

Jackie Lacey

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NEWS RELEASE

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District Attorney Jackie Lacey's Conviction Review Unit Exonerates Wrongfully Convicted Man

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey today announced the release from prison of Derrick Harris, a Los Angeles man wrongfully convicted of robbery, illegally possessing a firearm and violating a gang injunction.

"This case underscores the important ethical duty of every prosecutor to continue to seek justice, even if it requires us to admit that a mistake was made," District Attorney Lacey said. "I am grateful to the man who told the truth, that Mr. Harris was not involved in this crime, which ignited our reinvestigation of this case."

At a hearing this morning, Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge William C. Ryan vacated Harris' conviction, permanently released him from prison, dismissed his case with prejudice and found him factually innocent of the crimes for which he was convicted.

The District Attorney's Office not only lost faith in his conviction but also was convinced Harris is, in fact, innocent of the crimes.

Harris was convicted of the July 1, 2013, armed robbery of a customer at a fast-food restaurant in Watts. At trial, the victim identified Harris as one of the two men who pointed a handgun at him and took his gold chain necklace.

Harris was convicted in case TA129185 of one count of second-degree robbery, one count of possession of a firearm by a felon and one count of disobeying a court order. He was sentenced to 15 years in state prison.

Harris, however, remained resolute in his innocence.

On May 8, 2020, the California Innocence Project submitted a claim of factual innocence to the District Attorney's Conviction Review Unit on behalf of Harris. That claim was based on new evidence: A

written statement from the second suspect in the case disclosing that Harris did not commit the robbery with him.

Deputy District Attorneys Martha Carrillo, Stephen Gunson and Hailey Singh, and District Attorney Investigators Dave Jones and Vic Pietrantonio undertook the task of essentially reopening the investigation.

The Conviction Review Unit interviewed the second suspect, corroborating his written statement that Harris was not involved in the robbery.

In addition, they developed evidence that led to the identification of a new suspect who confessed that he committed the robbery. He could not be charged with the crime because the statute of limitations for robbery is three years.

District Attorney Lacey established the office's first Conviction Review Unit in 2015 as part of her commitment to innovative criminal justice reform.

Since its inception, the unit has received more than 1,960 wrongful conviction claims. While most of those claims have not met the eligibility criteria, four convictions have now been vacated and one sentence was reduced. Currently, there are 55 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.

Claim forms may be found on the office website at <http://da.lacounty.gov/operations/cru>.

[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.