

Posted 3/20/23

## A BROKEN “SYSTEM”

*Exploiting yet another break, a parolee absconds.  
He wounds three police officers, and society shrugs.*



*For Police Issues by Julius (Jay) Wachtel.* We’re not privy to juvenile records. So all we can say is that the first significant criminal action against Jonathan Magana took place just a few months after his eighteenth birthday, when the Los Angeles resident was arrested for armed robbery. Two months later, after pleading “nolo” to a felony, the young adult drew a year in county jail and five years’ probation. As a felon, he became forbidden from ever having guns or ammunition.

That’s the first entry in the table. Alas, Mr. Magana’s first adult brush with the law apparently had little effect. Our search of L.A. County Superior Court records reveals that he enjoyed quite the criminal career:

Arrest	Charge	Plea	Sent. date	Sentence
2/6/09	Armed robbery	Nolo	4/28/09	One year county jail, five years formal Probation.
12/17/09	Hit-and-run, no driver license	Nolo	10/25/10	Three years probation for ct. I, two years for ct. II, plus brief jail term or small fine.
5/1/11	Felon with ammunition, no driver lic.	Guilty	5/11/11	32 months prison (driving charge dismissed).
8/31/13	Felon with a firearm	Nolo	2/28/14	One year county jail, three years formal probation.
9/14/14	Possess control. subs.	Guilty	4/2/15	Forty days jail, two years summary Probation.

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10/27/19	Armed robbery (2 cts.), att. robbery (1 ct.)	Guilty	2/4/20	Four years prison ct. I; one year ct. II. Att. robbery dismissed.
10/5/22 10/6/22	Battery on a peace officer; felon with a firearm; parole viol.			10/21/22 posted bail; 2/2/23 warrants issued for failure to appear

Punishment-wise, Mr. Magana always got a break. And except for a gap following his 2014 arrest, he was always convicted on new charges well before his existing sentence (had it run its full course) would have expired:

- In December 2009, less than eight months after drawing a year for armed robbery, Mr. Magana was arrested for hit-and-run and unlicensed driving. He got a slap on the wrist.
- In August 2013, less than twenty-eight months after getting thirty-two months for having ammunition, Mr. Magana was caught with a gun. That earned him county jail time and probation.
- In October 2022, thirty-two months after being sentenced to two prison terms for two robberies – one for four-years, another for one year – Mr. Magana was again caught with a gun. He also battered a cop.

Now facing a parole violation, Mr. Magana knew that he had run out of wiggle room. It might have been anticipated that he wouldn't show for arraignment. Yet he was allowed to post bail. Five weeks later, on March 8, LAPD officers spotted the fugitive. [He ducked into a residence](#). Police ordered him to come out, but he refused. So a K-9 team went in. Mr. Magana responded with gunfire.

Three officers were wounded, fortunately none critically.

SWAT took over and sent in a robot. Mr. Magana's body was hauled out later that night. He had committed suicide.

As one might imagine, "three officers shot" dominated the broadcast news. But when we turned to our main go-to source for happenings in Southern California, the *Los Angeles Times*, their coverage seemed to lack its usual depth. Click [here](#) for the first

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piece, and [here](#) for the second. Three days after the shooting, [its weekly “The Week in Photos” feature](#) was prominently tagged “A brutal killing devastates a family; meanwhile, California braces for flooding”. That “family” was unrelated to the officers’ shooting. As for the cops, their tragedy was accorded one measly picture, and it could only be reached after considerable scrolling. It depicts a patrol officer placing a flare on the roadway.

Fortunately, other news outlets proved quite informative. [A detailed account](#) by the *Associated Press* featured some telling comments from the board of the L.A. police officers’ union:

Although we believe they will recover physically, each of these officers will live with the memory of almost losing their lives at the hands of a wanted fugitive in a hail of gunfire. What occurred last night to these Metropolitan Division K-9 officers happens all too often to law enforcement officers and is a stark reminder of the inherent danger every officer faces when they put on their uniform each day.

KTLA, a local television station, [posted a print version](#) of its comprehensive on-air coverage. After exploring Mr. Magana’s criminal past and the breaks he got in some detail, it conveyed the heartfelt comments of L.A. Mayor Karen Bass, who spoke with two of the officers in the hospital:

I think that it was just important for me to be here. This is a place that is familiar to me. I used to work here in the emergency room, in trauma, and so to go back to the emergency room now to try to bring comfort and support to officers was something that was very important and meaningful to me...It is worth repeating that we must do much, much more to protect our officers and protect our communities.

To be fair, the *Times* did (briefly) allude to Mr. Magana’s criminal career. But its coverage was far less informative than what we found elsewhere. Say, [in the Washington Times](#). Its detailed account was descriptively entitled “Another felon released early from prison shot three police officers in Los Angeles.”

Alas, many such encounters have produced tragically lethal endings. Here are four recent Southern California examples (see “Catch and Release [I](#) and [II](#)”):



Michael Paredes

Joseph Santana

Isaiah Cordero

Gonzalo Carrasco Jr.

