it's the best of both worlds. The sheriff (Baca) gives credit to the Board of Supervisors for making a sound choice."

Whitmore noted that if one candidate exceeds 50 percent of the vote in the primary, the Board of Supervisors has the option to immediately appoint that person interim sheriff rather than wait for the official swearing-in.

Scott said he is "anxious to get started" and outlined goals for his time in Los Angeles.

"I can assure you, I'm not going to be a placeholder," he said at a downtown press conference. "I will begin the process, immediately, of restoring both the dignity to the men and women of L.A. County and the confidence and the trust of the public that they serve."

Scott will assume his new office Thursday and has taken a leave of absence from the Orange County Sheriff's Department. Both the supervisors and Scott himself stressed that the position was temporary, and he has no plans to run for the office.

Scott said the contentious election will also likely play into his first days on the job.

"There's operational challenges that have been identified by the Department of Justice and the Blue Ribbon (Commission). But there's also at least five to seven candidates out there, so you're going to have some split in terms of division within the ranks, so that's going to be my first challenge and that's going to be getting everybody moving forward in the same direction," he said.

Los Angeles supervisors praised Scott's role in turning around Orange County's once-troubled department, and emphasized their hope that he can do the same in Los Angeles.

"He's understanding of the kind of reform this department needs and we're looking forward," said Supervisor Gloria Molina. "We have an awful lot of confidence he'll provide a kind of leadership and command we need here in L.A. County."

Although the interim stint will be just 10 months at most, the supervisors said their selection of Scott reflected a desire to continue to make changes in the department even during the election season.

"In looking for an interim we were looking for someone who would not be a caretaker. Not someone who would just be marking time for the next 10 months," said Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky. "Someone who could carry on the momentum that has been developed in the aftermath of the Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence, deal with some of the other issues the department has and key it up for the next sheriff who will be elected later this year."

The head of the ACLU of Southern California, which has played an aggressive role in monitoring and fighting abuse in the L.A. County jail system, said he hopes the appointment foreshadows reforms in the agency.

"We hope that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' decision to appoint John Scott as temporary sheriff of Los Angeles County will serve to move this troubled department a step closer to real reform," said ACLU executive director Hector Villagra, in a written statement. "In selecting Scott, the supervisors recognized that the only way to restore the public's trust in the sheriff's department is to follow state law with respect to who can be sheriff. We look forward to working with him in the coming months to ensure that the vital recommendations made by the Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence, along with those made by the ACLU, continue to be implemented."

Scott is a Yorba Linda resident. He has a bachelor's degree in management from the University of Redlands and a master's in public communication from Pepperdine University. He and his wife, Alice Scott, a retired L.A. County sheriff's captain, have four children.

Cameras in L.A. jails praised

Devices installed after inmate abuse scandal have been effective in vetting allegations, watchdog report says.

By Robert Faturechi

The hundreds of cameras installed inside Los Angeles County jails in response to an inmate abuse scandal have been powerful tools in vetting allegations against jailers, according to a watchdog report released Thursday.

For years, critics of the Sheriff's Department's jails pushed the agency to install cameras in the lockups since independent witnesses are rarely present when deputies use force. In 2011, after an onslaught of inmate abuse allegations, the department began installing hundreds of cameras.

The report released by the agency's civilian monitor Thursday found that the footage has helped to exonerate deputies who were falsely accused and build cases against those who break the rules.

"The department now has a video record of 90% of force incidents in its downtown jails and is no longer completely reliant on 'observations' of inmates and jail deputies," the report by Michael Gennaco's Office of Independent Review stated.

Dozens of cameras were installed inside the downtown Men's Central Jail in 2011 — when the FBI's investigation of deputy misconduct inside the lockups first became publicly known. Today there are 705 cameras in the facility, with about 840 more in the sheriff's other downtown jail facilities, Twin Towers and the Inmate Reception Center.

Gennaco's report found that there are still areas of the lockups that cameras don't cover, causing shortcomings in some investigations, but that overall, use-of-force investigations have improved because of the cameras.

In one case, an inmate accused a deputy of injuring him by violently pulling his handcuffed arms upward. But a recording of the incident showed that there was no force used by the deputy.

