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For Immediate Release

Contact: [Steve Walker](#) (619) 531-3890
[Tanya Sierra](#) (619) 531-3315

Gang Member Sentenced to Life in 2003 New Year's Homicide at Dr. J's Liquor

San Diego County District Attorney [Bonnie Dumanis](#) today announced a life sentence was handed down in a high profile case involving a gang member involved in a 2003 liquor store shootout that left two women dead and a 7-year-old boy injured. James Carter, 37, was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole after a jury found him guilty of two counts of first degree murder, three counts of attempted murder, and one count of conspiracy to commit murder.

He was indicted in 2009 after a years-long cold case investigation. Carol Waites, 45, and Sharen Burton, 32, were killed by gang crossfire when they stopped at Dr. J's Liquor store following New Year's Eve church services.

"Innocent victims were caught in a gang revenge shooting that shook the community and left law enforcement with very few leads," said DA Dumanis. "Over the years, investigators pursued this case with great determination. With today's sentencing, Carter has finally been held accountable for his crimes."

The near two month-long trial was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Robert Hickey in the DA's gang's division. The jury deliberated for more than a week before issuing its verdict. Carter is facing two terms of life without the possibility of parole plus three life terms and five additional 25 years to life terms for discharging a firearm resulting in death.

District Attorney and San Diego Police Department investigators worked tirelessly over a six-year period to develop new leads and piece together new evidence in the case. During that process, law enforcement, with the help of the FBI's Violent Crimes Task Force, was able to solve two other gang-related murders, seize 15 guns and convict 30 gang members of unrelated crimes, sending them to state prison for cumulative sentences of more than 400 years. Investigators were also able to avert two other revenge shootings.

In May of 2009, evidence against one of the suspects in the Dr. J's shooting was presented to a Grand Jury. After hearing from 25 witnesses during a month-long hearing, jurors returned a seven-count indictment against Carter, 35.

(More)

Ms. Waites and Ms. Burton were friends from the True Faith Missionary Baptist Church. They attended midnight services on New Year's Eve and stopped at Dr. J's on Logan Ave. near Euclid Ave. to buy a fire log shortly before 1:00 a.m. Rival gang members opened fire. The victims were both shot in the back and died. Waites' seven-year old nephew was hit six times as he shielded Waites' two-year old granddaughter in the back seat. The toddler was not injured.

The shooting involved as many as eight to 12 gang members in two or three cars attacking up to eight members of a rival gang. There were at least four gunmen. It was the culmination of a 12-year turf rivalry between the two Southeast San Diego gangs. In just over two months prior to the Dr. J's shooting, the gangs had exchanged at least six murders and many more drive-by shootings.

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