- On June 14, 2022, [a multi-convicted felon](#) shot and killed El Monte, Calif. police officers Michael Paredes and Joseph Santana as they responded to a domestic violence call. Justin Flores wouldn't have been running loose had progressive L.A. District Attorney George Gascon not barred his deputies from using sentencing enhancements. Instead, the known gang member was back on the streets after serving twenty days for felon with a gun.
- On December 1, 2022 [a multi-convicted felon](#) shot and killed Riverside County (Calif.) Deputy Isaiah Cordero during a traffic stop. Two months earlier William Shea McKay was convicted of crimes including false imprisonment and evading police. But a judge released him on bail and repeatedly postponed sentencing. Police later shot McKay dead. To the *Times*' credit, it published a piece that deeply probed McKay's criminal past. It was entitled "Why a three-strikes felon — on bail twice over — was on the streets, where he gunned down a deputy."
- On January 31, 2023 [a 23-year old ex-con](#) shot and killed Selma, California police officer Gonzalo Carrasco Jr. Officer Carrasco, who had two years on the job, encountered Nathaniel Dixon on a suspicious person call. Dixon had served a brief prison term for robbery. Once released he accumulated a series of gun and drug convictions. But thanks to [a considerate plea deal](#) and California's "Public Safety Realignment Act" (see below) he was on probation.



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“[Cause and Effect](#)” traced California’s easing of punishment to September 2010, when then-Governor Schwarzenegger [signed a bill](#) raising the threshold for felony Grand Theft from \$400 to \$950. One year later came the “[Public Safety Realignment Act](#)”, which redirected “non-serious, non-violent” offenders from state prison to county jail. In 2014 [Proposition 47](#) reclassified all thefts where losses don’t exceed \$950 (including break-ins formerly treated as burglaries) to misdemeanors. Two years later came the alluringly entitled “[Public Safety and Rehabilitation Act](#)”, which directed that persons convicted of non-violent crimes be paroled after completing their primary term, regardless of other charges or sentence enhancements. And in 2022, [AB 2361](#) forbid transferring minors to adult court without proof that they couldn’t be rehabilitated if treated as juveniles.



Progressive places are likely to “realign” until the proverbial cows come home. But coupling high-sounding concepts such as “realignment” and “rehabilitation” with “public safety” overlooks a chronic problem. According to a September 2021 BJS report, “[Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 24 States in 2008](#)”, 81.9 percent of the members of this population of releasees was rearrested within ten years; 39.6 percent for a violent crime and 47.4 percent for a property crime (Table 11). And when rearrested, those who had been imprisoned for a violent crime were somewhat more likely than property offenders to be charged with a violent offense (44.2% v. 39.7%).

What’s more, the length of prison terms proved important (Table 14). Inmates who served sentences longer than the median (15 months) were less likely to be rearrested within ten years (75.5% v. 81.1%). That was particularly so for those who had been convicted of a violent crime. For this group, 78.3 percent who served terms less than the 29-month median were arrested within ten years of release. That dropped to 66.4 percent for inmates whose sentences had exceeded the median, a statistically significant difference.

Still, as in virtually every other aspect of public policy, ideology rules. One day before Mr. Magana wounded the three officers, the Los Angeles city council [put off a decision](#) on whether to accept a \$280,000 gift to acquire an advanced robotic dog. Although its donor, the LAPD Foundation, assured lawmakers that the newfangled



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creature “would allow authorities to avoid unnecessarily putting officers in harm’s way and potentially avoid violent encounters,” protesters argued that its true purpose was to help cops spy on minorities.

Your blogger is no fan of harsh policing. Nor of harsh punishment (see, for example, [“Tookie’s Fate”](#) and [“Lock’Em Up”](#)). But what he learned during a law enforcement career makes him reluctant to endorse get-out-of-jail-free cards. As the [BJS report](#) mentioned on its very first page, “about 61% of prisoners released in 2008 returned to prison within 10 years for a parole or probation violation or a new sentence.” Still, convicted persons can’t be locked up forever. While officers Paredes, Santana, Cordero and Carrasco would have certainly benefited had their assailants remained in custody, long prison terms provoke liberty concerns and are *very* expensive. At some point inmates *must* be let go.

So what *could* help? Progressively-minded California has a couple of intriguing approaches. At the state prison in Lancaster, an [“Offender Mentor Certification Program”](#) trains prisoners as alcohol and drug addiction counselors. Its intense eighteen-month program, which includes an lengthy, hands-on internship, has enabled many former inmates to secure related positions after release. And in a [brand-new effort](#), Governor Gavin Newsom announced a re-do of infamous San Quentin prison –



California’s oldest lockup and the home of its only death row (he halted its use in 2019). Based on a Scandinavian model, the “Big Q” will focus on rehabilitation, education and training. California’s re-do ([it’s already in place](#) at SCI Chester, a Pennsylvania prison) has drawn interest [from across the U.S.](#)

Yet for now, when it comes to punishment, the criminal justice “system” is clearly broken. Whether their disputes reflect differences in ideology or perspective, judges, prosecutors, cops and corrections officials can’t seem to agree on basics such as length of confinement, terms of release, and what to do when efforts to give someone a “break” don’t work. And it’s not just cops who suffer the consequences. So until “Little Scandinavia” (that’s what they call SCI Chester) becomes a universal reality, perhaps we ought to encourage everyone who participates in that imperfect “system” to take a deep read of that sobering BJS report.

It couldn’t hurt.

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## UPDATES

**11/20/25** [In the "Golden" State, repeat drunk drivers](#) continue to take their despicable human toll. On Tuesday morning, November 18, a 13-year old pedestrian was struck and killed by a pickup truck as he stood on a "safety island" on his way to school. Bradley Gene Funk, 59, fled but was soon arrested. He is reportedly on probation for two prior DUI's. Funk now faces murder charges. And yet another DUI. (See 11/19 update.) Dangerous traffic scofflaws aren't just California's problem. [In New York City](#), a well-known wig maker was sentenced to three to nine years in prison after pleading guilty to manslaughter for killing a woman and her two daughters. Miriam Yarimi, who had amassed "more than \$12,000" in fines for recklessness and speeding, was driving on a suspended license when she blew through a red light in March and collided with the victims' car. Her victims' lawyer was outraged at her sentence. "I think this doesn't send any message at all, other than a lenient message."

