

Jackie Lacey
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NEWS RELEASE

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District Attorney Jackie Lacey Honors Four Heroes for Courageous Acts

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey today honored four people for their courage in stepping up in the face of danger and helping to keep our community safe from violent crime.

The honorees included a man who witnessed a fatal shooting outside his San Pedro home and twice testified against the suspected killer; a Los Angeles mother who saw and tracked the man who sexually assaulted her 12-year-old daughter days earlier as he fled by rail and bus; and two men who rescued a woman being beaten by her boyfriend outside their Signal Hill office.

“It is with great pleasure that we recognize the extraordinary courage of four individuals who put their lives at risk while helping to make Los Angeles County safer for all of us,” District Attorney Lacey said. “They helped law enforcement officers solve crimes and then assisted my deputy district attorneys in removing violent offenders from our community.”

District Attorney Lacey recognized the honorees this afternoon at a Courageous Citizen Awards ceremony. It was hosted by the Rotary Club of Long Beach.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office presents these awards several times a year to people who have performed extraordinary acts of valor and selflessness in assisting in criminal prosecutions, aiding victims, preventing crimes or even capturing suspects.

Awards were presented to:

John Raski, 67, of San Pedro (Case no. NA102044, presented by Deputy District Attorney Maren Dermody)

On June 14, 2015, Mr. John Raski and his wife were reading in their bedroom when they heard loud noises outside their San Pedro home. Mr. Raski went to the window and saw a man chasing another man around a car. He then watched the defendant shoot at the victim, who later died from his wounds. Mr. Raski identified the suspect for authorities. He testified for the prosecution at two separate murder

trials, after the first jury could not reach a unanimous verdict. His testimony was essential in getting justice for the victim and his family.

A jury convicted the defendant of first-degree murder on June 24. He is expected to be sentenced this month to a minimum of 25 years to life in prison. The case was investigated by the Los Angeles Police Department.

Viridiana Chavez, 33, of Los Angeles (Case no. VA147901, presented by Deputy District Attorney Safaan Ahmed)

On May 31, 2018, Ms. Viridiana Chavez's 12-year-old daughter was sexually assaulted while walking to school in Los Angeles. Five days later, Ms. Chavez was walking her daughter to school when the girl saw her attacker. Ms. Chavez called 911 and followed the man onto a Metro Blue Line train toward Long Beach and then, when he got onto a bus, chased him on foot, all while keeping sheriff's deputies informed of his whereabouts. Her courageous actions and willingness to testify at trial helped take a violent offender off our streets.

The defendant was sentenced to 40 years in state prison after pleading no contest to two counts of forcible lewd act on a child under 14 years old and admitting one strike. He was ordered to register as a sex offender. The case was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

John Laguna, 45, of Santa Ana, and Rogelio Martinez-Reyes, 27, of Long Beach, (Case no. 8LB10601, presented by Deputy District Attorney Hikari Kimura)

Mr. John Laguna and Mr. Rogelio Martinez-Reyes were working in their Signal Hill office on March 9, 2018, when they saw a man assaulting his girlfriend in an alley. Mr. Martinez-Reyes yelled for the man to stop and ran after the fleeing suspect. Mr. Laguna stayed and comforted the injured woman and called 911. The men stopped the brutal attack, preventing further harm to the woman, and were ready to testify as witnesses for the prosecution, prompting a guilty plea in the domestic violence case.

The defendant pleaded guilty to one misdemeanor count of injuring a spouse, cohabitant, fiancé, boyfriend, girlfriend or child's parent. He was sentenced to three years of summary probation and was ordered to complete 52 weeks of domestic violence counseling and has a lifetime ban from owning a firearm. A 10-year protective order was issued for the victim. The case was investigated by the Signal Hill Police Department.

[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.