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MYUNG J. CHUN / Los Angeles Times

William J. Bratton pulls no punches in public appearances, criticizing the performance of LAPD's brass and the rank and file.

## Bratton Takes His Show on the Road

**Police:** Chief-designate keeps up a grueling schedule of meetings with community groups and sings L.A.'s praises.

By ANDREW BLANKSTEIN,  
CARA MIA DiMASSA  
and JILL LEOVY  
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

One thing became clear as William J. Bratton made the rounds of civic groups and politicians this week as he prepares to take the helm of the Los Angeles Police Department: He knows how to work a room.

The chief-designate kept up a punishing schedule of public appearances from Thursday, when his selection was announced, through Saturday.

And from the moment he touched down, Bratton showed a knack for the artful compliment

and the bold declaration—tempered with a touch of humility. But when it came to his prescription for the LAPD, he seemed to pull no punches, criticizing the performance of department brass and the rank and file, bluntly.

Bratton seemed to strike a chord with audiences by singing L.A.'s praises in his Boston accent, calling the country's sun-drenched second-largest metropolis "one of the great cities of the world."

In a nod to West Coast sensibilities, he apologized for the accent, joked about needing an interpreter, and even promised "to work on changing that so I can fit more closely into this city." He explained its origins as Bostonian, with New York nuances.

He repeatedly paired the name of Los Angeles with New York, calling them "literally the cities of this century."

"Now is the time to get these cities safe," Bratton told journalists Friday.

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# LAPD: Bratton Makes the Rounds, Singing Praises of City

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At one point, Bratton airily dismissed years of debate over whether San Fernando Valley residents should secede from Los Angeles, which voters will decide next month, with a simple question: Why, he asked, in an incredulous tone, would anyone want to do such a thing?

Everywhere he went, people seemed hungry to hear praise. For some, it seemed to balance out the jarring East Coast-ness of his speech.

"His accent was very thick," observed Meg Barclay, 28, a public policy student at USC who attended a Saturday meeting of neighborhood council members at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

"I'm not sure if he lays it on for effect. But he was very positive about Los Angeles."

Similarly, Ray Covarrubias, a printer, who is on the Lincoln Heights neighborhood council's steering committee, spoke of Bratton's "passion for the city," after hearing him speak at Saturday's meeting.

And Orlando Ward, an associate director of the Midnight Mission and a member of the Downtown Los Angeles council, walked out a believer: "He has a level of enthusiasm that holds out hope for us. It's a new era," he said.

Still, some of those he sought to win over seemed inclined to withhold judgment, such as a group of Watts residents, most of whom were black, members of the local police station's community advisory board.

The meeting was in stark contrast to those of a few months ago,

when black South Los Angeles residents packed standing-room-only community meetings to voice concern over the ouster of Bratton's African American predecessor, Bernard C. Parks.

On Thursday, only a handful turned out to get a glimpse of the incoming chief. Most of the comments dealt with concerns about new traffic signals and remedies for other local nuisances.

But Bratton also got his first taste of some of the skepticism that has long existed toward the LAPD.

"Just how well-informed are you about any of our problems here?" one woman asked him pointedly.

Bratton's initial response to the question was to tout his experience with the federal court case mandating LAPD reforms. But when his audience gazed back at him with impassive stares, he smoothly switched gears, admitting ignorance and expressing a desire to learn.

"What I have to learn about the neighborhoods here, I don't profess to know at all," he told the questioner, who leaned back in her chair, regarding him.

"Well," she responded archly, "I don't have anything negative to say, but we will be watching."

Throughout his whirlwind tour, Bratton's message about policing was consistent—toughness, compassion, professionalism and above all, change.

There was just one constituency Bratton did not seem to be trying to please—the existing hierarchy of the Los Angeles police force. In stop after stop, the LAPD took a drubbing from the chief-apparent.

Although Bratton announced his



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Mayor James K. Hahn, incoming Los Angeles Police Chief William J. Bratton and outgoing acting Chief Martin Pomeroy eating a lunch of hamburgers at the Los Angeles Police Academy earlier this week.

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Orlando Ward, associate director of Midnight Mission

command staff would be selected mostly from department veterans, at every turn he found fault with the department, frequently referring to LAPD's tarnished badge.

He repeatedly stated officers have resisted meeting the promises made to reform since the LAPD was accused by federal officials of a pattern of civil rights violations. Bratton has said his service help-

ing monitor reform over the last year has shaped his perspective.

"Officers are literally—and they admit it—just driving by and waving," he said at one point Friday.

For those who might resist change, he sent a warning. He referred pointedly to "overt resistance" to reform within the LAPD, saying it permeates the department "at all levels, particularly

coming from senior levels."

The comments signaled that Bratton, who has a reputation in policing circles as a disciplinarian, "is not coming in trying to be warm and cuddly," said Greg Berg, a former LAPD deputy chief.

Bratton's words also seemed crafted to frame himself as a turnaround artist. He repeatedly promised to restore the luster of the de-

partment, and create "the most brilliantly shining badge of any in the United States."

Bratton was liberal in praising allies, and careful to acknowledge community concerns.

At the same time, in a bid to build political momentum, he was forceful in exhorting the public to back his agenda for the LAPD. Nor did Bratton neglect the man who picked him, Mayor James K. Hahn, offering effusive praise for his vision of community policing. He talked up the rank-and-file cops while a beaming police union President Mitzi Grasso looked on approvingly.

And in a nod to LAPD history, he talked about the department's spit-and-polish image from the era of "Dragnet" and "Adam 12."

Bratton visited the Hollenbeck Youth Center in East Los Angeles, and then before a largely African American crowd Friday—members of the Los Angeles Urban League at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles—he gave a nod to historic black grievances against the LAPD.

Bratton vowed to run a department that is "of the people, for the people, and respectful of the people."

He struck the right note, said Don L. Bardo, director of the Los Angeles Urban League's Pasadena-Foothill Branch. Bardo left the gathering saying he believes that Bratton will "remove the bad elements of the LAPD, and that will mean fairness on the streets."

Willie Solomon, 78, a black resident of southeast Los Angeles succinctly summarized his reaction to Bratton's Saturday appearance:

"We have to give him a chance."