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ANTI GUN ACTIVIST ARRESTED..... FOR SELLING GUNS

DID CITY HALL FUND A GUN-RUNNER?

Feds arrest Hector Marroquin, of the purported "No Guns" anti-gang program

BY JEFFREY ANDERSON

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FEDERAL ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS AGENTS knocked first, then entered the Downey home of purported anti-gang activist Hector Marroquin on Wednesday, arresting him for selling silencers and weapons — including three assault rifles and a machine gun — to an undercover ATF agent.

The gun sales, some of which Marroquin, the founder of the gang-intervention group No Guns, transacted at his bar in the city of Cudahy, were captured on videotape and audiotape, said police officers present at his arrest.

Inside the house, the 51-year-old veteran of the 18th Street Gang surrendered as his daughter's boyfriend, David Jimenez, a parolee at large, jumped out a window, tossed a gun into the backyard pool and climbed on the roof, authorities said. Officials said ATF agents then confronted him, he climbed back inside and was arrested and charged as a felon in possession of a gun.

Marroquin, an alleged associate of the prison-based Mexican Mafia, has grown accustomed to such intrusions, having been arrested many times over the years while at the same time being the founder and CEO of No Guns, which has received \$1.5 million from Los Angeles City Hall via the much-criticized L.A. Bridges program designed by the Los Angeles City Council to keep youth out of gangs.

Last December, the *L.A. Weekly* exposed Marroquin's allegedly persistent gang ties and suspected mafia association, in its "[Broken Bridges](#)" article, based on federal Drug Enforcement Agency memos, classified L.A. County Sheriff's Department documents, wiretap transcripts and interviews with current and former law enforcers.

Since then, John Chavez, the head of L.A. Bridges, which funded No Guns through the Community Development Department, has lost his job.

On Wednesday, the L.A. District Attorney's Office filed five charges related to Marroquin's sale of automatic weapons and silencers to the undercover ATF agent, according to a criminal complaint filed in L.A. Superior Court. Also charged was Marroquin's girlfriend, Sylvia Arellano, who police arrested the same day in Cudahy. Police searched Marroquin's bar on Atlantic Avenue in Cudahy, as well as an auto yard in South Gate, where they recovered gang photos and journals.

The criminal charges against Marroquin are elevated by his gang membership, according to the complaint. If convicted on all counts, he and Arellano face up to 50 years in prison.

At the time of his arrest Marroquin faced a separate gun possession charge, also reported in December by the *Weekly*. That trial has been delayed. Meanwhile, his son, Hector Marroquin Jr., a former No Guns officer who police say is an admitted 18th Street Gang member, has been indicted on charges of home invasion robbery and faces up to 40 years in prison.

No Guns finally lost its funding last year, after city officials found the organization had engaged in nepotism and misappropriation of public funds. Along with his wife, son and daughter, who police say is a member of the Hawthorne L'il Watts Gang, the Marroquins made more than \$200,000 a year in salaries — public funds paid by L.A. taxpayers — to steer children away from gangs and help active gangsters escape the life.

However, a report by civil rights lawyer Connie Rice and independent audits have stated that L.A. Bridges, which has funneled more than \$100 million to programs like No Guns, cannot show that it has reduced gang activity, and the city council lacks any meaningful measures for determining success. Just last week, another purported gang-member-turned-good, 30-year-old Mario Corona, with a group called Communities in Schools, also a recipient of L.A. Bridges money, was sentenced to 32 months in prison for transporting a large amount of methamphetamine and being a felon with a gun.

Marroquin grew up on the rough streets of Cudahy, a crime-riddled L.A. suburb largely inhabited by poor Latino immigrants. Ever since founding No Guns in 1996, when he was shot while protecting his son from unknown attackers, Marroquin has been a target of police suspicion. Earlier that year he was convicted of gun charges, and has violated terms of his probation two times. In 1998, he was acquitted of weapons charges. That same year he intervened to resolve gang strife in Santa Monica.

In 2005, he told the *Los Angeles Times* he was a changed man — intent on fighting gangs and violence — but he was arrested last year at his home in Downey when police, while looking to arrest his son, found an unloaded gun on the top of an armoire in his bedroom. His daughter, Charleeda Marroquin, claimed it was hers.

Then, in November of last year, Marroquin was shot twice and hospitalized after a confrontation with a group of young men in the alley outside his South Gate auto yard. The shooting remains unsolved.

The undercover sting that culminated Wednesday came as the result of a nine-month investigation, federal ATF officials said. The complaint alleges Marroquin and his girlfriend sold guns to an ATF agent in September, October and November of last year. According to the District Attorney's Office, Marroquin posted \$260,000 bail and is expected in court on June 21.

Police say ATF agents caught Marroquin on videotape selling at least one of the guns out of the parking lot of Marrokings Seafood and Bar — a property on Atlantic Avenue he and his wife purchased for \$645,000. Police say that in the past, they have arrested gang members there for gun possession. In 2005, a Cudahy man alleged that Marroquin assaulted and threatened him there, after a dispute over the sale of tires. "You're messing with the Mexican Mafia. I run all of Cudahy," Marroquin said at the time, according to an arrest report. According to a real estate database, Marrokings has been put up for sale.

In a [second exposé](#), published in February, the *Weekly* found that Marroquin was operating the bar without a valid business license. Cudahy City Manager George Perez told the *Weekly* he did not know how that occurred, and confirmed that he called then-Maywood Chief of Police Bruce Leflar on Marroquin's behalf after police raided the property last year looking for weapons.

Documents obtained by the *Weekly* also show that the city of Cudahy passed a moratorium on issuing Conditional Use Permits for alcohol sales, but that the moratorium was lifted at the time Marroquin applied for — and was granted — his permit.

Staff writer Christine Pelisek contributed to this story.