



RIVERSIDE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
NEWS RELEASE
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**DA'S OFFICE ANNOUNCES THE EXONERATION OF A MAN CONVICTED
OF A 1998 MURDER AND THE ARRESTS OF TWO SUSPECTS FOR THE MURDER**

RIVERSIDE –Riverside County District Attorney Mike Hestrin announced today Oct. 15, 2018, that a former Temecula man has been exonerated of a 1998 murder conviction and two men have now been arrested for the crime.

On Friday, Oct. 12, 2018, the Riverside County District Attorney's Office dismissed all charges against 60-year-old Horace Roberts for the murder of Terry Cheek in 1998.

"What happened to Mr. Roberts is tragic," DA Hestrin said. "We as prosecutors always strive to be vigilant and follow the truth. Once I learned of the new DNA findings, I immediately directed that all charges be dismissed. Mr. Roberts has my commitment that we will aggressively apply new technologies to past, present and future prosecutions. And I commit to him the resources of our Victim Services Division to help him in rebuilding his life."

In April 1998, the body of Terry Cheek was found near some rocks along Temescal Canyon Road, near Corona Lake. Following an extensive investigation by Riverside County Sheriff's investigators, Horace Roberts, the victim's boyfriend and co-worker, was arrested and later charged by the DA's Office with her murder. In July 1999, he was convicted by a Riverside County jury of second-degree murder and sentenced to 15 years-to-life in prison.

After the conviction, the California Innocence Project took on Mr. Roberts' case and began investigating. Recent advances in DNA technology resulted in the California Innocence Project obtaining additional DNA testing that was not available during the original investigation. The DNA testing provided additional evidence which the California Innocence Project brought to the attention of DA Hestrin's Conviction Review Committee. The Conviction Review Committee closely examined the newly discovered evidence and a decision was made by DA Hestrin to reopen the investigation into the murder of Terry Cheek.

Extensive investigation by the DA's Office Bureau of Investigation ultimately led DA Hestrin to dismiss the case against Horace Roberts, and agree to request a finding of factual innocence. This hearing is set today at 2:15 p.m. in Dept. 61 at the Hall of Justice in Riverside.

As a result of the new DNA evidence, the DA's Bureau of Investigation was able to reopen the investigation into the murder of Terry Cheek. On Oct. 12, 2018, DA Investigators arrested Joaquin Lateee Leal, DOB: 12-31-65, of Compton; and Googie Rene Harris Sr., DOB: 8-5-56, of Jurupa Valley. Harris was married to Terry Cheek and Leal was the victim's nephew by marriage.

The DA's Office on Oct. 15, 2018, filed murder charges against Harris and Leal. Both men are scheduled to be arraigned in case RIF1804461, at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2018, in Dept. 61 at the Hall of Justice in Riverside.

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