



Vice: One Cop's Story of Patrolling America's Most Dangerous City

By John R. Baker, Stephen J. Rivele

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9 square miles. 10,000 criminals. 130 cops. A riveting memoir by Baker, California's most-decorated police officer

Compton: the most violent and crime-ridden city in America. What had been a semi-rural suburb of Los Angeles in the 1950s became a battleground for the Black Panthers and Malcolm X Foundation, the home of the Crips and Bloods and the first Hispanic gangs, and the cradle of gangster rap. At the center of it, trying to maintain order was the Compton Police Department, never more than 130-strong, and facing an army of criminals that numbered over 10,000. At any given time, fully one-tenth of Compton's population was in prison, yet this tidal wave of crime was held back by the thinnest line of the law—the Compton Police.

John R. Baker was raised in Compton, eventually becoming the city's most decorated officer involved in some of its most notorious, horrifying and scandalous criminal cases. Baker's account of Compton from 1950 to 2001 is one of the most powerful and compelling cop memoirs ever written—an intensely human account of sacrifice and public service, and the price the men and women of the Compton Police Department paid to preserve their city.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Born and raised in Compton, the city in L.A. county notoriously home to the Bloods and Crips gangs, Baker traces both the history of the city and his own rise from rookie to detective in his gritty memoir. Co-written with screenwriter Rivele (Nixon), Baker, born in 1942, describes growing up the son of a white father and Mexican mother, learning early on how to sidestep racial boundaries--yet never walking away from a fight. He joins the Compton Police Department in 1968 after earning a sociology degree and serving in the Marine Corps, hoping to fulfill his need for adventure and serve his town. Baker recounts the racial shift in Compton beginning in the late 1950s as "white flight" began and the area became predominantly black, though by the 1970s Hispanics became the majority--and the rise of brutal gang violence. Along with his fellow officers, Baker was more often than not outnumbered on the streets by criminals, but describes a police force dedicated to protecting the community, even if that means doling out some unorthodox, Compton-style justice. (Jan.)

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Review

"Harrowing...thrilling...in-your-face violence and resilient heroism that leap off the page." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"A candid and unapologetic glimpse into a lawman's life. Grim, exhilarating, heroic ... with a dash of history thrown in for good measure." --Lt. Randy Sutton, author of *True Blue* and *A Cop's Life*

"Some of the best cop stories you'll ever read—[I] promise. Rick Baker's Compton makes the South Bronx look like [summer] camp."

--Brian McDonald, author of *My Father's Gun: One Family, Three Badges, One Hundred Years in the NYPD*

"Compton, California, in the 1970s and 80s was like the Wild West, and Rick Baker was perhaps the Compton Police Department's bravest and most honorable officer. His book, *Vice*, is a nonstop thrilling saga of how this small but determined police force kept order in a tough town."

--Leonard Levitt, author of *NYPD Confidential*

About the Author

SGT. JOHN R. BAKER is an 18-year veteran of the Compton Police Department. He lives in Las Vegas, NV.

STEPHEN J. RIVELE is the Academy Award-nominated screenwriter of Oliver Stone's *Nixon*, and of Will Smith's *Ali*. Rivele is also the author of eight previous books. He lives in Pasadena, CA.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Richard McCain:

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Helen Kingsbury:

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