

The Enemy Within

‘The story of Supercop Joe Sanchez’
by: Tony (The Marine) Santiago

The majority of the police officers who serve our cities, towns and counties are good law-abiding men and women whom we can look up to as heroes. However, we also often hear in the evening news about the police officers who believe that they are above the law and are witnesses all to the abuses that some of them commit against the defenseless illegal immigrant or the petty criminal who is unarmed and surrenders, expecting simply to be read his Miranda rights and hauled off to the nearest county jail, upon viewing the televised videos presented in the news. Yet, many of these officers are seldom charged for their crimes and often the only punishment that those who are accused receive is a minor and limited suspension from their jobs. I am sure that you as I, have asked yourself, why is it that some of these officers who are so cruel can get away with the things that they do. Well they do get away with it, however that is not the worst of it, the most amazing thing of all is that there are many corrupt officers within the police forces who are associated with the worst criminal elements known to society and the fact that they are officers of the law makes them worse than your common street criminal. In many cases the corruption and criminal acts committed by these officers are known by other fellow officers, who would rather keep quiet and look the other way instead of doing something about it. There is a code of silence within the police force similar to the Mafia “Omerta”, known as the “Blue Wall of silence” or the “Blue Code of Silence“. A police officer, who reports the criminal acts of another officer, is considered a traitor by his fellow officers and often has to go through hell as a result of his honest acts.

I recently had the honor and pleasure of making the acquaintance of a highly decorated former NYPD police officer, who had the guts to do the right thing, even though it meant the end of the career which he so much loved. That man is Jose “Joe” Sanchez Picon. Sanchez discovered the corrupt activities of his Captain and Lieutenant and he refused to be dragged down to their level. Instead he decided to do something about it, only to be betrayed by his own Department of Internal Affairs, who instead of taking action against his superiors helped to frame him of criminal acts, which he did not commit. Sanchez was acquitted, but lost his job. He wrote two great books about the events that happened to him. He also tells of the many good cops he worked with, be they white, Latinos and blacks he doesn’t discriminate. I highly recommend the books and hope that someday one of our Latino movie producers will make a film of them. You can purchase the books at Amazon.com. They are “Latin Blues, A Tale of Police Omerta From The NYPD”, [ISBN 1601790007](#) and "True Blue: A Tale of the Enemy Within", [ISBN 978-1-60179-012-5](#) . Here is the biography which I wrote in Wikipedia about Joe Sanchez, enjoy:

Joe Sánchez (born: January 16, 1947), is a highly decorated former New York City police officer and author whose books give an insight as to the corruption within the department. Upon exposing the illegal acts committed by some high ranking officers, he was betrayed by the Internal Affairs Division and arrested on the false allegations of committing various crimes in a case which was highly publicized by the news media. He was found guilty for the assault charge, a conviction which was overturned. His case exposed the existence of a code of silence among police officers known as the "Blue Wall of Silence".



Early years

Sanchez (birth name: Jose Manuel Sánchez Picon) a native of Santurce, Puerto Rico, was one of five siblings born to Jose Sánchez and Clotilde Picon. In the early 1950s his parents migrated to New York City in search of a better life and settled in Manhattan. Sánchez' parents divorced and his mother remarried and the family moved to the South Bronx. There Sanchez received his primary and secondary education. Sanchez decided that he would enlist in the United States Armed Forces upon his graduation from Theodore Roosevelt High School.

Military service

Sánchez attempted to enlist, but was not accepted by any of the four military branches. He then signed up for the selective service and in 1965, Sánchez was drafted into the United States Army, at the age of 18. On January 16, 1967, his twentieth birthday, he found himself with Company D, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry of the 1st Air Cavalry Division (Mobile) (after being transferred from A Company, 5/7) deployed near the village of Phantiet in South Vietnam. On that day, his unit was engaged in a firefight with the Viet Cong. Sánchez and three of his comrades were seriously wounded by the shrapnel of an enemy grenade during that firefight. Sanchez was awarded the Army Commendation and Purple Heart Medals. After he recovered from his wounds, he was discharged from the Army and he returned to New York. There he met a young girl by the name of Lorraine Pfaus whom he married. He worked in various jobs among them as a Taxi and Ambulance driver. In various occasions Sánchez applied to become a police officer in the New York Police Department, but was not accepted. He then opted to apply to take the entrance examination as a police candidate in the New York Port Authority and was accepted. Sánchez served in the NYPA from January 1971-October 1973, during which time Sánchez discovered that his application for the NYPD had not been accepted once more because of a technicality. He opted to take his case before the board and was finally accepted as a police candidate in the NYPD.

