



*Los Angeles Community Action Network*

April 8, 2015

Jackie Lacey  
Los Angeles County  
District Attorney's Office  
210 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Suite 18000

**RE: Trishawn Carey  
BKG #4257163**

Dear DA Lacey –

Organizationally we applaud your efforts to divert people living with mental illness out of the county jail system. Our ultimate preference would be that individuals were afforded treatment and housing (instead of any jail time) but this is a step in the right direction. We also agree with your assessment that the majority of people living with mental illness are not violent or dangerous. This is an important “truth” that needs to be spread by political leadership in an attempt to disrupt the violent and deadly encounters between law enforcement and those living with mental illness. Lastly, your push to retrain law enforcement is noteworthy and hopefully one step of many aimed at disrupting a culture of fear and violence.

While we soundly appreciate the direction your office is heading more can be done on the front end.

While presenting at the April 3<sup>rd</sup> Q & A, at Amity House and hosted by ACLU, you acknowledged that high profile shootings (of people with mental illness) needed to end. We agree, steadfastly, but recognize that shootings are but one manifestation of the problem. You are undoubtedly aware of the killing of Charly Leundeu Keunang by LAPD Central Division officers – the video, captured by a bystander, has been viewed over 50 million times and caused outrage across the globe. Also captured on the video but receiving far less fanfare is the takedown of a very small African American woman who picked up a police baton and shrieked as officers beat Mr. Keunang. Her name is Trishawn Cardessa Carey.

We were present at the arraignment of Ms. Carey and were extremely alarmed by her clearly fragile mental health status. After watching the video a number of times we were also alarmed at her felony charges and the fact that she is being held in lieu of more than a million dollar bail. Post arraignment we connected with many community residents familiar with her and it became clear that her mental health status is widely known – this of course concerned us greatly.

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*April 9, 2015*

*Page 2*

To this end we sent a delegation to visit Ms. Carey in custody – a registered nurse was part of this team – to ascertain her current medical condition. Within minutes of speaking with Ms. Carey a number of things surfaced, 1) that her mental health condition is very apparent and needs to be evaluated and treated; 2) that her physical health was not great and she complained about not getting the right medication for her diabetes; and, 3) that she is aware of her health history and health diary and has been battling these conditions for years. While it would not be proper to share all the details regarding her health we assert the need for a full psychological and psychiatric evaluation prior to proceeding to the scheduled preliminary hearing.

We are certain that you know the stakes in this case and have undoubtedly reviewed the video of Ms. Carey's arrest – we understand those stakes as well. As we've done in the past we will monitor all court proceedings, locate witnesses, and assist the court in any way to ensure that treatment, not jail nor prison, is the only outcome in this case. We also believe that this is an opportunity to move your diversion aims from planning to practice. That Ms. Carey's case represents the failure of an entire system which persistently criminalizes those better served by treatment not incarceration. That Black Lives Matter and deserve to be treated with dignity, respect and humanity. We understand your fiduciary responsibility to your client (we will not impede on or jeopardize that relationship) but we will do everything to ensure Ms. Carey is treated in a fair and just manner by the courts.

Pete White

Co-Executive Director,  
Los Angeles Community Action Network

\*C/o LA CAN Human Rights Committee