



Street sex worker
Donna Gentile
police informant due to
poice extortion,
murder victim

Since 1985 at least 45 women have been sexually assaulted and brutally murdered in San Diego County. These women, designated by law enforcement as prostitutes, drug addicts, and transients have been associated with the police term, “NHI--no humans involved.” “NHI” is an in house rhetorical discounting of crimes against individuals from marginalized sectors of our society. This nonhuman classification, as well as the personal involvement of police officers with a number of the victims, has hindered public awareness and a full-scale investigation of these murders.

“NHI” is an interdisciplinary project that uses billboards, a gallery installation, performance and a panel discussion to examine one of the largest unsolved series of murders of women in the United States and the flawed investigation that has ensued. The project acknowledges that the murder of a single woman is a threat to all women, and that to brand victims of violent sexual assault as prostitutes, drug addicts and transients stifles genuine public concern and gives a false sense of assurance to the community.

In reference to the slain women, Mayor Maureen O'Connor told one of the out-of-town reporters “Don't write that San Diego is the murder capital of the world or anything like that.” Even at the risk of tarnishing the veneer of “America's Finest City,” we think it is time for the community to examine the appalling lack of priority given to these murders.

“These were ‘misdemeanor murders,’ biker women and hookers . . . sometimes we'd call them ‘NHIs’—no humans involved.”
—San Diego police source, *Sacramento Bee*, 7 October 1990

“ ‘The prostitute,’ that's all the San Diego police ever called her.”
—Rose Varela, mother of Anna Lucilla Varela
quoted in *San Diego Magazine*, November 1988