



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY COUNTY OF KERN

CIVIC CENTER JUSTICE BUILDING
1215 TRUXTUN AVENUE
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA 93301
(661) 868-2340, FAX: (661) 868-2700

ANDREA S. KOHLER
Assistant District Attorney

CYNTHIA J. ZIMMER
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JOSEPH A. KINZEL
Assistant District Attorney

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MEDIA ADVISORY

CONTACT:
Christine Antonios
(661) 868-2726

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Case Resolution: People v. Richard Castleberry, BF 176870A

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a resolution in a significant homicide case today. Defendant Richard Castleberry entered a plea of no contest to felony voluntary manslaughter for the unlawful killing of Luis Vargas Quintero. The case was prosecuted by DDA Christine Antonios.

On May 26, 2019 at 1:50 a.m., Richard Castleberry and Luis Quintero were both patrons at the Triple T's Tavern in Ridgecrest when the business was closing for the night and customers were leaving the parking lot. Employees ordered Castleberry to leave the premises after catching him urinating on the building. Castleberry became aggressive and agitated and without warning punched the victim, Luis Quintero, who was standing nearby and had no involvement in addressing Castleberry's conduct. Castleberry's punch to Quintero struck Quintero in the head, causing Quintero to fall and further hit his head on a parked car, and then upon the pavement. Quintero was pronounced deceased within the hour from blunt force trauma injuries to the head.

After throwing the punch that killed Quintero, Castleberry fled and was chased by several witnesses. Witnesses chased Castleberry until officers of Ridgecrest Police Department quickly arrived and apprehended Castleberry.

Castleberry and Quintero were not acquaintances, were not visiting the bar together, and there was no evidence suggesting the two had a prior altercation leading up to the unprovoked assault by Castleberry.

The terms of the plea agreement included a plea to a charge of Voluntary Manslaughter, and the agreement requires defendant will be sentenced to the maximum term for that charge, 11 years in prison. Additional charges relating to the incident were dismissed in accord with the plea.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the resolution, stating:

"This case is a tragic reminder that aggressive and violent behavior too often results in fatal consequences. So-called 'one-punch homicide' cases inflict the same loss of life as other homicide crimes, but in some instances without an evident intent to kill."