**11/19/25** [Mothers Against Drunk Drivers](#) was founded by a California woman whose daughter was run over and killed by a drunk motorist. It was Clarence Bush's [fifth drunk driving arrest](#) in four years. And his *second* in *two days*. Busch served nine months in jail. Five years later, the 51-year old man [turned left on a red light](#), causing an accident that injured another motorist. And yes, he was drunk. Throughout, Busch kept getting his driver licenses back. And he's not the prime example of California's lenient posture towards drunk drivers. Consider the woman who, according to *Governing*, collected *fifteen* DUI's. And kept driving.

**10/20/25** [In 1994 an L.A.-area man with an extensive prior criminal history](#) drew 46 years for "a string of robberies." In 2022 a compassionate judge granted him early release. But a year later, Markham Bond robbed an armored car "at gunpoint" and fled with \$145,000 cash. Despite his lawyer's pleas for mercy and a "second chance," a Federal judge just imposed a 29-year term for the new crime on the 62-year old man. Meanwhile, another Southern California man, Jake Haro, [just pled guilty to murdering his 7-month old son](#). Two years ago he was convicted of a felony (and his former wife of a misdemeanor) for badly injuring an infant daughter. Haro's present female companion is also being prosecuted over the boy's death. His remains have not yet been found.

**8/6/25** [Oregon prisoner Jesse Lee Calhoun](#) was an inmate firefighter. That helped him gain an early release in 2021 from a 4-year sentence he was serving for burglary, assault on a police officer and other charges. But he apparently misused his newfound freedom. In 2023 authorities accused him of murdering three women, ages 24, 31, and 32, then dumping their bodies in the woods. Naturally, his release was voided. And he's just been

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charged with murdering a fourth woman, age 22, and of abusing her corpse. His trial is set in two years.

**6/18/25** Birmingham, AL man Damien McDaniel, 22, faces capital murder charges for allegedly gunning down eighteen persons in 2023 and 2024. [He allegedly murdered eleven patrons and wounded twenty](#)-nine during a three-month span last year. That includes mass shootings at two nightclubs: one in July, which killed four patrons and wounded ten, and another in September, which killed four and wounded seventeen. He is also charged with committing single fatal shootings on each of three days last August and September. McDaniel apparently had seven other victims in 2023. His trials will begin next year. But with all the publicity, finding “fair juries” won’t be simple.

**6/11/25** A *Washington Post* investigation reveals that D.C. youths arrested for even the most serious crimes are routinely released on ankle monitors, which they are responsible for keeping charged. Some kids told reporters that they don’t bother to keep the devices working; one admitted that he committed robberies while supposedly being “tracked.” And even when teens get hauled in for failing to comply, judges simply release them again. Experts criticize the devices, as there is no evidence that they deter misbehavior or help young persons heal. “A monitor is just a black box. It doesn’t educate young people, it doesn’t rehabilitate them, it’s not a substitute for going to school or getting counseling...”

**6/10/25** Last October a 15-year old D.C. youth and a 17-year old companion violently robbed a 39-year old man. Their victim wound up in a coma and passed away in two weeks. At the time the 15-year old had five open robbery and assault cases. But he was nonetheless released. Now 16, he just pled guilty to murder in juvenile court. His maximum sentence is detention until he turns 21. Bryan Smith’s friends were dismayed; the judge conceded that their criticism “was not unreasonable.”

**6/9/25** “Operation Justice Trail,” an initiative of Dallas police chief Daniel Comeaux, draws on the resources of his agency and the U.S. Marshals Service to arrest the city’s “most wanted criminals.” In its first month the project has arrested 98 persons wanted for violent crimes. These offenders had amassed a startling 700 convictions. Problem is, criminals often go on the lam after bonding out. Keeping that from happening may not be easy. According to the D.A., “...the way the system is set up in Dallas County, we’re not even present when the initial bonds are set.” Information that leads to the arrest of a wanted violent felon can earn a tipster up to \$5,000.

**5/22/25** After fleeing from a Pennsylvania youth detention center, where they were being held on behalf of D.C. authorities, three teens, ages 15, 17 and 18 stole an SUV and



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headed home. Meeting up with a couple of other young evildoers, they used an AR-15 rifle to commit a robbery, wounding the victim. Daijon Bourn, 17, who had pled guilty in a 2022 killing, and 18-year old Javontay D. Johnson, who was convicted of assault with a dangerous weapon, have been recaptured. Still on the lam is the 15-year old, who was convicted of robbery.

**5/21/25** Ten inmates of a New Orleans jail slithered out by shoving aside a toilet that covered an existing hole in the wall. Their efforts were aided by a maintenance worker who insists he only helped out because he would have otherwise been “shanked.” Sterling Williams, 33, has been charged with 10 counts of escape, and one of malfeasance. So far, four escapees have been caught. They, and those still on the lam, were awaiting trial or sentencing on charges ranging up to murder. “There are witnesses and victims, and all of those people are very, rightfully, unnerved by all of this,” said Louisiana’s A.G.

