

Jackie Lacey

District Attorney

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NEWS RELEASE

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District Attorney Jackie Lacey Asks Governor to Deny Parole to Manson Cult Follower

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey has sent a letter to Gov. Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown Jr., requesting that he deny parole to Manson cult follower Leslie Van Houten.

"She clearly lacks insight, genuine remorse, and an understanding of the magnitude of her crimes," District Attorney Lacey said of Van Houten in the letter. "The viciousness of the murders, the relationship of those murders to the effort to incite the 'Helter Skelter' race war, and Van Houten's attempts to minimize her criminal responsibility, make her an unreasonable risk of danger to society."

On April 14, 2016, a Board of Parole Hearings panel found Van Houten suitable for parole. She was convicted of the first-degree murders of Leno and Rosemary LaBianca in 1969. Brown has until mid-September to reject or accept the parole board's decision.

The letter is attached.

[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.



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June 24, 2016

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor of the State of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Governor Brown,

On April 14, 2016, a Board of Parole Hearings panel found Inmate Leslie Van Houten suitable for parole. I strongly oppose the release of Inmate Van Houten. She poses an unreasonable risk to public safety and is unsuitable for parole at this time. I request you reverse the decision of the hearing panel and deny parole to Inmate Van Houten.

Inmate Van Houten, an active member of the Charles Manson Family, was convicted of the brutal murders of Rosemary and Leno La Bianca on August 10, 1969. The La Bianca murders were committed during a four week Manson Family murder spree, where Los Angeles and Southern California were held in the grip of fear.

Inmate Van Houten and the other Manson Family members were trying to ignite a civilization-ending race war between African-Americans and Caucasians, which they referred to as "Helter Skelter." They believed the African-American race would prevail in the bloody conflict, but after winning, they would not be able to govern the world. After the war, the Manson Family would emerge from hiding in the desert to take control of the world. According to former member Barbara Hoyt, Manson Family members spent their days preparing for Helter Skelter physically, mentally, and financially.

In July, 1969, Charles Manson spoke with Inmate Van Houten and other Manson Family members about whether or not they were willing to kill for "Helter Skelter." Van Houten thought about it for two days and decided that she could, in fact, kill to perpetrate "Helter Skelter." In preparation for this bloody conflict, Manson Family member Charles "Tex" Watson instructed the other family members, by way of group lessons, how to effectively murder someone using a knife. Inmate Van Houten attended these lessons.

On August 10, 1969, Inmate Van Houten entered the La Bianca residence with other Manson Family members for the sole purpose of killing the occupants inside. Prior to her entry, Charles Manson and Charles "Tex" Watson tied and bound the victims and robbed Mrs. La Bianca of her wallet. They planted

the wallet in an area they believed had a large African-American population. They intended that an African-American person would find the wallet, use the credit cards contained therein, and subsequently be blamed for the murders. This would precipitate the race war between the African-Americans and the Caucasians.

When Inmate Van Houten entered the La Bianca residence, she put a pillowcase over Mrs. La Bianca's head, wrapped a lamp cord around her neck to prevent the pillowcase from coming off, and held her down for Manson Family member Patricia Krenwinkel to stab. When Krenwinkel's knife bent during the stabbing, Watson came in to assist Inmate Van Houten. Both Watson and Van Houten stabbed Mrs. La Bianca in the back. Inmate Van Houten estimated that she stabbed Mrs. La Bianca in the back between 14 and 18 times.

According to the autopsy report, Rosemary La Bianca, 38 years old, was stabbed 41 times. Eight of the stab wounds were fatal. Seven of the fatal wounds were on Mrs. La Bianca's back. The medical examiner opined that not all of the stab wounds on the back were post-mortem.

Leno La Bianca, 44 years old, was butchered and killed moments earlier by Watson. Leno La Bianca suffered twelve stab wounds, five of which were fatal. A knife was left imbedded in his neck. He also received 14 fork puncture wounds to his stomach.

Krenwinkel carved the word "War" into the skin of Leno La Bianca's stomach and used his blood to write the words, "Rise" and "Death to Pigs" on the living room wall. These words announced the alleged "rising up" of the African-Americans and their hatred toward the white establishment who were called "pigs." This was a further step in announcing the "Helter Skelter" race war. Krenwinkel also used Mr. La Bianca's own blood to write "Helter Skelter," spelled incorrectly, on the refrigerator door. As Krenwinkel did this, Van Houten wiped the entire crime scene free of fingerprints. Inmate Van Houten then rummaged through Mrs. La Bianca's clothes, put them on, and wore them away from the crime scene. After the murders, the killers casually drank milk and ate cheese they stole from the La Bianca's refrigerator.

Once Inmate Van Houten reached a place of safety, she burned Mrs. La Bianca's clothing to hide evidence. Van Houten later described the stabbing to another Manson Family member by stating, "It was fun." "The more I did it, the more I loved it."

Inmate Van Houten and the other killers left the victims' bodies in the house. They were found by their 15-year-old son.

Prior to the La Bianca murders, the Manson Family committed several other notable murders. Two weeks before the La Bianca murders, Manson Family members held Gary Hinman captive, tortured

him, and stabbed him to death. Before leaving the Hinman crime scene, a Manson Family member, using the victim's own blood, wrote the words "Political Piggies" and made a Black Panther symbol of a paw print, in blood, on the wall. The purpose was to blame African-Americans for the murder to ignite the "Helter Skelter" race war.

