



Just because you're a Los Angeles police officer, don't think you can't get victimized by another law enforcement agency.

Prior to hearing about an incident involving former Central Police Officer Sergio Arreola, which occurred in the city of Pomona on April 11, 2012, I did not know where Pomona was. My only knowledge of Pomona was that it had fairgrounds there.

Being a Los Angeles Police Department employee for 32 years, I have heard stories of LAPD officers getting in trouble in the jurisdictions outside the city limits where outside agencies responded and unfortunately had to take law enforcement action. Usually it is circumstances way beyond their control. I know because as an assistant watch commander and lieutenant for a combined total of over 20 years, I had to respond to them. Normally the outside agency is very sympathetic, having been forced to get involved in a potentially embarrassing incident for an officer.

What makes this story unique is that it appears from the final investigation that the involved officers and supervisor in this incident probably contrived a factually wrong story and possibly lied about it on the stand. After reading the story from court transcripts, audiotapes and the officers' testimony, any reasonable person should come up with that conclusion. The jury foreman later advised the officer's criminal defense attorney, Robert Rico, that he believed that the involved Pomona officers had some sort of professional jealousy against LAPD officers. This was also the conclusion of most of the jury, according to Rico.

The story of former Central Area Police Officer Sergio Arreola and his arrest as detailed below was compiled from these sources: court transcripts, audiotapes, the officers' testimony and interviews with Robert Rico.

On Dec. 18, 2012, a jury of seven women and five men found Police Officer I Sergio Arreola not guilty of Penal Code Section 148 (a) (resisting arrest) and Penal Code Section 69 (willfully resisting by violence). The Pomona police officers who effected the arrest were fully aware that Arreola was an off-duty LAPD officer and were found not credible by the jury. In fact, during the trial, the district attorney was forced to stipulate that a Pomona sergeant had given completely fabricated testimony in an effort to support the arresting officer's version of statements made, statements caught on an officer's audio recorder. This was no ordinary downtown jury. On the jury was the sister of a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) deputy and a 10-year veteran LASD custody assistant. This is Arreola's story, a story that every LAPD officer should know.

On the morning of April 11, 2012, Police Officer I Sergio Arreola had just finished his shift as a probationary police officer assigned to Central Area. Excited about the impending end to probation in a little over one week, this Iraq War veteran and decorated Marine headed out of Central Station when he received a call from his wife, who informed him that her sister-in-law had hit a curb and flattened a tire. What appeared to be a simple telephonic notification of her whereabouts and the flat tire would shortly turn into a sequence of events that would change

Arreola's life forever.

En route from Central Station to his in-laws' house (not where the car was disabled), Arreola received another call from his wife: There were actually two flat tires; the car was not drivable, and could Arreola come and help her? So Arreola changed course and headed to help his wife and in-laws. As Arreola arrived at the location of the flat tire, he observed his wife sitting on a curb, a marked black and white parked nearby, his in-laws sitting 40 feet away, a tow truck, and a uniformed Pomona police officer hovering over his wife. Arreola parked his vehicle and exited his car knowing only what his wife had told him about his sister-in-law and the flat tire. Upon exiting his car, Arreola was verbally confronted by the uniformed officer (who was over 50 feet away) and yelled and cursed at as the Pomona officer demanded to know who Arreola was and what agency he was with. As Arreola was first exiting his vehicle, he heard his wife tell the officer that Arreola was a police officer — which is why he was asked “What agency are you with?”

Although surprised and disappointed by the verbal onslaught, Arreola responded, with a Spanish accent, his name, that he was her husband and that he was an off-duty Los Angeles police officer. The officer asked to see his badge, and Arreola advised him that his badge was in his trunk on his jacket. The officer responded, “I didn't ask you where it was, I asked you to show it to me.” Complying with the officer's demand, Arreola opened his trunk and retrieved his jacket with the badge, clearly displaying it to the officer. At this point, according to all testimony, the officer lost his composure, started yelling at Arreola and ordered him to park his car, specifically pointing to where Arreola should move. Again, Arreola complied and parked his vehicle exactly where the officer directed.

