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LIFE SENTENCE FOR MURDERER WHO KILLED OVER JEALOUSY, CONTROL

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Charleston, S.C.— Solicitor Scarlett A. Wilson announced that the Honorable Thomas J. Rode sentenced Rigoberto Rojas-Santiago to the State Department of Corrections for the remainder of his natural life for executing 20-year-old Brihan Zuriel Maritnez Calderon on November 20, 2022. The Defendant was convicted by a Charleston County jury on the three-year anniversary of the date of the murder. Assistant Solicitors Lemuel Zeigler and Jewell Gearding presented the State's case.

Upon arriving at the scene of the murder, the North Charleston Police Department interviewed victim Calderon's roommate, employer, and uncle and aunt, who led them to investigate a woman named Guadalupe Sanchez, whose vehicle was used by the killer. Calderon's roommate provided a ring surveillance video which captured the murder; however, the killer was wearing a hood and covered his face with his arm. Detectives learned that the Defendant, the father of Ms. Sanchez's children, was controlling and manipulative. At trial, witnesses testified that the person in the video was the father of Ms. Sanchez's children and that they were able to identify him based on his stature and clothing, having seen him many times. Ms. Sanchez testified that the father of her children, Rigoberto Rojas-Santiago, was the killer. She stated that she was in the car with the Defendant at Calderon's house, and that she heard them talking in the driveway. She then heard one single gunshot before the Defendant jumped back into the driver seat and drove off, telling her that he, "only shot the kid in the leg and he'll be fine." Sanchez testified that earlier in the day, the Defendant found out that she was texting with Calderon and became enraged. She stated that the Defendant took her vehicle and phone and began driving around looking for Calderon while texting Calderon, pretending to be her. The Defendant was captured on surveillance arriving at Calderon's aunt and uncle's restaurant in Moncks Corner, before ultimately tricking Calderon into sharing his location. The Defendant drove to Calderon's house, approached the door, lured Calderon out of his house, held him at gunpoint for over two minutes, and shot him once in heart while standing the driveway. Upon executing a search warrant at the Defendant's residence, officers located a firearm that matched the cartridge case found on scene. They also located over 70 rounds of the same brand and caliber of ammunition that was used to kill Calderon in the Defendant's van parked in the front of the house and in his backpack in his bedroom.

As Assistant Solicitor Zeigler stated to the jury, "Rojas-Santiago stalked and murdered Zuriel Martienz Calderon. He was jealous, controlling, and manipulative. He needed to make sure Guadalupe Sanchez was his, and only his, so he killed Calderon." North Charleston Police Department conducted a thorough investigation which laid the foundation for this conviction. Solicitor's Office Investigator Dustin Morris coordinated with the involved agencies. Zeigler also stated, "We are grateful to the Martinez Calderon family for their sincere and incredible strength and support in the face of this unnecessary violence."

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