In another case, a prisoner filled out a complaint form alleging he had been handcuffed and left in a recreation area for more than three hours, before being violently grabbed and slammed into a door.

A supervisor located the footage of the incident and "discovered that much of the inmate's complaint was substantiated by the video evidence," according to the report. "While there were some inconsistencies between the inmate's statement and the video — most notably that the inmate did not appear to be slammed into a door or wall — he did accurately describe rough handling by the deputy."

The deputy had not reported the force, and eventually was given "a significant suspension."

The report comes at a tumultuous time in the Sheriff's Department's history. Sheriff Lee Baca, who recently announced his unexpected retirement amid a string of scandals relating to inmate abuse and bad hiring, will be stepping down next week. And the future of the Office of Independent Review, which issued the report Thursday, is unclear.

A new civilian monitor with expanded authority — the Office of the Inspector General — was created recently, and is preparing to begin work. Some county supervisors had criticized Gennaco for not doing more to expose problems in the Sheriff's Department. Gennaco has countered by saying his recommendations for reform were not heeded.

As is typical in Gennaco's reports, recent cases of deputy misconduct were highlighted.

In one case, a deputy was fired after he was accused of sexually assaulting a woman who came in for a vehicle inspection after repairing a broken headlight. He allegedly directed her to go to his office, then leered at her body and told her he liked her breasts, before grabbing them, according to the report.

Later, the deputy was accused of getting in her car and directing her to drive into a parking structure. She said she tried to leave, but he asked her to promise she would come back before taking her hand and placing it on his groin. He then made further suggestive comments, according to the report.

The deputy denied all allegations, and prosecutors declined to file charges, citing a lack of evidence. But an administrative investigation by the Sheriff's Department found that he violated multiple policies — including committing immoral conduct and making derogatory statements — and he was fired.

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Sat 1-25-14

Foster care reform plans offered

Responding to recent high-profile deaths and injuries, a special county commission on child welfare is proposing a far-reaching overhaul of the Los Angeles County child protection service.

The plans would impose greater oversight on private foster care agencies and improve coordination among the many agencies who deal with child welfare cases, officials said.

In addition, representatives of the commission drafting reforms are calling on the county to establish a position of child welfare czar empowered to coordinate services between the Department of Children and Family Services and other county agencies involved in child abuse cases, including health services, social services and mental health.

They also propose that the Los Angeles County district attorney's office act as a clearinghouse for child abuse cases, working with the county's 46 law enforcement agencies. The commission said this central coordination is needed because it found that police agencies frequently do not cross-report child abuse complaints with county child welfare officials and fail to properly train officers on how to handle child abuse cases.

David Sanders, a former county child welfare chief who heads the commission, cited the beating death of 8-year-old Gabriel Fernandez and recently reported shortcomings among private foster care contractors, key problems the proposed changes will seek to correct.

Gabriel was found last May with his skull cracked, three ribs broken and his skin bruised and burned. He had BB pellets embedded in his lung and groin and two teeth were knocked out. County social workers had investigated six separate reports of abuse but allowed Gabriel to stay with his mother and her boyfriend.

The boy's death sparked widespread outrage and prompted the Board of Supervisors to appoint the commission to develop recommendations.

The commission con-

[See Foster, A11]

Foster care reform plan

Sat 1-25-14 LA Times

[Foster, from A1]

cluded that reforms were needed not just at the Department of Children and Family Services but at the other agencies that deal with child abuse cases.

"Before any set of recommendations can be effectively implemented, a fundamental change in county structure and culture must occur," a preliminary report by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection concluded.

Dozens of children have died of abuse or neglect in recent years despite being under the oversight of the Department of Children and Family Services social workers. In some cases, the social workers assigned to their cases struggled to communicate with other county departments about the child's situation because of management breakdowns and confidentiality rules.

More than 700 changes to the system have been recommended by various experts and panels since 2008. Many were stymied by lack of cooperation between county departments that managed them independently.