Two days before the La Bianca murders, Manson Family members butchered four people and took the life of a fetus at the home of Sharon Tate. The sixth victim at the Tate residence was shot to death. Manson Family members killed affluent Caucasians at the Tate residence to precipitate the goal of "Helter Skelter". Before leaving that crime scene, a Manson Family member wrote the word, "Pigs" on the wall in one of the victim's blood.

Two weeks after the La Bianca murders, Manson Family members murdered Donald "Shorty" Shea because they believed he had cooperated with the police. Victim Shea was targeted to protect Charles Manson and the other members of the Manson Family so they later could rule the world after "Helter Skelter."

The La Biancas were specifically targeted because they were affluent and Caucasian. The Manson Family targeted them to further their goal to achieve "Helter Skelter." They were held captive, tortured, and butchered just like the victims in the Tate, Hinman and Shea killings.

The La Bianca's were murdered in a brutal fashion, and the killings were carried out in a manner that shows exceptionally callous disregard for human suffering.

Despite overwhelming evidence of her involvement in these two horrible murders, Inmate Van Houten has consistently minimized her conduct during current and past hearings. She continues to claim that Charles "Tex" Watson struck the fatal blows. She claimed to have looked away, stared off into the den, and wasn't "conscious" at the time Watson stabbed Mrs. La Bianca because she was "overwhelmed" with what was happening. She claimed that she only stabbed Mrs. La Bianca because Watson told her to "do something" and gave her a knife. She did not currently assert her long-established claim that she inflicted only "superficial" stab wounds to Mrs. La Bianca. Inmate Van Houten continued to declare that Mrs. La Bianca was already dead when she stabbed her, despite evidence to the contrary.

In the past, Inmate Van Houten minimized her act of wiping the entire house free of all fingerprints in what she called "busy work" to take her mind off what she had done. She never admitted that she did it to cover up the identity of the murderers. In the current hearing, Van Houten admitted to wiping only the bedroom free of fingerprints. Van Houten downplayed her desire to kill once inside the residence. The act of minimizing her behavior demonstrates her inability to appreciate the magnitude of her crimes. Despite her years of positive programming, she is still unwilling to understand just how dangerous and involved her behavior was. As such, she continues to pose an unreasonable risk of danger to the community if released.

Inmate Van Houten also continues to rationalize, and offer excuses for her criminal behavior. She consistently blames everyone but herself for her criminal and anti-social behavior. She blames not only her

parents' divorce, but also her mother's insistence that she have an abortion during her teenage years, for her anti-social rebellion. Inmate Van Houten also blames her long-time use of LSD and Charles Manson for influencing her to commit the murders.

During the current hearing, Inmate Van Houten downplayed her ability to leave Spahn Ranch despite her description of an overnight sexual rendezvous in a remote cave outside the boundary line of the ranch. In previous hearings she described a trip to her mother's house, despite Manson's strict instructions to sever ties with her family. It is difficult to accept her claim that she was fearful of Manson and committed the crimes upon his orders, when she clearly admits to willfully disobeying his orders.

Inmate Van Houten downplayed her knowledge of the brutality inflicted the night before at the Tate residence when she stated "I knew that people had been murdered. I didn't know exact details and I knew that Helter Skelter had started," and that "Pat said it seemed very wrong." In fact, she watched television accounts of the murders and talked about the murders with the killers at the ranch. This downplaying of her involvement appears to be an attempt to evoke sympathy from the panel. It served her well to play the victim in her effort to convince the panel that she was not a danger to society then and is not a danger to society now.

One of the most troubling observations at this hearing was that Inmate Van Houten currently has a disturbingly distorted view of Charles Manson. She simply does not see him for the brutal megalomaniac that he is. During the hearing, she described him as a "myth" of a person, which is normally reserved for descriptions of supernatural beings. She also described him as a "caricature of horror," a description normally reserved for something which is a gross exaggeration. In reality, there was nothing exaggerated about the volume of death and fear Charles Manson generated across Los Angeles. This description alone would lead to the rational conclusion that Inmate Van Houten has no appreciation of the magnitude of her involvement with the Manson Family nor her crimes. If she is unable to appreciate this magnitude, she continues to represent a current danger to society.

At the current hearing, Inmate Van Houten attempted to manipulate the Board by submitting a psychological assessment of insight by a private clinician. However, the clinician that "evaluated" her was a long-time friend of 13 years who had previously submitted a letter of support for her release. Inmate Van Houten tried to hide that detail from the Board in hopes that they would see a favorable evaluation. This conduct is manipulative and continues to show a "criminal thinking" mind. A "criminal thinking" mind surely poses a current unreasonable risk of danger to society.

Inmate Van Houten's falsehoods and minimized admissions of involvement are part of a pattern of manipulation where she admits to involvement in the murders in an effort to convince hearing panels and appellate courts that she has true insight, remorse and an understanding of the magnitude of her crimes. In reality she clearly lacks insight, genuine remorse, and an understanding of the magnitude of her crimes. The viciousness of the murders, the relationship of those murders to the effort to incite the

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“Helter Skelter” race war, and Van Houten’s attempts to minimize her criminal responsibility, make her an unreasonable risk of danger to society.

I strongly urge you to reverse the decision to grant Inmate Van Houten parole.

Very truly yours,



JACKIE LACEY
District Attorney

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Enclosure

cc: Jonathan Renner, Legal Affairs Secretary



**Leno La Bianca, Cory La Bianca (daughter), and Rosemary, the day of Cory's high school graduation
in June 1966—three years before their deaths.**