**5/14/25** Despite vigorous opposition from the current D.A., L.A. Superior Court judge Michael Jesic went along with the previous D.A.’s request and resentenced Eric and Lyle Menendez, who were doing life without parole for murdering their parents, to fifty years to life. Since the brothers have served 35 years and were under 26 when they committed the murders, they are eligible for parole. That’s a time-consuming process. Governor Newsom could also invoke clemency, and a hearing is scheduled in June. (See 2/4/25 update)

**5/2/25** On May 21, 2024 the L.A. Sheriff’s Dept. gave the D.A.’s office a report alleging that Mario Edgardo Garcia-Aquino, a 43-year-old youth soccer coach, sexually assaulted one of his players. But due to a case “backup” the D.A. didn’t issue a warrant for Garcia-Aquino until April 2, 2025, when the body of another of Garcia-Aquino’s soccer players was discovered in a ditch. He’s been charged with the killing, and with two instances of sexually abusing teens. According to the D.A., [a new rule](#) requires that sex abuse charges be promptly filed. And according to DHS, [Garcia-Aquino is illegally present in the U.S.](#)

[California prisons had 24 inmate-on-inmate killings in 2024.](#) So far this year there’s been thirteen. Most recently, the killing of convicted rapist Renee A. Rodriguez by Kenneth Wilson, [who is doing life without parole for 1st. degree murder](#). Other recent prison killings include the slaying of prisoner William Couste by inmate Rodger Brown, who is doing life for a previous inmate killing. And another prisoner reportedly told his psychologist that murdering his cellmate “was a ‘freebie’ because he was already serving life.” California’s [long-standing death penalty moratorium](#) was imposed by Governor Gavin A. Newsom in March, 2019.

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**4/28/25** “Thousands” of California prison inmates have gone through a decade-old reentry program that transfers them to local facilities as they approach their release date. Its purpose, to help them re-integrate into society, has reportedly met wide success, and an expansion is in the works. But so far this year “at least” nine participants slipped off their ankle monitors and walked away. These include three convicted robbers: Dijon Barber and Deshon Daniels, who were both re-captured, and [Jose Arroyo, who remains at large](#).

**3/31/25** Conjugal visits at Northern California’s Mule Creek State Prison take place in “apartment-like facilities” and “are intended to foster family connections.” But two such overnight visits last year ended with the violent deaths of visiting spouses. Their alleged killers were David Brinson, 54, who was serving consecutive life terms for murdering four men during a 1990 robbery, and Anthony Curry, who drew 30 years to life for shooting and blinding a woman with whom he was having an affair. But his first love forgave him and visited. Curry has been charged with murder; Brinson is yet to be charged.

**3/21/25** David Brinson, 54 murdered four men during a 1990 robbery. He drew four consecutive life terms at a California prison. Last November he and his 62-year old wife had a private overnight “family visit” in an apartment-like facility on prison grounds. According to authorities “these visits are designed to support positive family connections and successful rehabilitation.” About 2:00 a.m. Brinson notified prison staff that his wife had “passed out.” But an autopsy found that she was strangled to death.

**3/13/25** Inmate-on-inmate killings beset California prisons. A recent “surge” - there were seven such episodes during the first nine weeks of 2025 - has led to severe restrictions on prisoner movement and visitations. Some “lifers” seemingly feel immune to sanctions. A prisoner was murdered in January by two “lifers,” each of whom had previously killed a fellow inmate. One had told a prison psychologist that given his existing life term, that attack, in which he “strangled, beat and slashed his cellmate,” was in effect a “freebie.”

**3/12/25** Two D.C. teens, now ages 16 and 17, face murder charges for the brutal robbery and beating of a 39-year old man last October. At the time, the 16-year old had six “active” robbery/assault cases pending, while the 17-year old was on probation for an undisclosed offense. Police said the pair had been involved in three other assaults and robberies on that day as well. They will now remain in custody.

**3/11/25** Shortly after leaving the Chicago courthouse where he was pending trial on gun charges, Eric Vaughn, 28, was ambushed and slain. His alleged killer, Marquez

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Robinson, 25, is on Federal parole for a drug conviction. However, his parole has been in question because of a recent arrest for burglary. And while he's yet to be charged with murder, Robinson is back in Federal custody facing ex-con with a gun charges in connection with Vaughn's killing.

**2/4/25** Former L.A. County D.A. George Gascon's progressive, go-easy approach led voters to replace him with Nathan Hochman. Gascon had endorsed resentencing the Menendez brothers to straight life terms, which could lead to their parole. His prosecutors on that motion, Brock Lunsford and Nancy Theberge, remained on staff. They are now suing current D.A. Hochman for defaming them and reassigning them to lesser roles. Like retaliation claims were once made against Gascon by prosecutors who said they were punished for opposing his progressive policies. (See 5/14/25 update)

**1/13/25** On January 9, as major blazes beset Southern California, residents of an L.A.-city neighborhood that was being consumed by flames alerted police about a man who was trying to set brush on fire. LAPD officers detained Juan Sierra, 33, and arrested him for violating his probation on a 2023 assault conviction. Sierra, who reportedly has a substantial arrest record, has been identified by Ventura County authorities as "a person of interest" in the Kenneth fire, which has destroyed over 1,000 acres.

**1/13/25** In December 2016 North Carolina man Edgar Welch, then 24, acted out his beliefs in the "Pizzagate" internet conspiracy by opening fire with an AR-15 rifle in a Washington, D.C. pizza parlor. Fortunately, no one was hurt, and Welch surrendered to police. He pled guilty to Federal firearms charges and served four years. Welch was released in May, 2020. On January 4, 2025, Welch pulled a gun on North Carolina officers who were trying to arrest him for a probation violation. He was shot dead.

