

## Coalition aims to help victims of police brutality and abuse

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Author: SHARON SPIVAK

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Seven years after Jim Butler was beaten by a deputy sheriff, his nose broken and shoulder dislocated, he says the pain still is hard to bear.

"You are stunned," said the former Navy chaplain. "The sense of violation is so horrendous that you never forget it. I'll take it to my grave."

Even though he won a \$1.1 million judgment against the Sheriff's Department for civil-rights abuses, Butler says he won't rest until there is a better support system for other victims of police brutality.

Yesterday, Butler joined members of the American Friends Service Committee downtown to announce a new local coalition that is ready to work with anyone who has suffered physical or emotional abuse by law enforcement.

"The best-kept secret in the United States is the fact of police brutality and police abuse," Butler said. "They refuse to prosecute (law enforcement) and they allow them to stay on the force."

Butler's group, Victims Against Law Officer Repression (VALOR), will hold an organizing meeting in San Diego tomorrow at 10 a.m. at the Carpenters union meeting hall, 1165 19th St.

Aside from being a network to provide comfort and support, Butler says the new San Diego chapter will teach people how to file complaints with local authorities and the FBI. It also will push for a federal review board to investigate police brutality.

"These victims go through incredible emotional distress," said attorney Michael Crowley, representing the American Civil Liberties Union. "That's where VALOR comes in -- to tell these people they're not alone, that they didn't cause it to happen."

Fear of repercussions -- or of deportation in the case of undocumented workers -- keeps many victims from reporting abuses, Butler said. Many lack the money to bring lawsuits.

Butler stressed that the group wants to support law enforcement that is "decent," but wants protection against "Rambo officers" who cause most of the problems.

While the number of brutality cases is impossible to track, Roberto Martinez of the American Friends Service Committee said his office has seen "a dramatic increase in the last few years."

Credit: Staff Writer

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**Abstract** (Document Summary)

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