

Thursday, October 11, 2007

L.A. police report admits excessive force at May Day demonstration.

Bill of Rights. (From the public domain.) On May 3, 2007, I blogged about severe police brutality by Los Angeles police against demonstrators and journalists near the conclusion of a huge pro-immigrant demonstration. Thanks to a fellow listserv member for posting about a recent Los Angeles Police Department report that admits excessive force was used by police at the demonstration. Fortunately, the report goes beyond that obvious conclusion to provide details about how such rampant brutality took place in the first place. As Agence France Presse relates from the Los Angeles Police report: "As the day wore on, there was a breakdown in command' that left officers on the ground to their own devices when they were pelted with bottles and rocks by protesters. "As subordinates from various positions in the field made numerous requests over the radio that went unacknowledged and unanswered ... officers began to make independent decision in efforts to control the crowd,' the report said. "Some officers used their batons to strike protesters, while others fired rubber bullets inappropriately into the crowd in violation of police procedures, the report added." How many more such instances of police brutality do we need before more people recognize the high risks of giving anybody a gun, the power of arrest, and a police uniform (the same can be said of giving a gun and the authority to maim and kill to soldiers)? I think police brutality will continue to run deep and rampant as long as society remains as overcriminalized as it is, because an overcriminalized society requires an excessive number of police, which translates into too many underqualified police being hired, insufficient training, insufficient supervision, insufficient police morale, and insufficient selection and training of those who train and supervise the frontline police. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Constitutional Law at 00:00