

We Still Own This City: Police Corruption in HBO's *The Wire* and *We Own This City*

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Honors Program



Corrupt Police in Season One

Officer Roland Pryzbylewski - blinds a teenager – instead of being fired he gets reassigned (related to a Major Valchek and Lt. Daniels covers for him)



Major William Rawls - prioritizes increasing arrest stats – regardless if investigation is complete or not



Lieutenant Cedric Daniels - has a speculated history of possession of excessive income (which is threatened to be exposed by Deputy Commissioner of Ops, Ervin Burrell)



Ervin Burrell - When the detail investigating drug kingpin Avon Barksdale catches a state senator's driver carrying Barksdale drug money, Burrell orders that the money be returned – in affect covering for a "dirty politician"
-Bribed Det. Ellis Carver with a sergeant promotion to feed him information on Barksdale detail

Gun Trace Task Force from *We Own This City* (not all pictured)



Real Life Gun Trace Task Force from Baltimore, MD

Conclusions

Both of these shows involve the TV producer, David Simon. When *We Own This City* came out in 2022, versus season one of *The Wire* coming out in 2002, Simon adjusted his presentation of police brutality to fit the changes society are seeing with police brutality in real life. Had *The Wire* come out today, the show would be much more different and heavily focused on police brutality like *We Own This City* does. In our current day, how police treat the public is a lot more scrutinized and judged then it was 20 years ago.

- The men detailed to the Gun Trace Task Force from the years 2007-2017. They were investigated by the FBI, and all were found guilty of various charges such as conspiracy, racketeering, robbery, destruction, drug dealing, etc. The longest sentence was given to leader Wayne Jenkins, who got 25 years.
- The Task Force were tasked with finding and seizing weapons and drugs in bulk from the people believed to be putting them on the streets in the first place.

Some Wrongdoings Represented in the TV Show

- The more "bodies" they bring in – the more overtime approved
- Extreme police brutality & harassment– police will bump into people and pin them with "assaulting a police officer"
- Would take large amounts of money (thousands) from homes & cars, only log partial amounts in evidence logs
- Evidence planted on civilians to cover up dirty police work
- Wrongful car chases that led to civilian deaths
- Drug dealing within task force (Jenkins)
- Mentality that as long as they put guns & drugs on table, they can police however they want
- Jemell shot and killed three people in one year – paid suspension for two years then reassigned to GTTF
- Jenkins posed as a US Attorney to find drugs and cash on Hamilton – threatens to plant drugs on him
- Suitor's unsolved death – day before he was supposed to testify in court