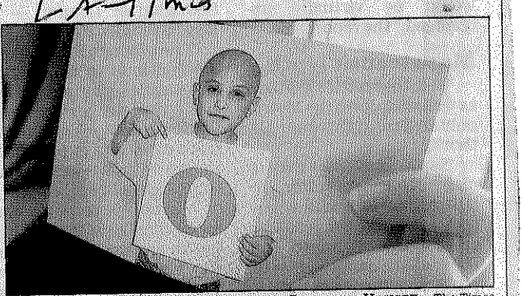
It remains unclear whether the Board of Supervisors will accept the commission's new recommendations.

The commission did not estimate the costs of the reforms, but they are expected to be considerable.

The county's child welfare director, Philip Browning, also warned that the price tag of the proposed changes may be high. But Sanders maintains that existing funding sources should be adequate to implement reforms.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas' office is drafting motions to move forward on the plan, a spokeswoman said.

One target of reform is expected to be nonprofit, privately contracted agencies that recruit and supervise foster families.



Christina House/For The Times

THE DEATH OF Gabriel Fernandez, 8, from abuse sparked widespread outrage and prompted the Board of Supervisors to create the blue ribbon panel.

The Times has reported that children placed through those agencies are a third more likely to endure physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Over the last five years, at least four children have died as a result of abuse or neglect in the homes overseen by contracted foster care agencies, the paper found.

Many regulations that are intended to keep children safe under the contracted foster care companies — including a cap on social workers' caseloads and a ban on assigning children to foster parents with certain criminal histories — haven't been consistently enforced, The Times found.

Marilyn Flynn, the dean of USC's School of Social Work and a commission member, said the panel will probably propose changes in the way the county contracts with private foster care agencies. She argues that payments should be tied to improvements made in foster children's lives, not just the number of days they remain with a foster family or in group homes.

There are about 5,000 children living in private foster care in Los Angeles County and 15,000 across the state. Los Angeles County is limited in its oversight because the foster family agencies are licensed and overseen by state regulators.

The Board of Supervisors passed a motion this month asking Sacramento to improve oversight. It also authorized the county's lobbyists to push for legislation that will change privacy rules to allow county workers to be regularly informed about the criminal histories of foster parents and contractors' employees.

State Sen. Holly Mitchell (D-Los Angeles) said she agrees that more oversight is needed.

One possibility, Mitchell said, is legislation that would allow county officials to regularly review the criminal histories of foster parents and employees of foster agencies.

Will Lightbourne, the state social services chief, has declined to comment about increasing oversight of foster care. His spokesman said a report on possible improvements to the oversight of foster family agencies will be released in October.

The commission is also calling for improved health assessments of children suspected of being abused or neglected, and requiring that public health nurses work with investigators in all cases involving children younger than 1.

The commission is expected to release its final recommendations in April.

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Sheriff reform? Look to the LAPD

Tues 1-28-14 LA Times

By Erwin Chemerinsky and Miriam Aroni Krinsky

THE RECENT resignation of Sheriff Lee Baca presents a much-needed opportunity for meaningful, lasting and long-overdue reform of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The federal indictments in December of 18 former and current sheriff's deputies are the latest and most dramatic indication of a department in desperate need of change. In charting the road for reform — with the multifaceted aims of transforming a troubling culture, institutionalizing internal structural changes and rebuilding public confidence — much can be learned from the experiences that propelled reform of the Los Angeles Police Department.

For decades, the LAPD was plagued by a culture that tolerated, and at times encouraged, civil rights violations. Every time there was a major incident of misconduct, department and city leaders said the misconduct was the result of just a "few bad apples." A study would be done and there would be proposals for reform. Some would be adopted; most would be ignored. The problem would be deemed solved until the next incident precipitated the same pattern of responses.

This cycle ended with the Rampart scandal in 2000, which exposed officers in an anti-gang unit who planted evidence on innocent people and lied in court to gain convictions. In the wake of these revelations, the Justice Department informed city officials that it was contemplating suing Los Angeles for a pattern and practice of civil rights violations. The city entered into a consent decree that mandated many changes overseen by a monitor and a federal judge. Mayor James Hahn appointed a police chief from outside the department, William J. Bratton. Real reforms occurred and the LAPD today is a vastly different department.