**1/3/25** In 2012 San Diego, Calif. resident Mary Shojai declined Paul Carl Tomasini's marriage proposal. So he violently assaulted her, repeatedly striking the 66-year old woman with a mallet until she was dead. Tomasini, who seemed deeply remorseful, was convicted of murder and drew life. But in 2022 [California AB 960](#) provided for compassionate release. That law was recently applied to Tomasini, who developed terminal cancer while imprisoned. He's been released to a "healthcare facility." And Shojai's daughter is incensed. His release, she says, has driven her family into "a state of hellish angst."

**1/2/25** Information from a citizen that a Virginia home was chock-full of weapons and explosives recently led to the arrest of 35-year old Brad Spafford, who resides there with his wife and two children. Although Federal agents said they found more than 150 pipe bombs and other explosive devices, Spafford has so far only been charged with having

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an unregistered short-barreled rifle. A Federal magistrate just recommended that Spafford, who reportedly lacks any criminal record, be released to his mother, but agreed to temporarily jail him while the Government makes a case for his detention.

**11/8/24** Darion C. McMillian, 23, was recently released from parole after being imprisoned for a 2019 shooting. And on November 4 he was on electronic monitoring for a pending drug case when Chicago police officers approached the double-parked car that he occupied. McMillian opened fire with a pistol converted by a “switch” to full-auto, killing Officer Enrique Martinez and, apparently by accident, the driver of his own vehicle. McMillian fled but was soon arrested. Officer Martinez, himself a young person, had less than three years on the job.

**11/4/24** Anderson Blanco Diaz supposedly hung with the MS-13 gang. That’s the capacity in which Maryland prosecutors say he executed Antoine Dorsey, with a bullet to the head. Jurors convicted Blanco Diaz of 1st. degree murder. And as the law requires, he was sentenced to life. But Judge Darren Johnson suspended all of his term but ten years. “The court can consider things that the jury could not,” he said. Prosecutors and Dorsey’s family were enraged. But Blanco Diaz’s lawyer applauded the judge’s decision. After all, the shooting was an “accident,” and ten years is the penalty for manslaughter.

**11/4/24** Nineteen-year old Nhazel Warren had recent arrests for gun possession and fleeing when officers caught him illegally packing a pistol in July. He was released with an ankle monitor. Warren then committed a home invasion. He was arrested and released on bond and, again, with an ankle monitor. He went on to commit several more armed robberies; his most recent arrest was a week ago. Again, he was released on bond. And again, with a monitor. All along, Warren was supposedly being monitored by the Probation Dept. But there’s no record that they ever put his “tracking” devices to work.

**10/25/24** [In 1989 Erik Menendez, 18, and his 21-year old brother Lyle](#) used a pair of 12-gauge shotguns that they had just bought to murder their wealthy L.A. parents. The killing was originally thought to be a mob hit, and the brothers weren’t arrested for a year. While their lawyer insisted that the brothers acted to protect themselves from their fathers’ sexual abuse, prosecutors said they did it for the money. After two hung juries they were convicted of 1st. degree murder and drew life without parole. Current D.A. George Gascón, who is convinced that the brothers were indeed driven by abuse, [is moving to have them be resentenced to straight life terms](#). That would likely free them.

**10/4/24** In 2019 Crips gangster Shanice Amanda Dyer, then 17, helped gun down two rivals. But strict policies by progressive Los Angeles D.A. George Gascon led her to be prosecuted as a juvenile. She was released on probation last February. Four months

later Dyer, now 22, staged a murder. In the interim Gascon, whose stance was openly resented by his staff, has given prosecutors more freedom. But one of his former prosecutors calls Dyer's latest killing "predictable and preventable."

**9/18/24** A 12-year old Maryland girl was struck and injured by a car in a D.C. crosswalk. Its driver was cited and released. It turns out that traffic cameras generated six speeding tickets for his vehicle this month and four for running red lights since July. In all, \$19,770 in fines levied against the car remain unpaid. In D.C., traffic infractions seem to carry few consequences. Prosecutors are reluctant to wield the hammer even in a fatal crash. According to a spokesperson, "many accidents are simply the result of a tragic mistake."

**8/30/24** Nathaniel Radimak flaunted a lead pipe during his 2022-23 L.A.-area "reign of terror", repeatedly bashing vehicles and threatening their drivers. Once arrested, he pled no contest, and a "lengthy criminal history" helped earn him a five year prison term for stalking and threatening. But after serving less than a year, he's been freed. According to lawyer Gloria Allred, many of his victims are "terrified". One who spoke out doubted that such a brief term led to any positive change. "I highly doubt Radimak has learned from his mistakes," she said.

**7/18/24** Los Angeles-area man Malcolm Darnell Guss Jr. is a seven-time convicted felon. He received a 16-month prison term in 2022 for resisting arrest (he had also been armed). After gaining early release, he was arrested in July 2023 for violating the conditions. But he gained release a month later. This July 3rd., as officers tried to stop him for a traffic offense, Guss opened fire with an AR-15 rifle that fired fully automatically. Its bullets grazed and lightly injured two LAPD officers. Guss escaped but was arrested on July 12. He's charged with attempted murder with a machinegun. And no, he's not (yet) been released.

**7/11/24** Leroy Ernest McCrary and two associates face murder charges for fatally running over the wife of a visitor from New Zealand while the couple shopped at Newport Beach, California's tony Fashion Island. McCrary, who allegedly wanted the husband's fancy watch, was on probation for stealing a Rolex in 2020. He also had convictions in 2023 for gun possession and robbery. These also led to probation. Prosecutors claim that the dispositions were influenced by evidentiary problems. But police vehemently disagree. According to progressive D.A. George Gascon's forthcoming election opponent, "malpractice appears to have cost another life." [McCrary court record](#)

**6/24/24** In 2018 Denmonne Lee, 16, set up the robbery of an L.A.-area gas station and



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provided the gun that his crime partner used to kill an employee. Two years later, when progressively minded George Gascon became D.A., he barred prosecuting teens as adults. Lee was convicted of murder in 2020, but as a youth. He drew six years and gained early release in 2023. This April Lee and an accomplice were arrested and charged with another murder. Criticism of Gascon - he's survived two recall attempts - has again ramped up.