New York Police Department

Sánchez graduated from the New York Police Academy after six months of training and was assigned to the 90th Precinct in Brooklyn. The 90th Precinct is located in northern Brooklyn in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. It is primarily a residential and commercial area consisting of factories, warehouses, one and two family private homes as well as numerous apartment buildings. The five primary commercial strips are Graham Avenue, Grand Street, Lee Avenue, Havemeyer Street and Broadway. During his years as a police officer, he learned that there were good police officers and as well as corrupt ones. He also noticed that the illegal acts committed by some of his fellow officers were often ignored and seldom reported by others, including some of his superiors who believed in a code of silence known amongst them as the "Blue Wall of silence" in which reporting another officer's errors, misconduct, or crimes is regarded as a betrayal. He served in various precincts before being transferred to the 30th Precinct. The 30th Precinct is primarily residential, containing a commercial area on Broadway. The neighborhoods in the precinct are known as Hamilton Heights, Sugar Hill and West Harlem.

The Blue Code of Silence

Sánchez discovered that his Lieutenant was receiving payments and sexual favors in exchange for protection by accident, after he gave a routine traffic summons to the brother of a powerful businessman. The businessman cited him to his office and asked if he would be interested in providing protection for his drivers, same as his (Sánchez') Lieutenant and Captain were doing, and made a monetary offer to

Sánchez. He reported the situation to Internal Affairs Division, who in turn "wired" him, which in this case means that he was connected to a recording device, with the supposed intention of gathering proof of his accusations. Unknown to Sánchez was the fact that those who wired him were friends of his Lieutenant. Sánchez returned to the businessman and gathered enough information to implicate his Lieutenant and Captain on corruption charges, however upon learning of the situation his Lieutenant had him transferred to another precinct.

In 1983, Sánchez participated in a drug bust which ended his career as a police officer. In October of 1983, Sánchez was framed by some members of the police force involving the drug bust and was indicted by a Special and Extraordinary Grand Jury in Manhattan for one count of Burglary in the First Degree; one count of Grand Larceny in the first Degree; one count of Grand Larceny in the second Degree; six counts of Grand larceny in the Third Degree; and, one count of assault in the Third Degree. The witnesses against Sánchez were drug dealers involved in the drug bust who were promised to have their indictments dropped if they agreed to testify against him. After a lengthily trial, he was exonerated of the charges and applied for reinstatement in the NYPD. In 1988, after an administrative "snafu" sent his appeal for reinstatement to two different Supreme Court justices, one ruled that he be rehired and the other upheld his dismissal. The latter prevailed.

Corrections officer

Sánchez worked for Holmes Security as a night supervisor for 3 years, until he started to work as a letter carrier in Haverstraw, New York. In 1989, he joined the New York State Department of Corrections who welcomed him on the job. As a corrections officer he came into contact with many of the inmates he once arrested as a police officer in Washington Heights. He first worked at Sing Sing Correctional Facility, a maximum security prison in the Village of Ossining, Town of Ossining, New York. There he was assaulted and one inmate tried to set him up on false allegations that he had mistreated him. The Department of Corrections knew what was going on and supported him. Sánchez, purchased a house in Catskill, New York, and transferred to Coxsackie State Prison. While at Coxsackie State Prison, he was involved in many dangerous situations involving fights between inmates. There was one particular incident, which almost cost him his life, he came to the aid of an inmate which was being stabbed by another. None of the other correction officers, who witnessed what was going on, came to his aid until it was almost over. This experience led him to consider retirement.

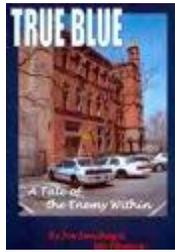
Later years

Sánchez, retired and moved with his family to Florida. He continues to be active in various organizations, among them the North East Florida NYPD 10-13 Chapter; the Latino Officers Association Florida; the Purple Heart Chapter 0808, Flagler County Flagler Beach, Fl., the First Cavalry Division Association; 5/7 Cavalry Association, the 7th Cavalry Association and the Association of Retired Hispanic Police (ARHP) NYPD in New York. He is quoted as saying:

"What I tell young cops I come in contact with... they have one of the greatest jobs in the world, and to stay honest, for once you lose a job for being dishonest, it will stay with you until you die"

Written works

Sánchez together with Mo Dhanias is the author of the following books:



*"Latin Blues, A Tale of Police Omerta From The NYPD", Publisher: The Old Kings Road Press (2006), ISBN 1601790007

*"True Blue: A Tale of the Enemy Within", Publisher: Old King Road Press, ISBN 978-1-60179-012-5

Military decorations

Among Sánchez' military decorations and awards are the following:

- *Army Commendation Medal
- *Purple Heart
- *Army Good Conduct Medal
- *National Defense Service Medal
- *Vietnam Service Medal
- *Vietnam Campaign Medal

Badges:

- *Combat Infantryman Badge
- *Rifle Sharpshooters Badge