Important lessons can be drawn from this experience. First, civilian oversight is essential. A police or sheriff's department is in many ways a paramilitary organization. Civilian engagement and a transparent vehicle for accountability is critical. That means having department leadership that is held accountable for measures of progress and answerable to voices from the community who are focused on maintaining the highest standards of constitutional policing.

The path to reform at LAPD began with the Christopher Commission, which in the wake of the 1991 Rodney King beating proposed that the Los Angeles Police Commission have authority to manage the department. Voters then approved a City Charter amendment empowering the commission.

Unlike the police chief in Los Angeles, the sheriff is elected and directly answerable only to the voters. The county Board of Supervisors sets the sheriff's budget, but it cannot manage the department or mandate full access and authority for any civilian commission. Although these constraints render a civilian oversight board less than perfect, there are still significant benefits to its creation. The supervisors should proceed down this path, even as efforts continue to create by statute the best possible authority for civilian oversight.

It is also important to bring in leadership from outside the sheriff's office. The Christopher Commission, and every major study of the LAPD, found that the central problem was the culture of the department. Studies of the sheriff's office have said the same thing. It is difficult for a person who is a product of that culture and environment to be the one to change it. It is not coincidental that the major changes in the LAPD occurred only after a strong leader from outside the department was appointed as its chief.

And there is great value in external standards and monitoring. The reform of the LAPD happened when the Justice Department got involved and a consent decree, with a monitor, was approved. It is difficult for a department to reform itself, especially when problems are systemic and long-standing.

Finally, it was crucial that Bratton acknowledged past problems and sincerely embraced the need for reform. Absent recognition of past problems, that troubling history is destined to repeat itself, especially when the spotlight fades. It is imperative that the next sheriff not simply be committed to reform but also be fully candid about the department's disturbing history.

The Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence in 2012 documented a troubling culture in the Sheriff's Department that fostered abuse of force and allowed excessive force to continue for decades. It has crafted a detailed road map for change. But implementing this blueprint will require the right people, the right structure and the right oversight.

The experience of the LAPD shows that real reform can happen. Now it must occur in the Sheriff's Department.

ERWIN CHEMERINSKY is dean of the UC Irvine School of Law. MIRIAM ARONI KRINSKY is a policy consultant for the California Endowment and served as the executive director of the Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence.

LUIS SINCO Los Angeles Times

JOHN L. SCOTT, center, with county Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, right, leaves a news conference Tuesday. He promised to begin reforms immediately.

WSJ 1-29-14 LA Times

Veteran to fill in for Baca

O.C. Undersheriff John L. Scott will serve until voters elect a sheriff.

BY ABBY SEWELL AND ROBERT FATURECHI

The newly named interim sheriff of Los Angeles County, current Orange County Undersheriff John L. Scott, said Tuesday that he would continue the momentum of reform in the beleaguered department.

Flanked by four of the five county supervisors, Scott said, "I can assure you, I'm not going to be a place-holder here in L.A. County. I will begin the process immediately of restoring both the dignity to the men and women of L.A. County and the confidence and trust of the public that we serve."

After two closed-door meetings earlier in the day, the supervisors announced that they had selected Scott to take over for the resigning Lee Baca until voters select a new sheriff later this year, either in June's primary election or November's runoff. Baca, who had been favored to win reelection despite receiving frequent public criticism, announced unexpectedly early this month that he would drop out of the race and retire. His last day will be Thursday.

[See Sheriff, AA4]

[**Sheriff,** from AA1]

The Sheriff's Department has been beset by allegations of poor hiring and abuses in managing the nation's largest jail system. Late last year, investigations culminated in federal criminal charges against 18 current and former department employees.

The supervisors said it was a priority to find an interim sheriff who would continue to implement reforms recommended by a county commission that studied jail violence. Scott will also be involved in the initial phases of long-term planning for the jail facilities, including a proposal to replace the aging Men's Central Jail.

Baca had recommended Assistant Sheriff Terri McDonald for the interim post, but that suggestion was scuttled when county officials learned that McDonald — who came from the state corrections department last year specifically to oversee the jail system — lacked the required certifications or field experience to hold the sheriff's post.

However, Baca spokesman Steve Whitmore said the sheriff considered the decision to appoint Scott "a very wise move," noting that he was qualified because he has worked for the Sheriff's Department and an outside agency.

