

DA calls Mitchell case 'clearly justifiable homicide'

Urging Koreans, blacks to fight crime together, not each other

By Richard Reyes Erute
Korea Times

District Attorney Ira Reiner said black residents and Korean merchants must work together to fight crime, rather than fight each other.

"The residents and merchants in the inner city are at risk of being shot to death on a daily basis," Reiner said. "They've got a common problem, and the common problem are killers with guns. The problem is not each other."

Reiner also said he will not tolerate hate crimes or re-open the case on Lee Arthur Mitchell, who police said was killed when he tried to rob the store.

"We reviewed that very carefully, and clearly it was a justifiable case. No question about it," Reiner said.

Black activists, who have launched a boycott against the store, want the owner

prosecuted because they don't believe Mitchell was robbing it. No charges were filed against Tae Sam Park, the shopkeeper who shot Mitchell.

Reiner commented on black-Korean race relations in an interview with the *Korea Times* July 3.

The district attorney's office will prosecute those responsible for throwing a

Molotov cocktail onto Park's store a day after the boycott began



District Attorney Ira Reiner

June 17, Reiner said.

"It won't be tolerated by this office, and we will prosecute, and I mean seriously, severely prosecute anybody who engages in a hate crime. I don't care who it is or what their reason is," he said.

The firebombing caused no damage or injuries. Arson investigators could not be reached for comment on whether an arrest has been made.

There is no place for racially motivated

crimes. We've got enough crimes without (them)," Reiner said.

According to him, the most common murders are committed by armed robbers who put little value on human life and will kill for even a little money.

"I can imagine how difficult it must be in a store and never knowing from minute to minute whether the person walking into the store has a gun and will take your life just to steal a few dollars," Reiner said.

"That's a tremendous burden, tremendous pressure for any merchant to have to live under. They are terribly, terribly vulnerable," he said.

If asked, Reiner said, he will help to mediate disputes between blacks and Koreans.

"This doesn't need to be a problem. But it stands on the precipice, on the edge of being a horrible problem," he said. "It shouldn't be. There is no need for it."