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NEWS RELEASE

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District Attorney Jackie Lacey's Conviction Review Unit Exonerates Innocent Man, Helps Convict Real Culprits

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey announced today that her Conviction Review Unit (CRU) not only exonerated an innocent man but also helped bring the real criminals to justice.

"The work of my Conviction Review Unit does not stop when a wrongfully convicted person is freed from prison," District Attorney Lacey said. "We continue to seek justice on behalf of victims by re-investigating the crime and prosecuting the real criminals who, in this case, may have thought they got away with attempted murder."

Antonio Salgado (dob 5/19/75) was sentenced yesterday to 60 years to life in state prison and Antonio Garcia (dob 11/3/55) was sentenced to 25 years to life.

On Feb. 15, 2019, Salgado and Garcia each were convicted by a Compton jury of one count of attempted murder and conspiracy to commit murder. The jury also convicted Salgado of one count of felon in possession of a firearm and found true an allegation that he personally used a firearm.

Deputy District Attorney Adan Montalban with the Hardcore Gang Division said the two defendants were involved in a murder-for-hire plot against a man targeted as an alleged drug rival with Salgado as the gunman and Garcia providing information on the victim and his whereabouts.

The crime took place on the morning of Sept. 10, 1996, when the victim arrived at a gas station at the corner of Acacia Avenue and Alondra Boulevard in Compton. While pumping gas, the victim was approached from behind by Salgado who, after a brief exchange, pointed a gun at him and shot him once in the chest, according to evidence presented at the 11-day trial.

The victim ran away, but Salgado pursued him and fired the gun multiple times. The victim dropped to the ground after being shot a second time from behind and crawled under an SUV for cover. Salgado looked under the SUV, fired again, then ran into a vehicle and escaped, the prosecutor said.

The victim crawled out from under the SUV and asked the cashier to call the police before he lost consciousness. He survived his injuries.

Evidence uncovered by CRU investigators led to the arrests of Salgado and Garcia.

Initially, Marco Contreras' brother, Miguel Contreras, was charged in the crime. During his preliminary hearing, a witness wrongfully identified his brother, Marco, who was seated in the audience, as the shooter. Based on that identification, Marco Contreras was charged with the attempted murder.

On June 9, 1997, Marco Contreras was wrongfully convicted of the attempted murder and sentenced to seven years to life in state prison. His brother pleaded guilty to being an accessory after the fact and was sentenced to 16 months in state prison.

The District Attorney's Habeas Corpus Litigation Team, known as HABLIT, began looking into Contreras' claims of innocence due to eyewitness misidentification in 2014 at the request of the Loyola Project for the Innocent. The investigation was reassigned to deputy district attorneys in the CRU, after the specialized unit was established in 2015.

During the second investigation, key evidence was uncovered that led to the arrest and conviction of Salgado and Garcia.

Based on the new information, deputy district attorneys in the CRU asked the court on March 23, 2017, to release Marco Contreras from prison while deputy district attorneys in the Hardcore Gang Division simultaneously filed a case for warrant against Salgado and Garcia.

The court granted the District Attorney's request and Marco Contreras was released from prison after serving 20 years for a crime he did not commit.

Since its inception, the Conviction Review Unit has received more than 1,900 wrongful conviction claims. Three convictions have been vacated, most recently that of Ruben Martinez Jr., a man wrongfully convicted in 2008 for a series of armed robberies in Boyle Heights.

After learning of the formation of the unit, he and his wife, Maria, contacted the District Attorney's Office with claims of his innocence based on alibis that were not fully explored at the time of his trial.

Currently, there are 61 pending claims in various stages of the review process.

Requests to have a conviction reviewed must be submitted in writing to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office, Conviction Review Unit at 211 W. Temple Street, Room 1255, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Claims also may be emailed to: CRU@da.lacounty.gov

Case TA142806 was investigated by the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's 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.