Scott began his law enforcement career as a deputy at Los Angeles County's Lakewood sheriff's station in 1969, and rose to division chief, retiring in 2005.

He then went to work at the Orange County Sheriff's Department in 2008, serving as undersheriff to Sheriff Sandra Hutchens, who had also been with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. At the time, the Orange County department was reeling from the indictment of former Sheriff Mike Carona on corruption charges.

Supervisor Gloria Molina praised Scott's track record in Orange County, saying that he has the right qualities to head Los Angeles County's troubled department.

"He's understanding of the kind of reform this department needs," she said.

Other supervisors said Scott's knowledge of the Los Angeles County department would enable him to quickly transition into the new role. Board Chairman Don Knabe said Scott would be able to "hit the ground running."

Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky said, "Looking for an interim, we were looking for someone who would not be a caretaker, would not just be marking time for the next 10 months."

Officials who worked with Scott and are still at the Sheriff's Department told The Times that he is generally well-respected, and considered a strong steward until voters choose a permanent replacement.

Two officials, who spoke on the condition that they not be identified because they were not authorized to speak publicly, said that when Scott left the department, he had grown disillusioned with the subordinates whom Baca was empowering, and warned the sheriff that he was headed for trouble if he stayed on the same course.

Whitmore declined to discuss that assertion, saying, "I'm not going to get into the pettiness."

The vote to appoint Scott was 4 to 0, with Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas abstaining. Ridley-Thomas did not appear with the other supervisors at a news conference where Scott appeared and did not respond to a request for comment.

Scott will take over immediately upon Baca's departure and will earn the same annual salary, about $300,000, as the former sheriff. He will take a leave of absence from Orange County and return to his post there once a new sheriff is chosen.

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L.A. County delays foster care changes

Board votes to wait for final report before revamping child protection system.

BY GARRETT THEROLF

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has decided to delay action on the interim recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection until a final report is issued in April.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas signaled that he would continue to press to immediately begin a restructuring of the county system to protect children from abuse and neglect, but the four other supervisors said they were not prepared to join the effort until they can fully assess the commission's vision and the accompanying cost.

The commission chairman, David Sanders, had said that he would be disappointed if the board did not begin taking action this month, and other proponents expressed dismay that the board was not moving more quickly.

"Time lost is time wasted," said Dr. Astrid Heger, who leads a system of county clinics for health evaluations of foster children that would be greatly expanded under the interim recommendations.

The commission began its work last summer to improve the county's child welfare system after the death of 8-year-old Gabriel Fernandez.

Gabriel was found in May with his skull cracked, three ribs broken, and his skin bruised and burned. BB pellets were embedded in his lung and groin, and two teeth were knocked out. County social workers had investigated six reports of abuse but allowed Gabriel to stay with his mother and her boyfriend.

In recent weeks, the commission released a report calling the county's child welfare system "dysfunctional" and in need of "fundamental change."

"Our interim recommendations should be implemented immediately," Sanders said in an interview this month.

The commission recommended that the county's system of clinics overseen by Heger be used to screen all children entering foster care, as well as children under age 1 who may be victims of child abuse.

The clinics are designed to expertly detect child abuse and provide comprehensive medical and mental health assessments so that children receive the correct services in foster care.

Additionally, the commission said public health nurses should work with investigators in all cases involving children younger than 1.

They also proposed that the district attorney's office act as a clearinghouse for child abuse cases, working with the county's 46 law enforcement agencies. The commission said central coordination is needed because it found that police agencies frequently do not cross-report child abuse complaints with county child welfare officials and fail to properly train officers on how to handle child abuse cases.

Heger acknowledged that some proposals come with an undetermined price tag, but she said the county should begin to assess the cost now.

"They should start doing the preliminary analysis so that they can move forward on the final recommendations in April," Heger said. "The recommendations are not going to change."

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Remains of 55 found at ex-reform school

L.A. Times
WED 1-29-14

By David Zucchino

For decades, relatives of some boys dispatched to the notorious Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys have struggled to find out what became of them after they went missing amid reports of beatings, torture and sexual assaults at the reform school in Marianna, Fla.

