

To: Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors; District Attorney Jackie Lacey
Cc: Sheriff's Civilian Oversight Commission Executive Director Brian Williams; Inspector General Max Huntsman
Date: November 18, 2019
Re: LASD's retaliation and harassment of grieving families seeking transparency and accountability

We write to request that the Board of Supervisors ("Board") direct the Sheriff's Civilian Oversight Commission and the Office of the Inspector General to investigate the retaliation and harassment by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department ("LASD") deputy sheriffs of families of individuals killed by deputy sheriffs. We also urge District Attorney ("DA") Jackie Lacey not to pursue a criminal case against Jaylene Rea, sister of Paul Rea, who was killed by deputy sheriffs this summer.

This letter describes deputy sheriffs' unnecessary arrest and ill treatment of Jaylene as an example of a broader trend of retaliation, harassment, and discourtesy against grieving family members. Other families of those killed by police have also reported ongoing harassment, including the families of Anthony "AJ" Weber, Ryan Twyman, and Anthony Vargas. Indeed, family members have feared that deputy sheriffs will taunt them, arrest them, or even physically hurt them—not because they have done something wrong, but simply because they have spoken publicly about their loved ones' deaths and have sought transparency and accountability.

By unanimously voting to create a Family Assistance Program, the Board has recognized Los Angeles County's duty to support families traumatized by the death of loved ones at the hands of deputy sheriffs. Deputy sheriffs' retaliation and harassment of families directly impedes the work of this program by re-traumatizing those who are grieving and by creating distrust between family members and county officials. We provide Jaylene's story as one recent example and urge you to take immediate action.

On October 30, 2019, Jaylene addressed a rally at the Hall of Justice regarding her brother's killing. This was her first time speaking in public about her brother. There, a delegation of family members, including the family of Paul Rea, sought to deliver a lawsuit to Sheriff Alex Villanueva filed the previous day for LASD's violation of SB 1421. After the rally, Paul's family and other community members attended a town hall hosted by Sheriff Villanueva in Temple City. During that event, Paul's family saw deputy sheriff Sanchez (who identified her Badge Number as 9898) using a cellphone to take photographs of the family and sending these photographs. Another woman, who was standing with deputy sheriffs but not wearing a uniform, also took pictures of the family.

After attending these events, Paul's family, along with friends and loved ones, visited his

memorial site, located at the 300 block of South Gerhart Avenue in East Los Angeles, and set up an *ofrenda*, a display set up in observance of *Dia de los Muertos*. Around 10:45pm, a deputy sheriff taunted Paul Rea's family and friends by making a rude hand gesture through the open window of his patrol car as it drove by slowly. Shortly thereafter, around 11:15pm, several patrol cars arrived at the memorial site, and deputy sheriffs proceeded to arrest two of Paul's friends. Jaylene used her cell phone to record both arrests.

According to Jaylene and Paul's family, a deputy sheriff instructed one of Paul's friends who was arrested to put out a blunt he had been smoking, and he complied. In full view of the deputy sheriff, the friend tried to hand the extinguished blunt to Jaylene, so he could be handcuffed. Because the deputy sheriff did not say anything or try to take the blunt, Jaylene took it. At that moment, a second deputy sheriff said, "I want that," referring to the blunt, and a third deputy sheriff responded, "I'll get it!" Immediately and without warning, the third deputy sheriff, who was approximately 6 feet tall and weighed approximately 200 pounds, walked up behind Jaylene, who is just under 5 feet tall, grabbed her wrists and bent her arms upward behind her back, causing her to yell in pain and bend over to alleviate the tension on her arms. This deputy sheriff then walked her over to a patrol car to search her. No deputy sheriff ever asked Jaylene for the blunt.

After searching Jaylene, deputy sheriffs handcuffed her and buckled her into the back of a patrol car. Jaylene asked, "Where are you taking me?" but the deputy sheriffs only replied, "You'll see when we get there." A deputy sheriff started the patrol car and began driving faster than the speed of traffic, running through stop signs and red lights.

When the patrol car passed the East L.A. Sheriff's Station, Jaylene began to fear for her safety. She reiterated her earlier question, "Where are you taking me?" This time, deputy sheriffs responded, "None of your business. You'll see when we get there." Eventually, the deputy sheriffs took Jaylene to a hospital and subsequently the East L.A. Sheriff's Station.

Jaylene's family and an ACLU lawyer arrived at the East L.A. Sheriff's Station a little before midnight. LASD employees at the station said no one by Jaylene's name was in custody at the station and suggested she might be en route to the station. Jaylene's family noted that the memorial site was only about three minutes from the station. Eventually, a deputy sheriff told Jaylene's family and the ACLU lawyer that the arresting deputy sheriffs took Jaylene to a hospital, but she would not disclose which hospital. (Only after calling five different hospitals, Jaylene's family was able to find that she had just been released from a nearby hospital.)

Around 1:00am, a deputy sheriff informed the family and the ACLU lawyer that Jaylene arrived at the station. Shortly after, the ACLU lawyer was able to see and talk with Jaylene. Watch Commander Reynaga then spoke with the family and the ACLU lawyer and informed them that

Jaylene was to be cited for “obstruction of evidence” and released. Yet, because no one at the station was trained to take Jaylene’s fingerprints for Live Scan purposes in order to book her, she would have to wait until about 6:00am, when a jailer trained in Live Scan would begin his shift.

Jaylene’s family and the ACLU lawyer stayed at the station until Jaylene was finally released around 7:00am. When deputy sheriffs returned Jaylene’s property to her, she realized they had deleted the recordings of the arrests that she had taken from her phone, even though she had not given them permission to access her phone. Jaylene was ultimately able to recover the recordings, which had been uploaded to cloud storage.

We are deeply concerned about what happened to Jaylene and her family. Jaylene was arrested unnecessarily. She did not attempt to conceal the blunt and was never given an opportunity to hand it to deputy sheriffs before she was arrested. Further, the deputy sheriff used more force than necessary to effectuate her arrest. Deputy sheriffs also refused to tell Jaylene or her family where they were taking her, in order to scare them into thinking they would hurt Jaylene—and ultimately intimidate them into submission and silence. Additionally, deputy sheriffs may have prolonged Jaylene’s detention to further intimidate or inconvenience her and her family. Last but not least, deputy sheriffs accessed Jaylene’s phone without her permission and attempted to delete recordings of their conduct.

We urge the Board to direct the Sheriff’s Civilian Oversight Commission and the Office of the Inspector General to fully and formally investigate this incident, not as an isolated event, but as part of the larger problem—that is, LASD’s retaliation and harassment of family members.

In addition, we urge DA Lacey to use her power as District Attorney to not file charges against Jaylene. We also urge DA Lacey to drop the criminal case against Valerie Rivera, the mother of Eric Rivera, who was killed by the Los Angeles Police Department in 2017. Her arrest also stemmed from retaliation and harassment. As DA Lacey runs for reelection, we encourage her to consider the obligation to the post. With more than 576 deaths at the hands of law enforcement since her time in office, DA Lacey has continuously failed to bring any justice. We strongly insist that DA Lacey use her current power to bring some form of justice regarding these latest developments.

Sincerely,

Centro Community Service Organization; Black Lives Matter - Los Angeles;
ACLU of Southern California

