



Los Angeles Police Department
Los Angeles, California

News Release

March 4, 2010

NR10105mg

Open Letter from Los Angeles District Attorney Steve Cooley and Los Angeles Police Chief Charlie Beck

This week, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) participated in the California Homicide Investigators Association (CHIA) conference in Las Vegas, Nevada.

CHIA was formed in 1968 when homicide detectives from Los Angeles and San Francisco met over dinner to discuss the Zodiac Killer investigation. Today, CHIA is the largest organization of homicide and death investigation professionals in the United States with over 1,400 members that include law enforcement representatives from all over the United States and Canada.

Each year different law enforcement organizations take turns hosting the conference. At this year's CHIA conference, hosted by the LAPD, a multimedia exhibit called, "Behind the Scenes: The LAPD Homicide Experience," was created and features homicide evidence from crimes and deaths that have captured the public's attention. The teaching exhibit was opened on Wednesday to the public and thousands of guests have stood in lines for up to two hours to glimpse Los Angeles's history.

A number of the exhibits show evidence that was collected during various well-known incidents and they were carefully designed so visitors would gain a better appreciation for the tragedy of murder and the difficult jobs law enforcement detectives have in solving often very complicated cases. Murder is the absolute worst thing one human being can do to another and the displays were designed to provide a unique insight into the sacrifice of victims and their families as well as the emotional toll murder takes on homicide detectives and the District Attorneys who prosecute the cases. Homicide is by nature horrific, but the entertainment media often portrays it as sterile and benign. When people see the reality of murder, it becomes an unthinkable act.

Based on the feedback we have received, it is now clear that a few of the items on display have offended some crime victims' families. We have both been to hundreds of murder scenes in our law enforcement career and we have consoled many family members. It was never our intent to cause grief to victims of crime or their families. The CHIA exhibit was designed to be educational and to show the public how murder cases are very carefully investigated. We never intended to compound the grief of murder victim's families, but unfortunately, a few items on display have been interpreted by some people as such, and that was never our intention. Our organizations strive to bring justice to homicide victims not to cause sorrow to their families.

Steve Cooley
District Attorney

Charlie Beck
Chief of Police