



**OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE
FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK
JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS**

June 5, 2019

District Attorney Vance,

For many years, justice was denied to the young men who became known as the "Central Park Five" for a crime they did not commit. Even in their exoneration, they did not receive justice - and all these years later, they still have not. We as a culture may have moved on, but these men have been unable to. And with the release of the miniseries *When They See Us*, it is clear that we have to see them, and to see the injustice that has gone unaddressed over decades. This is a new opportunity to seek justice, which is why I write you today.

Those involved in the prosecution of the "Central Park Five" must be held accountable for the wrongdoing they committed while working on the case. It is even more clear today than it was before that former District Attorney Linda Fairstein, prosecutor in the case, engaged in immoral, unethical, and illegal conduct. She took advantage of vulnerable, young, Black and Latino youth by orchestrating false confessions from the teenagers. Fairstein's actions were not only unjust, but possibly criminal, which many believe could be reason for disbarment. It is crucial that we now re-examine and investigate all of her past cases, particularly those where there was no DNA evidence found. I suspect we will find more victims in her wake.

In addition, Elizebeth Lederer, who was directly involved in the prosecution's misconduct, continues to have employment in your office. Lederer's involvement in the case cannot be ignored, and she too must be held accountable for her actions. She should be removed from her position immediately.

We cannot bring back what was taken from these five young men. We also can not bring back Trisha Meili, or the other victims of the man who went free while these boys were incarcerated. We were not the people in power back then, but we have the power now. I implore you to exercise the authority you now possess to help right the wrongs of the past, to bend the arc toward justice.

Thank you for your prompt attention,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.D. Williams".

Jumaane D. Williams
Public Advocate for the City of New York