[6/18/24](#) Walter Gray, a 53-year old California man, was sentenced in 2023 to two years for robbery and failure to register as a sex offender. His extensive prior record, which includes convictions for robbery and burglary, first landed him in prison in 1993. Thanks to good time and other credits, Gray was released from San Quentin State Prison on May 7. One day later he allegedly robbed a bank. During the process - it was captured on video - he took three employees hostage. So, for now, Gray's back in custody.

[6/5/24](#) Against D.C. prosecutor's wishes, a 20-year old Maryland man was released to home confinement pending trial for murder. Jayvon Thomas' record prohibited him from having guns, but it turns out that he kept a "ghost" gun hidden under his bed. That's how a girl "younger than 5" playing hide-and-seek came to accidentally shoot herself. Fortunately her injuries weren't fatal. Neither were the wounds suffered by a three-year old who accidentally shot herself with a handgun in a nearby county. Both happened within a two-day span.

[6/4/24](#) A "Sixth Amendment nightmare." That's what a three-judge 9th. Circuit Court of Appeals panel called Oregon's critical shortage of public defenders. More than 3,200 of the State's criminal accused lack a lawyer, and more than one-hundred remain locked up. Endorsed by two of the three panelists, the ruling upheld a lower-court injunction ordering the release of all in-custody defendants who lack a lawyer after seven days. [Decision](#)

[5/13/24](#) Two Fontana, Calif. police officers pulled over Alan Metka for a traffic infraction. During what began as a casual interaction Metka, a large man, suddenly placed the female officer in a headlock. Her partner then shot Metka, who had a pistol in his pocket. Metka survived. He reportedly has "an extensive criminal history." We confirmed through San Bernardino county court that in 2021 Metka pled guilty to felony possession of a destructive device (carjacking and assault charges were dismissed.) He apparently drew a brief jail term and was placed on probation.

[5/9/24](#) On April 12, 2024 Memphis officer Joseph McKinney was killed during a shootout with Jaylen Lobley. Lobley had been released without bail one month earlier after being arrested in a stolen car in which he carried a firearm that was illegally

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converted to a machinegun. Officer McKinney's death is now attributed to shots fired by fellow officers.

**4/25/24** [In 2019 Elliot Nowden drew three years probation](#) for a 2019 attack on an L.A. Metro train passenger. Once released, he promptly returned to his old ways. Within a few weeks he pled guilty to assault with a deadly weapon and drew a four-year prison term. He was paroled in 2022 and discharged in 2023. Last January, police arrested him for trespassing. And three days ago he was booked on murder charges for fatally stabbing the elderly transit rider whom he had robbed.

[One-billion dollars.](#) That's how much different organizations have paid out to compensate hundreds of victims of former sports medicine doc Larry Nassar, who is serving a decades-long term for sexually assaulting dozens of female athletes who came under his care. Payees include USA Gymnastics, U.S. Olympic and Paralympic committees, and, most recently, the U.S. Justice Department. They're paying out \$138.7 million for the FBI's failure to follow up on allegations against Nassar that agents received in 2016.

**4/15/24** Texas man Raul Meza Jr. was 32 when he was paroled in 1993 after serving 10 years for murdering an 8-year old. That caused a stir. And now there's another, as Meza is back in custody after offering to accept a 50-year term in exchange for pleading guilty to recently murdering his roommate and to killing a woman during a 2019 sexual assault. That earlier murder would have been long solved, it turns out, but for an Austin detective's [then-failure to follow up on a positive DNA match](#). It's now thought that Meza may have committed as many as ten killings after his early release.

**4/3/24** When he was thirteen, Orange County, Calif. resident Ike Souzer stabbed his mother to death. Convicted of manslaughter, he wound up in a juvenile institution. Released after a couple of years, he absconded from a halfway house and collected a series of arrests. And when returned to jail, he assaulted correctional officers and was charged with possessing a "shank". Souzer was most recently jailed for vandalism. Promptly released, he again absconded. Authorities just arrested him...in Mexico. D.A. Todd Spitzer accuses judges of ignoring public safety and giving Souzer "break after break after break."

**3/27/24** Illinois' top parole official has resigned in connection with his board's release of Crosetti Brand, who went on to fatally stab the 11-year old son of a woman he had chronically - and violently - stalked. Donald Shelton's exit follows on the resignation of board member Lee Ann Miller, who favored the release. Her departure had been praised as "the correct decision" by Governor Pritzker, who said that Brand's release "was not

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given the careful consideration that victims of domestic violence deserve.” (See 3/18/24 update)

**3/26/24** Violence besets New York City. [Officer Jonathan Diller was shot and killed](#) by the passenger of a car stopped by NYPD’s Critical Response Team. Return gunfire wounded the shooter. He had four prior arrests, including a recent gun charge. The car’s driver has eleven prior arrests. NYPD’s chief of detectives called it “a recidivist problem. Same bad people doing bad things to good people.” And in the city’s fraught subways, [a 24-year old man was arrested for murder](#) after pushing a rider into the path of an oncoming train. Hours earlier, [a dispute between passengers](#) about smoking had led to a stabbing.

