



Office of the District Attorney, Alameda County
Nancy E. O'Malley, District Attorney



PRESS RELEASE

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Alameda County District Attorney Reignites Billboard Campaign Key to Combatting Human Trafficking in the Bay Area

2019 Effort Timed with Human Trafficking Awareness Month Continues Decades Long Fight to Help Victims Escape

Oakland, CA—Alameda County District Attorney Nancy E. O'Malley and Bruce Qualls, Vice President, Real Estate and Public Affairs Clear Channel Outdoor, today unveiled a public awareness campaign designed to heighten community awareness, mobilize the public and offer assistance to victims of human trafficking. The District Attorney's Office and Clear Channel Outdoor have collaborated for many years to deliver important messaging to communities throughout Alameda County and the greater Bay Area. January 2019 is National Human Trafficking Awareness month, a time to start the year with a renewed sense of determination and action aimed at stopping the commercial sexual exploitation of children and teens and the commercial labor exploitation of workers.

2019's public awareness campaign consists of billboards and bus shelters visible in neighborhoods and from roadways throughout the Alameda County. The billboards present a stark reminder that the Bay Area remains a hotspot for the commercial sexual exploitation of children and teens, while the bus shelters message directly to individuals who are at risk or are currently trafficked for sex or labor.

"My Office continues to work tirelessly to put an end to these dangerous and exploitative criminal enterprises," says DA O'Malley. "We are dedicated to prosecuting offenders and protecting and assisting victims. At the same time, it is vital to maintain a community focus on the fact that these crimes happen here, in our cities, and to our children, neighborhoods and loved-ones."

"On behalf of the thousands of Clear Channel Outdoor employees across the U.S., including the 100 that call the San Francisco/Oakland area home, we are honored to continue using our media to assist in the District Attorney's efforts to rescue these nearly defenseless victims of exploitation," said Bruce Qualls, vice president, public affairs, Clear Channel Outdoor-San Francisco. "Using this highly-visible form of media, we'll continue sending a clear message to victims that help is available, and to traffickers – you will be prosecuted."

The Alameda County DA's Office is a leader in the state and the nation in addressing and prosecuting human trafficking cases and in enabling victims to escape exploitation. Over the

past dozen years, this office has prosecuted over 650 defendants for human trafficking related offenses, with an 82% success rate. As of today, there are active cases against 48 defendants charged with human trafficking and related offenses.

In addition to prosecuting offenders, the DA's Office focuses on aiding teens who are exploited or at risk of becoming exploited. SafetyNet, a standout program that addresses the needs of commercially sexually exploited minors, was convened and is facilitated by the Alameda County District Attorney's Office. SafetyNet meetings are designed to provide an immediate response to the youth and to ensure victim safety at the moment of their identification and throughout their potential interface with any system. This includes but is not limited to youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system, social services, other government agencies, law enforcement, and/or community based agencies as either being at risk for or a victim of human trafficking.

The District Attorney's Office has a specialized unit comprised of attorneys, inspectors and staff dedicated to addressing all aspects of human trafficking. To learn more about human trafficking as well as how to become involved in the solution, please visit: HEATWATCH.org

Important phone numbers:

To report immediate danger, call 911.

FOR ALL NON-EMERGENCY REPORTS, CALL THE HEAT WATCH TIP LINE:

(510) 208-4959

FOR 24 HOUR HELP, CALL THE NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE:

(888) 373-7888 OR TEXT BEFREE (233-733)

Attached to this press release are high resolution images of the 2019 billboards and bus shelters.

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Highlights of 2018 Felony Prosecutions:

People v Darius Swain

On November 5, 2018, a jury convicted defendant **Darius Swain** of six felony counts, including human trafficking of a minor with force, pimping of a minor, pandering of a minor, robbery, felon in possession of a firearm, and felon in possession of ammunition. He has been sentenced to a term of 35 years-to life in State Prison.

In April 2017, Defendant Swain was introduced to 15-year-old Jane Doe through another juvenile girl he was actively exploiting. Defendant Swain would drive Jane Doe and two other young girls (14-years-old and 17-years-old) to known prostitution areas throughout the Bay Area. He would drop the girls off and watch them from his car to make sure they were soliciting men for sex. The girls were required to give all the money that they received from sex acts to Defendant Swain. The girls described multiple incidents of physical abuse during the time Defendant Swain was exploiting them. On one occasion the defendant broke a girl's nose because she looked another man in the eyes which was in violation of Defendant Swain's rules. On April 20, 2017, Defendant Swain was stopped in San Jose with all three underage girls on a street known for prostitution. Concerned citizens called the police and gave statements that all three girls had been in the location throughout the night, working. During the stop, San Jose Police Department discovered that one of the girls was underage and removed her from the situation. Jane Doe and the other minor gave false names and were released back to Defendant Swain.

On April 21, 2017, Defendant Swain picked up 15-year-old Jane Doe from International Boulevard in Oakland. Defendant Swain demanded that Jane Doe hand over all of her money. Jane Doe refused to give the defendant her money because she wanted to buy a greyhound ticket back home. The defendant responded to Jane Doe by driving her to a desolate area in the Oakland Hills. He then stripped Jane Doe completely naked, beat her, forcibly took her belongings, and abandoned her on the street. Defendant Swain drove off and never contacted Jane Doe again. On June 21, 2017, the 14-year-old minor was detained by law enforcement during a human trafficking sting operation. In the juvenile's purse was identification cards that belonged to Defendant Swain. Officers followed the young girl back to a Western Union where they located the defendant. Defendant Swain was arrested and his backpack was searched. Inside of his backpack was an unregistered 1911-style, Kimber .45 cal. semi-automatic handgun, with 7 rounds loaded in the magazine.

People v Rich

On May 22, 2018 a jury convicted defendant Albert Rich of thirteen felony counts, including human trafficking of a minor, sexual penetration of a minor, human trafficking of adults, torture, rape, sodomy and assault with a deadly weapon. The defendant has been sentenced to a term of 159 years to life in State Prison.

For several weeks in May and June of 2017 defendant Albert Rich sexually assaulted, physically assaulted and tortured three victims, 2 young adult women and one minor girl, making them work as prostitutes for him. They were made to prostitute every day on International Blvd in the City of Oakland until they were able to escape and get help from Oakland police officers. Unfortunately the victims' prior attempts to get help and to escape were unsuccessful. As a result the defendant who stood at 6 feet 6 inches and weighed 320 pounds punished them by severely beating them causing bloody noses, burning them with heated flat irons, and sadistic torture which caused internal bleeding injuries to the juvenile victim requiring surgery.

People v. Mejia

For over a decade, Alfonso Mejia owned and operated a catering business in Hayward. He maintained this business within the underground economy, developing a practice of hiring desperate immigrant women to cook and serve food for him. Five of these women reported to police that, between 2008 and 2015, he had trafficked them and forced them to work against their will for insufficient pay. These reports were made between 2012 and 2015. Many of the victims were difficult to reach, but by 2017 the DA's office had located them, connected them with sufficient services to ensure their stability, and was able to file charges alleging multiple counts of sexual assault, kidnapping, wage theft, and regulatory fraud. On October 22, 2018, after much consultation with the victims regarding the resolution of the case, the defendant was sentenced to 20 years in prison for three counts of human trafficking, two counts of felony sexual battery, and one count of attempted robbery.