

PRESS STATEMENT: Lee Baca Found Guilty

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Los Angeles, C.A. – As we wait for Judges Bigelow and Sortino to make their decision on whether to lift the ALADS initiated block on a list of 300 problematic deputies that Sheriff McDonnell provided to the D.A., the announcement of Lee Baca’s conviction leaves many who have experienced sheriff department abuse feeling both vindicated and unsatisfied. Sheriff Baca not only lied to the FBI, but to community members by claiming that the brutality their loved ones experienced was justified and that the oversight that existed at the time was the gold standard of transparency. Baca’s guilty verdict has not turned the page on corruption and misconduct in the sheriff’s department. **True justice is an effective Civilian Oversight Commission with the power to subpoena the sheriff’s department.**

We, Dignity and Power Now, as the organization responsible for the initiation of civilian oversight and largely for Baca’s conviction, and our Coalition to End Sheriff Violence stand with incarcerated people and their loved ones as we campaign the Board of Supervisors for subpoena power and continue to push the judges to lift the block by filing an amicus brief in partnership with the ACLU and a petition that has reached over 6,000 signatures to date.

Almost two decades of corruption and brutality under Baca's leadership and the fact that the current sheriff cannot even provide a list of problematic deputies to the courts without being challenged by the sheriffs’ union are the clearest signs that the Civilian Oversight Commission needs subpoena power to inform the community, hold deputies accountable, and keep violence at bay indefinitely. **We are looking to the county supervisors to add a charter change to the ballot to give the Civilian Oversight Commission subpoena power. We are looking to Judges Bigelow and Sortino to lift the block on the list of 300 problematic deputies.**

“As someone who was formerly incarcerated I understand that Baca’s guilty verdict might give some validation to the many individuals and families who continue to deal with the trauma inflicted under his regime,” says Michele Ynfante, Campaign Lead and Administrator at Dignity and Power Now, “but *true justice* won’t be achieved until we have civilian oversight with the power necessary to hold the department accountable at the first signs of abuse – long before the sheriff is sent to federal prison.”