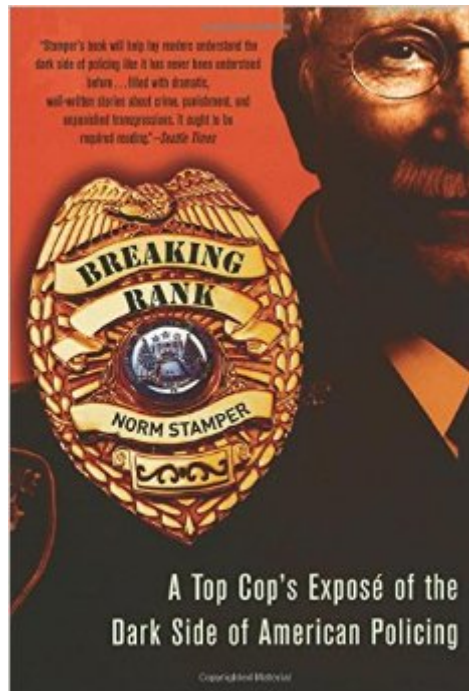


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Breaking Rank: A Top Cop's Exposé Of The Dark Side Of American Policing



Synopsis

Opening with a powerful letter to former Tacoma police chief David Brame, who shot his estranged wife before turning the gun on himself, Norm Stamper introduces us to the violent, secret world of domestic abuse that cops must not only navigate, but which some also perpetrate. Former chief of the Seattle police force, Stamper goes on to expose a troubling culture of racism, sexism, and homophobia that is still pervasive within the twenty-first-century force; then he explores how such prejudices can be addressed. He reveals the dangers and temptations that cops face, describing in gripping detail the split-second life-and-death decisions. Stamper draws on lessons learned to make powerful arguments for drug decriminalization, abolition of the death penalty, and radically revised approaches to prostitution and gun control. He offers penetrating insights into the "blue wall of silence," police undercover work, and what it means to kill a man. And, Stamper gives his personal account of the World Trade organization debacle of 1999, when protests he was in charge of controlling turned violent in the streets of Seattle. *Breaking Rank* reveals Norm Stamper as a brave man, a pioneering public servant whose extraordinary life has been dedicated to the service of his community.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Police officers do a job that I'm not willing to do. Yet when my car broke down on the highway or we heard noises that convinced us a burglar was breaking into our home, I had no hesitation in calling 9-11 for help. I can't imagine life in these United States without the service of police officers. Most of

my experiences with cops so far have been positive, but not all. I have friends and family who work in law enforcement and I've heard some pretty unbelievable stories from behind the "thin blue line." *Breaking Rank* validates those stories (and more) and gives the reader an appreciation for all aspects of law enforcement: the nobility of police work, the dangerous work that cops do every day to keep our streets safe, and the problems inherent in every profession-and the big, big difference when problems occur in a profession where the employees have guns and badges and can choose to use them as deadly force against any person. I can't imagine life in these United States without constitutional restrictions on that choice especially now with even more power for local law enforcement granted under the Patriot Act. In *Breaking Rank*, Stamper blows the smoke out of our eyes so we can see both the humanity and humanness behind the mystique of a respected and reviled profession. I found myself pensive and then concerned over issues that once seemed far removed from my corner of the world-violence in the home, capital punishment, the war on drugs to name a few. And, rather than getting one narrow opinion on these issues, I appreciated the research that was cited to back up Stamper's thinking. What this former chief can expect is a steady stream of vitriol aimed his way as a result of authoring this book, although it sounds like he's no stranger to it.

I met Mr. Stamper once briefly about 11 years ago in San Diego at a conference and decided to learn more about an interesting, knowledgeable, and experienced police professional. I'm glad he wrote this book and I recommend it. Like Norm (I can't imagine anybody calling him anything else) I retired after three decades of professional policing. I began in 1970. The three decades from 1970 to 2000 were tumultuously (yes, tumultuously) productive in the genuine professionalization of American policing. The profession is still blue collar shift work in many ways in most places, according to my own reading and experience, but it shouldn't be and seems to be heading in the right direction in many places. Myself, I am a proponent of the problem oriented approach. There are other approaches, and that is what makes for genuine professionalization -- vigorous (and tumultuous sometimes) effort. Norm's personality is on display in his book, as well as his expertise. This is a warm book with plenty of humor, as well as a serious book with the kind of advocacy backed up by research and experience that we need from those of us who are serious about the improvement of American policing. One big negative but constructive criticism: no index. One lesser criticism: the chapter on "Undercover." Norm tells a compelling and true story in that chapter, however, having some experience in "UC" work myself, I would have written from the point of view of management analysis of cost-benefit. Most undercover work is very expensive and produces not

very much genuine product. I distinguish here between process and product. UC might produce lots of arrests, but it seldom solves any problems. Process vs. permanent results.

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