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Three suspects in the death of Jose Morales plead guilty, receive prison sentences

Today, Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill announced that the three individuals involved with the homicide of Jose Morales were sentenced in Multnomah County Circuit Court.

Multnomah County Senior Deputy District Attorney David Hannon, who prosecuted this case, read an impact statement that was prepared by Mr. Morales' mother.

"No one understands how difficult this has been for me. ...I have to be strong for my children and haven't had the opportunity to grieve. ...This whole process has been very painful and in fact, painful is too small of a word to describe the loss. ...I was robbed of the opportunities to celebrate my son's accomplishments: to know my son as an adult, as an uncle, a father and as a husband."

Following the death of Mr. Morales, the Gresham Police Department and East Multnomah County Major Crimes Team arrested Cristian Martinez-Chavez, Isai Guzman-Ramirez, Francisco Martinez-Chavez and Obed Garcia-Antonio.

Law enforcement responded to the intersection of Southeast 187th Avenue and Southeast Stark Street on July 29, 2017 where they located Mr. Morales on the sidewalk suffering from a gunshot wound. At the scene, a single shell casing from a .22 caliber firearm was recovered.

During the initial investigation, detectives learned that a Gresham Police officer had conducted a traffic stop on a vehicle a few blocks from the homicide scene. According to previously filed court documents, the officer was on routine patrol when a vehicle passed him at a high rate of speed. The officer saw the driver of the vehicle blow through a stop sign. As the officer was conducting the traffic stop, he started hearing reports over his police radio about a shooting.

According to court documents, Garcia-Antonio was the driver of the vehicle stopped by law enforcement. Guzman-Ramirez was found in the front passenger seat. Cristian Martinez-Chavez was seated in the rear passenger seat. His brother, Francisco Martinez-Chavez, was seated behind the driver.

During the traffic stop, law enforcement recovered a .22 caliber rifle inside the vehicle, according to court documents.

The investigation revealed that the shooting stemmed from a fight that occurred earlier in the evening that involved Cristian Martinez-Chavez and Mr. Morales. Detectives learned that following the fight, all four suspects agreed to go to the residence of Guzman-Ramirez to obtain a firearm. According to court documents, upon obtaining the firearm, all four individuals got into a vehicle that was driven by Garcia-Antonio and returned to the area where the fight between Mr. Morales and Cristian Martinez-Chavez had occurred. The four individuals started looking for Mr. Morales.

Upon locating Mr. Morales, Cristian Martinez-Chavez fired a single round from the rifle, while the vehicle was in motion, and struck Mr. Morales, which resulted in his death.

Cristian Martinez-Chavez, the shooter in this case, pleaded guilty to one count of manslaughter in the first degree with a firearm. He received a 16 year prison sentence.

Isai Guzman-Ramirez, the individual who obtained the firearm used to kill Mr. Morales, pleaded guilty to one count of manslaughter in the first degree. He received a 14 year prison sentence.

Obed Garcia-Antonio, the individual who drove the three other suspects, pleaded guilty to one count of manslaughter in the second degree. He received a 6 year, 3 month prison sentence.

The Multnomah County District Attorney's Office would like to recognize the Gresham Police Department, Multnomah County Sheriff's Office, the East Metro Gang Task Force, the East County Major Crimes Team, and the victim advocates from the District Attorney's Office for their roles in bring justice to the family of Mr. Morales.

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