

The People vs. LA Sheriffs: Justice for Andres Guardado!

written by Jefferson Azevedo
May 27, 2023



Protest after police killing of Andres Guardado, June 21, 2020. SLL photo

Almost three years after the murder of Andres Guardado by a Los Angeles County

Sheriff's Deputy, the officers involved in his assassination have not been indicted. Guardado was an 18-year-old teenager who studied at LA Trade Technical College and worked as a security guard to help his family.

His murder took place in the City of Gardena, a place that, like its neighbors Compton and South Central, has a history of police brutality.

The killing of the Salvadoran-American teenager occurred weeks after the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. Floyd was a Black man whose killing by a white cop in Minnesota sparked some of the biggest mass demonstrations against police brutality in U.S. history.

If it wasn't for the demonstrations, Floyd's killer Derek Chauvin and the other officers who watched him slowly murder his victim would not have been sent to prison. The protests were not only a way to demand justice for another Black victim of the police; they were also a call for justice and a denouncement of racism and other kinds of violence that poor Black and Brown communities regularly suffer in the U.S.

Though not as big as the protests for George Floyd, demonstrations were also held to demand justice for Andres Guardado and show solidarity with his family and loved ones. [A march and rally](#) called by Unión Del Barrio and the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice and supported by other organizations was held in Compton and Gardena, near the spot where Andres was killed.

Protesters denounced the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, the cops involved in the murder, and demanded the imprisonment of Deputy Miguel Vega - who shot Guardado five times in the back - and his partner, Deputy Christopher Hernandez.

A pattern of brutality

Vegas and Hernandez no longer work for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's

Department. On April 13, 2023, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California released a note stating that the former deputies [were scheduled to be arraigned](#) that day on federal charges that they violated the civil rights of another young man at a skate park by falsely imprisoning him, then obstructing justice to cover up the illegal detention.

A [May 19 Los Angeles Times article](#) reports the difficulties encountered by county watchdogs investigating the participation of LACSD deputies in gangs, among other things. They have found that nothing has been done despite new Sheriff Robert Luna ordering the deputies to cooperate with the [ongoing investigation](#) on law enforcement gangs led by LA County Inspector General Max Huntsmen.

Among the alleged gangs being investigated are the Banditos, to which the former deputies involved in the murder of Andre Guardado allegedly belonged, and the Executioners, a gang that recruits potential members based on their history of violence against the people in their area and does not accept Black people or women.

At the time of Andres Guardado's murder, Miguel Vega was said to be an "ink chaser" - someone trying to be admitted to one of the police gangs. Admission would allow him to have the gang's tattoo. After someone is killed by a member of their gang, the deputies celebrate by going out to drink.

Maybe Andres Guardado was murdered just because a deputy wanted to prove to a police gang that he was capable of killing and was a good candidate for membership.

The deaths caused by police actions since the murder of Andres are a sign that police officers don't need to be ink chasers or form their own gangs to terrorize and kill poor people and people of color. They already have the support of the institutions set up to oppress their victims and the working class as a whole.

Police departments are gangs that operate to protect the interests of the capitalist class. Therefore, investigations – even on the rare occasions when they result in punishment for individual killer cops – won’t do much to stop police terror in poor communities or bring justice to their victims.

Ultimately, justice for Andres Guardado and all the victims of police terror can only be achieved with the abolition of the police and capitalism.