Unbeknownst to Arreola, the Pomona police officer had put out a help call for a “415 off-duty LAPD officer.” Yes, a Code 3 request; not a backup, not a Code 2, but a help call based on the above. As Arreola stood by his own vehicle, still well over 50 feet away from the officer, he saw another black and white unit arrive Code 3. On tape, the primary officer is overheard incorrectly advising the responding officer that Arreola was extremely “415-148,” not listening to anything he said. This was completely refuted by several witnesses at trial and the audio recording that had captured the primary officer's interaction with Arreola before the backup arrived.

After 10 seconds on the scene, which was the length of the entire communication between the primary and the backup officer at the scene, the backup officer ordered and waved Arreola over to him, and Arreola complied. Simultaneously, several other Pomona police officers were responding based upon the “415 off-duty LAPD officer” broadcast by the primary. An officer was later overheard on the recording stating, “As soon as I heard it was an LAPD officer, I was rolling.” The jury foreman would later state that the jury concurred with the theory that there was some sort of professional jealousy by the involved Pomona officers, although it was unknown why.

As Arreola walked over to the secondary officer, he was ordered to turn around and put his hands on his head. Arreola complied. In fact, with his hands on his head, Arreola immediately advised the secondary that he was armed, and that his firearm was in his right front pocket. The officer retrieved the firearm without issue. Again, all of this was recorded. The secondary officer proceeded to place Arreola in what they described as a modified felony standing position, squeezed his fingers and violently pulled Arreola back, pulling him off balance and bowing his back. Arreola yelled for someone to record the officer's actions (which were now being recorded by the officer's DICV and by his brother-in-law, and were attempted to be recorded by the two Hispanic tow truck drivers). The recovered audio clearly depicts Arreola complying, when out of nowhere, the officer yells, “Stop resisting,” to which Arreola responds, “I'm not resisting, sir.”

As Arreola was being pulled back, the officer rapidly struck Arreola three times in the rib cage, threw Arreola to the ground, and started to try to apply a choke hold, or in the words of the officer caught on tape, “choke his ass out.” None of these use of force applications were documented in the Pomona police report, and they were denied by the officer on the stand. Another officer jumped on top of Arreola and kned him several times, punched him in the back

and, in the words of this officer as caught on the audiotape, “I tried to break his arm, I wanted to break his f—ing arm.” The audiotape captured Arreola yelling, “What are you doing?” and “I’m not resisting,” over and over. Again, none of these force options were documented in the arrest report, and in spite of the audiotape evidence, the officers denied many of them to the end. The jury later found these Pomona officers untruthful.

Based upon the Pomona officers’ fabricated version of events, Arreola was arrested, booked and forced to post bail, and within a week (and after refusing to resign because he did nothing wrong) he was fired by the LAPD. On the audio recording, the primary Pomona officer is heard telling Arreola’s wife he was going to get Arreola fired, that he would personally call Chief Beck and that he would make sure Arreola was never a police officer in the state ever again.

What happened to the videos recorded on the brother-in-law’s phone? At the scene, he was threatened with arrest for recording, and his phone was confiscated by PPD. After a court order was obtained to allow the defense access to the phone (four months later), the recording was gone. The phone was in the possession of the PPD the entire time.

In addition, Arreola had actually observed the primary officer handling the cell phone in the booking area. During the trial, Arreola’s criminal lawyer demanded the videotape from the booking area. However, the defense was told that the video was accidentally deleted during maintenance. And the tow truck driver? He initially reported having some video capturing events. But after reporting to Arreola that he was being threatened by a Pomona detective, he later stated, “It did not record.”

Despite the Pomona officers’ overt attempts to hide the truth, the truth came out at trial. At one point on a break in the proceedings, and after Rico had thoroughly cross-examined the two Pomona officers on the stand about numerous discrepancies, omissions and blatant falsities, the judge referenced problems with Pomona police reports on other trials.

Thankfully, on Dec. 18, 2012, Arreola was found not guilty. And on Jan. 23, 2013, Attorney Matt McNicholas from the law offices of McNicholas and McNicholas filed a government claim for damages against the City of Pomona, and will proceed with a civil lawsuit once the claim is rejected.

Unfortunately, although Arreola prevailed at the criminal trial, to date he remains fired by the LAPD. Attempts are being made by his civil attorney and the Los Angeles Police Protective League to get him rightfully reinstated. The League reimbursed Officer Arreola his attorney fees after the not-guilty verdict.

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