**3/18/24** Chicago man Crosetti Brand, 37, had a life-long history of stalking, harassing and assaulting women. Repeatedly the subject of protection orders, he got 16 years in prison for a 2015 assault. Paroled last October, he promptly picked on a former target. Although he had been ordered to keep away, he tried to break into her residence. Brand was returned into custody. But he was released on March 12. One day later he got in. Armed with a knife, he stabbed the woman and killed her 11-year old son. (See 3/27/24 update)

**3/8/24** Once a big shot in the Bloods, Harlem resident Sheldon Johnson was released from prison last May after serving 25 years for attempted murder. Mr. Johnson, whose father had also been imprisoned, soon became well known for his work helping rehabilitate others. Acclaimed as a “community leader and mentor,” he was on Joe Rogan’s podcast a month ago. Mr. Johnson seemed to have accomplished his goal of leaving gangs, drugs and guns behind. Alas, he’s now back in custody, charged with shooting a man dead and dismembering his body.

**2/9/24** In September 2018 Illinois man Torrey Lewis was arrested and charged with the July 2017 shooting death of a disabled man. Lewis was held on a high bond, but in 2020 he was released on electronic monitoring because of the pandemic. Since then, provisions of Illinois’ 2021 SAFE-T Act, which eliminated cash bail, granted Lewis unmonitored “free time” each week. And on January 31 he took advantage, driving a stolen car at “over 100” MPH and getting involved in a car-to-car shootout in which he and three others were wounded. Prosecutors want him detained when released from the hospital.

**1/30/24** [Illinois law that eliminated cash bail](#) last September allows judges to detain persons who are provably dangerous. They’ve done so, and their actions have generated an avalanche of appeals. Detained defendants “have nothing to lose” by appealing. And

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while most of these appeals have been unsuccessful, some detention decisions were reversed for the judge's failure to demonstrate that "a less restrictive condition could keep the public safe." (See 7/19/23 update)

[Family members](#) of El Monte police officers Joseph Santana and Michael Paredes, who were slain in 2022 by an armed felon, marched in front of the police station to demand that two dispatchers be fired. According to police audio, neither supposedly warned the officers that the suspect's mother said "He's on PCP. He has a gun." That information was reportedly in an update to a "call report" that could have been read from a screen in the patrol car. But the officers may not have had the time to do so.

[1/25/24](#) Romeo Nance, a 23-year old Illinois man, murdered eight persons, including seven family members, during a shooting spree on January 21. Nance committed suicide as police closed in. An online search of [Will County court records](#) confirmed that Nance was out on bond and pending trial for felony discharge of a firearm and other crimes he allegedly committed in January and February 2023. Nance had a substantial adult criminal record, beginning with a robbery arrest in 2019.

[12/5/23](#) A 21-year old man opened fire in a Dallas residence, killing three adults and a 3-year old. He then stole a vehicle and drove to Austin. Byron Carillo, 21, shot himself dead as officers closed in. Carillo had been wearing an ankle monitor since his 2021 conviction for aggravated assault. But he apparently cut it off shortly before or after the murders. [Dallas PD release](#)

[8/18/23](#) To reduce recidivism, SWIFT, a Tarrant County, Texas program, provides selected high-risk felony probationers, including gang members, with intensive supervision. An academic study that compared the outcomes of gang members in the program with gang members who were on conventional probation determined that revocations were less likely for participants. But members of both groups were equally likely to be re-arrested.

[8/3/23](#) Actuarial risk assessments are used to help make decisions throughout the criminal justice system, from who must be detained pre-trial to who can be safely released. But a journal article warns that they're imperfect tools, and false positives and negatives are common. They should accordingly not become the sole means for determining whether someone is detained or released. Instead, their results should be used alongside "other factors that may affect individuals being assessed that are not included in the algorithms."

[7/20/23](#) An 11-year old Washington D.C. boy committed "an assault and two

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robberies” in May. But in June charges were conditionally dismissed provided he kept out of trouble. Eleven days later he was arrested for “robbery while armed, threats to injure a person and carrying a pistol without a license” for the brazen taking of a delivery person’s moped. But he’s been released again. A probation officer reports there’s been “issues” with the GPS bracelet; his mother admits that her son’s drug use was concerning.

**7/19/23** On September 18 Illinois will become the first State to do away with cash bail. On July 18 its Supreme Court ruled 5-2, with conservative Justices on the losing side, in favor of a hotly challenged provision of the reform-minded “SAFE-T Act”. To detain someone pre-trial, [prosecutors will have to demonstrate](#) by “clear and convincing evidence” that an accused “poses a real and present threat to the safety of a specific, identifiable person or persons.” Governor J.B. Pritzker said he’s open to making changes should they prove necessary. (See 1/30/24 update)

**7/5/23** Middle-aged Minneapolis resident Sylvester Vaughn got four years for causing a fatal December 2022 collision by speeding through an intersection at 85 mph while drunk. That sentence seemed wholly inadequate to the 22-year old victim’s grieving parents. Vaughn, “a repeat drunken driver operating on a revoked license,” will serve 2 1/3 years and the rest on release. He pled guilty to one count of vehicular negligent homicide, avoiding a second count that alleged he was impaired. His case follows that of [Derrick Thompson](#), another Minneapolis drunk driver who killed five women in a similar accident last month.

**6/22/23** “We’re very disgusted, sick to our stomachs.” That was the reaction of a disbelieving relative as a California jury returned involuntary manslaughter convictions for the stabbing deaths of a 59-year old woman and her 82-year old mother. According to his lawyers, Shawn Shirck, 29, was in the throes of PTSD and far too intoxicated when he committed the crimes to be conscious of his acts, and thus have the requisite intent to commit murder. According to jurors, prosecutors failed to adequately rebut that contention. Shirck had spent nearly four years in jail awaiting trial, and he was released on parole.

