

*Jackie Lacey*  
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NEWS RELEASE

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**Man Sentenced to Prison for  
Killing Girlfriend in Compton in 2003**

A 53-year-old man was sentenced today to 25 years to life in state prison for strangling his live-in girlfriend and leaving her body in their Compton apartment, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

On Nov. 9, a jury found defendant Juan Bravo Lopez guilty of first-degree murder in case TA070338.

Deputy District Attorney Marlene Martinez, who prosecuted the case, said at the time of the crime Lopez and victim Martha Higareda had been in a long-term relationship. The couple also shared two children.

On May 9, 2003, Lopez and Higareda had an argument, the prosecutor said. The next day, Lopez told the children their mother left for Mexico. The defendant ordered the children to pack up their belongings because they were going to meet Higareda, the prosecutor said. The defendant then borrowed a car from a family member and left the country, the prosecutor added.

Four days later, neighbors at the Compton apartment complained about an odor and asked the apartment manager to check Lopez and Higareda's residence, the prosecutor said. The apartment manager entered the home and found Higareda's body underneath a bunk bed with a belt around her neck, the prosecutor said. It was later determined the victim died by strangulation.

Lopez subsequently was charged with Higareda's death on June 5, 2003, in a felony complaint for arrest warrant.

According to the prosecutor, U.S. law enforcement learned in 2010 of Lopez's whereabouts in Mexico and in November 2014 the defendant was extradited to stand trial for Higareda's killing.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

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## **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 seeking justice for victims of crime and enhancing public safety. Last year, the [Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#) prosecuted more than 71,000 felony defendants and nearly 112,000 misdemeanor defendants.