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# L.A. probation supervisor charged in assault of teen revealed by Times report



In 2020, L.A. County probation officer Oscar Cross was nearly fired for the alleged use of excessive force against a 17-year-old who was already being restrained by four other officers.

BY JAMES QUEALLY, MELISSA GOMEZ, RICHARD WINTON

JULY 24, 2023 1:05 PM PT

An L.A. County probation supervisor will face criminal charges in connection with a 2020 incident in which several officers piled on top of an unarmed teen before the supervisor bent the boy's legs backward over his head, according to several law enforcement sources and court records.

Los Angeles County Dist. Atty. George Gascón will announce charges against Oscar Cross at a Monday afternoon news conference, according to three officials with knowledge of the incident. The district attorney's office launched an investigation into the case in February, just days after [The Times published footage of the incident](#).

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the matter candidly. Court records show a criminal case was filed against Cross on July 20, though no specific penal code is cited in the online log.



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The records describe the “violation date” as the same date the incident at Camp Kilpatrick took place in October 2020, according to probation department documents previously obtained by The Times.

Although video of the incident had drawn concern among other probation officers for years — with some referring to it as “child abuse” — former Probation Department Chief Adolfo Gonzales ignored recommendations to fire Cross or provide the footage to prosecutors. The district attorney's office and L.A. County Office of Inspector General only became aware of the case after The Times report.

In the footage, Cross can be seen arguing with a then-17-year-old boy identified as Beckham. The boy told The Times he was hungry and was searching in a common area for food, but all he found was a milk carton. He tossed the container, sparking an argument with officers.

During the melee, four officers can be seen grabbing the boy's limbs, forcing him face down onto a bed by his neck and placing a knee in his back, according to the video. Beckham's body twitches as he is restrained.

Roughly one minute into the conflict, with Beckham appearing to be subdued by the other officers, Cross grabs the 120-pound teen's legs and begins to bend his feet toward his head.

"Mamá, mamá," Beckham screams.

Neither the district attorney's office nor probation department immediately responded to a request for comment Monday. Previous attempts to contact Cross were unsuccessful. He could not be reached for comment Monday.



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Gonzales chose not to fire Cross despite being advised to do so by a unanimous vote of an internal probation department disciplinary board. He said he reached his decision after a "review of the evidence, consideration of the officer's service record and input from SEIU local 721," the union that represents probation department supervisors.

A spokeswoman for the union did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In an interview with The Times earlier this year, Beckham said that, after the incident, he was taken to the camp nurse, who gave him medicine to calm him. Records show he was not treated for serious injuries, but he remembered being terrified during the incident and didn't understand why the officers became so violent.

Beckham had never seen the video until a Times reporter shared it with his family earlier this year.

“That makes me mad,” he said, his hand in a fist. “I don’t like what they do, but when you’re in there, they’re in charge. ... It’s very ugly, isn’t it?”

Beckham, now 19, remembers fearing his leg would break.

“When I’m screaming, it’s because I couldn’t breathe,” he said.

The Board of Supervisors [unanimously voted to fire Gonzales](#) less than a month after The Times report on the incident.



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The report seemed to be the last straw for Gonzales, the former probation chief, whose tenure leading the agency was [marked by a surge in violence and a staffing crisis](#) in the juvenile halls, as well as repeated findings from a state oversight body that the county’s halls were “unsuitable” to house youths.

Beckham’s family praised Gascón’s decision to charge Cross in a brief interview Monday.

“I’m happy that they’re charging him, and hopefully they will convict him, because he should be punished. You don’t treat kids that way,” said Beckham’s aunt, who asked not to be named for fear of reprisal.

*Times Staff Writer Rebecca Ellis contributed to this report.*



James Queally

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Richard Winton

Richard Winton is an investigative crime writer for the Los Angeles Times and part of the team that won the Pulitzer Prize for public service in 2011. Known as [@lacrimess](#) on Twitter, during almost 30 years at The Times he also has been part of the breaking news staff that won Pulitzers in 1998, 2004 and 2016.