**6/12/23** An alleged gang member who is wanted for an Oakland murder and has “numerous” active warrants for gun violations in two counties reportedly opened fire during a block party in San Francisco’s Mission District. Nine persons, ages 19 to 35, were wounded. Javier Campos, who’s connected with the notorious Sureno gang, reportedly sped away from the scene in his vehicle. He is being sought by police.

**6/6/23** A 31-year old San Jose, Calif. man with a “violent, delusional past” is in custody



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after an inexplicable series of attacks that left three persons dead and five injured. Kevin Parkourana, who was on felony probation and has a string of convictions and mental-health detentions, stole vehicles, stabbed drivers, and ran over pedestrians and a man on a scooter. Parkourana was most recently arrested in January for a knife attack but was not charged. [Santa Clara Co. court history](#)

**6/5/23** In 1982 Texas man Raul Meza was on parole for a robbery and shooting when he pled guilty to the rape/murder of an 8-year old girl. He got 30 years and was released in 1993 after serving one-third of his term. Meza was then “run out” of a string of cities. He’s now back in custody, charged with two murders in the Austin area (he turned himself in and admitted to one). Meza is also being looked at in ten “cold cases”. Austin’s City Manager complains that “somebody made a bad decision 41 years ago and let this guy for whatever reason manipulate the system and justice was not served.”

**5/24/23** In a long-delayed decision, the Los Angeles City Council voted 8-4 to approve the donation of a “robot dog” for use by LAPD SWAT officers in high-risk situations. But opposition continues. According to the “Stop LAPD Spying Coalition”, its acceptance augurs an era where such devices will be “walking all over the place.” Others fear that the gadget will be used “to harm and spy on Black and brown communities.” Facing similar concerns, NYPD recently gave its version back. (See 4/12/23 update)

**5/6/23** When he took office, George Gascon, L.A.’s progressive D.A., forbid prosecutors from seeking sentence enhancements. That allowed Justin Flores, a felon with multiple prior convictions, to be on supervised release instead of prison on the day he shot and killed El Monte police officers Michael Paredes and Joseph Santana. And now their families are suing the D.A. over his policy and the probation department, which allegedly failed to adequately monitor Flores.

**5/5/23** Under attack about her office’s alleged failure to vigorously prosecute serious crime, St. Louis’ embattled chief prosecutor resigned. Kim Gardner, a “Blue” and the first Black person in that role, said she wanted to avoid giving the majority “Reds” an excuse to enact a law that would bypass her prosecutors altogether. But there’s also the matter of Daniel Riley, who was allowed to remain free while awaiting trial for robbery despite “nearly 100” bond violations. And while under “house arrest,” his speeding car struck a 17-year old Tennessee volleyball star and caused him to lose both his legs.

**5/4/23** In 2017, while imprisoned for rape, Jesse McFadden was charged with using a smuggled cellphone to solicit nude photos from a teen. Even so, he was freed in 2020, three years before his 20-year term would have normally expired. On May 1, 2023, when McFadden’s trial on the solicitation charge was set to begin, he shot and killed his wife

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and five other persons, then committed suicide. (He blamed his accuser: “This is all on you.”) His victims’ survivors are now demanding to know why, given his looming criminal case, McFadden was granted early release.

**5/1/23** In 2017, thirty-three years into a life-without-parole term for a double murder he committed as a 16-year old, Chicago resident Steven Hawthorne was a free man. Celebrated for his reformist work while in prison and after release, he had a seemingly bright future. But within a couple of years he was arrested for having a gun. He was arrested again in January with five guns, including an AR-15. But he was released. Hawthorne is now back in custody, accused in the April 15 double killing of an ex-girlfriend, whose head was crushed with a rock, and of her new boyfriend, whom he allegedly shot in the face.

**4/19/23** A Maine man with an extensive criminal record was arrested for murdering four persons in a Bowdoin residence and killing three more as he fled on a highway in Yarmouth. Joseph Eaton, 34, posted recent accounts of his emotional struggles online. He was most recently released from prison in 2021 after serving three years for felon with a gun and aggravated assault against a law enforcement officer. He also has prior convictions for felony assault and domestic violence.

**4/8/23** George Sydnor Jr., 43, the D.C. man who allegedly murdered a Virginia woman who was visiting the District, had a long criminal record, including an armed robbery last October. But he was allowed to plead to attempt, as no gun was found. Sydnor also had a larceny warrant from a nearby jurisdiction. But the judge released him on probation on condition that he take care of that charge. D.C. has had 59 murders, 31% more than last year. According to the *Post* editorial board, it’s “failing victims.

**3/27/23** On bail awaiting trial for a 2017 Arkansas murder, Kirkland Warren moved to Washington state. In 2020 and 2021 authorities in Vancouver investigated him for gun violations. Then on March 2, 2023 he was arrested for assaulting a woman and shooting into her apartment last December. But he was again released on bail. That woman and her daughter were recently found murdered. Warren hasn’t been charged with this crime. But Arkansas revoked his bail on the old murder, and he’s back in custody.

**3/20/23** “Blue” moves to eliminate cash bail and facilitate pre-trial release have become the target of “Reds” who warn they would seriously compromise public safety. As an example they cite the murderous November 2021 rampage of Darrell Brooks, [a multi-convicted felon and registered sex offender](#) who was on \$1,000 bail for domestic

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violence when he plowed his speeding SUV into a Waukesha (WI) Christmas parade, killing five and injuring 48.