On Tuesday, researchers and forensic anthropologists moved a step closer to providing answers. The remains of 55 people have been uncovered on school grounds, University of South Florida researchers announced — five more than previous field work had indicated and 24 more than listed in school records.

"Locating 55 burials is a significant finding, which opens up a whole new set of questions for our team," said Erin Kimmerle, a University of South Florida associate professor and forensic anthropologist who has led researchers on a nearly two-year project aimed at uncovering lingering mysteries at the school, which operated from 1900 to 2011.

From September to December last year, researchers led excavations at or near Boot Hill, an unmarked cemetery on school grounds. Using ground-penetrating radar, DNA samples and search dogs, they probed for unmarked graves of boys reported missing over the years.

Bones, teeth and other artifacts were recovered for all 55 bodies, Kimmerle said Tuesday. Bone and tooth samples will be submitted for DNA testing.

Meanwhile, researchers are attempting to collect DNA from survivors of boys sent to the school as "incorrigible," or for truancy or petty crimes.

So far, DNA has been collected from 11 surviving family members of former Dozier residents. Researchers are seeking DNA from 42 more.

The grave sites are not marked; some remains have been found in woods nearby. Thirty-one white crosses that dot the burial ground were erected in the 1990s to commemorate the unnamed boys buried there.

Kimmerle said researchers would attempt to verify the identities, ages and histories of the remains, as well as the timing and circumstances of their deaths. Excavations will resume in the coming months, she said.

"All of the analyses needed to answer these important questions are yet to be done. But it is our intention to answer as many of these questions as possible," she said.

Survivors who attended the school have described beatings, torture sessions, rapes and the disappearances of boys, many of them after they were taken from dormitories or other school buildings for punishment.

Roger Dean Kiser, now 67, of Brunswick, Ga., told The Times in October that he was sent to Dozier at age 12 in 1959 and stayed for two years.

He wrote a book about the school, "The White House Boys," named for a house on school grounds where he said boys were beaten.

Kiser said he was twice beaten bloody with a leather whip reinforced by a slab of sheet metal. Other boys were beaten so badly that their underwear was pounded into their bare skin. Many were sodomized or forced to perform oral sex on staff members, he said.

Boys were beaten for such infractions as spitting, cursing or talking back. Staff members placed bets on who could draw blood first, he said.

The bodies of some boys were burned in the school incinerator, Kiser said. He said another boy, Johnny Gaddy, told him he had seen a severed human hand in the "hog bath," where leftover food was dumped to feed pigs.

Boys were rented out to work without pay for neighboring farmers and timber companies.

"They're going to find a lot of bodies out there, and there are a lot more bodies they'll never find," Kiser predicted in the October interview.

Records at Dozier say some students died of influenza, pneumonia, tuberculosis, knife wounds or in a devastating 1914 fire.

Historical documents suggest that more than 100 boys died at the school, Kimmerle said in October.

An investigation by the U.S. Justice Department documented some of the abuse and led to the closure of the school.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement concluded in 2010 that, although it found dozens of graves, there was insufficient evidence to pursue criminal charges.

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Homeboy Industries is a struggling success story

LA Times
1-26-14

Steve Lopez

It was Father Gregory Boyle's first invitation to address the Los Angeles Police Commission, and he had something to get off his chest.

For a quarter of a century, Boyle has steered boys and girls, and men and women, out of the gang life through Homeboy Industries, which offers job training, counseling, tattoo removal and more. The model Boyle built has been replicated around the country and abroad.

Here in Los Angeles, some 120,000 gang members have voluntarily asked Father Boyle for help starting over. They struggle daily against the socioeconomic forces that drew them into gang life. But Homeboy itself confronts another daily struggle.

Making ends meet.

"Our government funding has gone in the last three years from 20% of our annual $14-million budget to 4%," Boyle told the police commissioners.

And then he had this pithy observation:

"I suspect if we were a shelter for abandoned puppies we'd be endowed by now. But we're a place of second chances for gang members and felons. It's a tough sell, but a good bet."

Boyle has been making that bet for 30 years, never excusing the violence, but also trying to understand where it comes from. He told the commission he lives by two rules of refusal:

"Refuse to demonize a single gang member, and refuse to romanticize a single gang."

