

Jackie Lacey

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NEWS RELEASE

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UPDATES: Separate rape and robbery charges dropped because they are outside the statute of limitations. Adds details about evidence.

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Man Charged For 1977 Murder of Mother in South LA

A man is facing a capital murder charge for allegedly raping and killing a 25-year-old woman in 1977, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Kenneth Ray Matthews (dob 4/2/58) was charged in case BA467480 with one count of murder as well as special circumstance allegations of murder during the commission of a rape and murder during the commission of a robbery, making him eligible for the death penalty.

Prosecutors filed an amended complaint this afternoon, dismissing forcible rape and attempted first-degree robbery charges because they fell outside the statute of limitations.

Arraignment was continued until May 30.

Deputy District Attorney Michele Hanisee of the Major Crimes Division is prosecuting the case.

On Dec. 6, 1977, Leona Davis had just put her two sons, ages 4 and 7, to bed at her home in the 8700 block of Menlo Avenue in South Los Angeles. Matthews is accused of raping and fatally stabbing Davis in the neck in front of the two children.

A fingerprint match was allegedly made to Matthews and a subsequent DNA test tied him to the crime scene. Matthews was arrested last week.

If convicted as charged, Matthews faces the death penalty or life in prison without the possibility of parole. A decision whether to seek the death penalty will be made at a later date.

The case remains under investigation by the Los Angeles Police Department's Robbery-Homicide Division.

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.