



July 2019

Dear Friends:

This month, I would like to talk about the death penalty.

As a career prosecutor, I believe the death penalty should be reserved for the worst of the worst offenders. As your District Attorney, I have asked for and received death sentences for eight defendants in some of Los Angeles County's most horrendous killings:

- The torture and death of 8-year-old Gabriel Fernandez in Palmdale.
- The slaughter of three sisters, Kayla 9, Melinda, 11, and Ebony, 14, who witnessed the fatal stabbing of their mother in their Lancaster home.
- The killing of five people living in a homeless encampment in Long Beach and the separate kidnapping and murder of a teenager in Lancaster.
- The fatal shooting of four people outside a Northridge boarding house.
- The murders of two men, ages 19 and 21, in a spray of bullets from an AK-47 assault rifle fired outside a Paramount home.
- A shooting spree outside a Pico Rivera pizza parlor that killed three and injured seven.
- And the execution of a home invasion robbery victim in the Fairfax District a year after the robbery to eliminate him as a witness at trial.

These eight defendants – five Latinos, two African-Americans and one Asian – were convicted for the murders of 21 people, four of them children. Their victims also were diverse: six African-Americans, six whites, five Latinos and four Asian Pacific Islanders.

These families grieve for their loved ones and look to me for justice. They, like every resident of Los Angeles County, expect their prosecutors to follow the law. In recent years, California voters have twice been given the opportunity to abolish the death penalty yet failed to do so.

I mention race because my office recently was criticized for its record on the death penalty. My prosecutors make decisions based on the facts of the crime – not the race of the defendant or the victim.

In Los Angeles County, a committee of experienced and diverse prosecutors examine the facts of these cases, including mitigating circumstances presented by the defendant and his attorneys, in one of the nation's most extensive review processes.

Prosecutors may seek death in a case, but a jury of 12 people from our community and a judge must agree that a death sentence is appropriate before it is imposed.

Since I became District Attorney, the committee has sought death for less than 3 percent of the more than 1,200 defendants who, under the law, may be punished for their crimes by death.

We will continue to carefully review these cases and I will follow the law as prescribed by the people of California – whether that is seeking the death penalty for the most heinous crimes or, if the death penalty is abolished, life in prison without the possibility of parole.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jackie Lacey".

Jackie Lacey - Los Angeles County District Attorney