Steve Soboroff, the commission chairman who invited Boyle to speak, told me he did so for a specific purpose. Crime rates are down, and Soboroff considers gang intervention a key part of the reason. Earl Paysinger, an LAPD assistant chief, said he shudders to think what shape the city would be in without Homeboy.

"I'm heartened that in 2012, gang-related crime has been reduced by 18% and gang-related homicide by nearly 10%," Boyle told the commission. "And I think Homeboy has had an impact on that."

But Boyle didn't hide his frustration, arguing that Homeboy's services save the public millions of dollars in reduced violence and incarceration.

"We shouldn't be struggling this much. God love the Museum of Contemporary Art, which can raise $100 million in 10 months to endow itself," he said. "They were so successful they moved the goal posts to $150 million, and we're just trying to keep our heads above water."

Warhols and puppies, Boyle shrugged. "Go figure."

I had reached out to Boyle because I'd heard that both he and Homeboy were having health problems. It turns out that Boyle is OK after the latest round of treatment for his chronic leukemia, and he told me he's not even thinking about slowing down.

"Jesuits retire in the graveyard," he said.

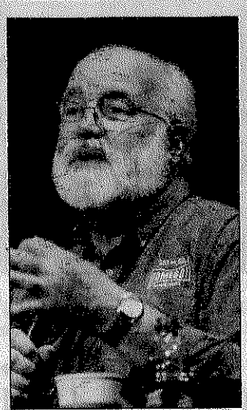
But yes, he conceded, Homeboy could use some vitamins.

We had lunch at Homegirl Cafe on Wednesday and I got more of the details. Homeboy had to lay off about 40 people last fall and projects another 60 layoffs this year unless it can plug a roughly $1-million budget deficit.

A few years ago, things were even worse. Homeboy had to tighten its operation, but that time the county also pitched in, with the first of three payments totaling $3 million.

Today, the only government funding is a small sum from the state.

But that doesn't stop the county from relying on



Allen J. Schaben L.A.Times

'I suspect if we were a shelter for abandoned puppies we'd be endowed by now.'

— Father Gregory Boyle, Homeboy Industries

Boyle. At lunch, Boyle told me that another bus had arrived at Homeboy just that morning from one of the juvenile detention camps, carrying kids who wanted their gang tattoos removed.

"We get zero dollars for that," said Boyle.

Homeboy's five paid therapists and 47 volunteers counsel youngsters who have dodged death and lost parents to violence, drugs or jail. But there's nothing in the county's $1.5-billion mental health budget for Homeboy, nor is the nonprofit in line to receive any of L.A. County's roughly $300 million in state funds for prison population reduction.

UCLA professor Jorja Leap, who studies gangs and intervention programs, has spent nearly five years tracking 300 Homeboy clients.

She says she's seen solid results, and that the majority of the 300 have stayed out of prison, had reduced their levels of traumatic stress disorder, found full- or part-time work and rekindled family ties.

"There is no one like them for one-stop shopping," she said of Homeboy.

At the commission hearing, Father Boyle said he hoped Mayor Eric Garcetti would support a program with such a long track record.

I wouldn't bet on it. When I asked Garcetti's office for a response, a spokesman emailed me a teaspoon of vanilla.

"Mayor Garcetti has great respect for Father Gregory Boyle and Homeboy Industries," said the first of two noncommittal sentences.

Homeboy might have better results with L.A. County supervisors, although none of them has recently given any of their roughly $1 million in annual discretionary funds to Homeboy. Staff for Supervisors Mike Antonovich, Gloria Molina and Don Knabe all gave nods to Boyle and expressed a desire to help him compete for various pools of money. Knabe took it a step further, saying, "My real goal would be for a long-term partnership with Homeboy."

But this is Los Angeles, home to 22 billionaires at last count. Home to a Hollywood crowd that congratulates itself for its social conscience and, in just one night at George Clooney's house, raised $15 million for Barack Obama — more than Homeboy's annual budget.

A Jesuit priest, meanwhile, goes begging for a little help with his life's mission. Boyle has now presided over 193 funerals, becoming more determined, with each one, to prevent the next.

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