

OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA
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District Attorney



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APPROVED BY JOYCE E. DUDLEY, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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February 10, 2016

Re: People v. Joseph Castro and Issac Jimenez; Case No. 1430491

Santa Barbara County District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley announced today that a jury in Santa Barbara found 25-year old Issac Efren Jimenez and 22-year old Joseph Michael Castro guilty, as charged, of all criminal charges and enhancements including first-degree murder in the shooting death of 21-year old Kelly Hunt on February 19, 2013. The jury also found the two special circumstances of murder by lying in wait and murder committed for criminal street gang purposes to be true, and found that a firearm was personally and intentionally discharged, causing the death of Kelly Hunt. The jury also found the defendants guilty of conspiracy to commit murder and the gang allegations true as to each charge.

On February 19, 2013, at approximately 7:17 p.m., Santa Barbara Police Department detectives and medical personnel were dispatched to the 1000 block of Olive Street in Santa Barbara after residents reported hearing four gunshots and a man down on the sidewalk. Fire and Police found Ventura resident Kelly Hunt lying on the sidewalk unresponsive with a bike next to him. Mr. Hunt was pronounced dead at Cottage Hospital shortly thereafter. He had four gunshot wounds located near his heart and chest area; one gunshot wound revealed he was shot in his back. Ballistics indicated the murder weapon was most likely a .38 revolver and that hollow-point bullets were used.

Police soon learned Mr. Hunt was in Santa Barbara on the night of his death and was accompanied by his friend Issac Jimenez. Jimenez told detectives he had no contact with Mr. Hunt the night of his death and had not spoken to him in quite some time. Shortly after making this statement Jimenez left the Santa Barbara area and changed his appearance, living for a short time in Sacramento and then Washington State. An extensive six-month investigation revealed the representations made by Mr. Jimenez in this interview were false.

Through the course of their investigation, Santa Barbara Police Detectives learned that Jimenez and fellow Eastside gang member Joseph Castro were with Mr. Hunt at a party the night of the murder. Police learned Jimenez and Castro were last seen walking with Mr. Hunt on Olive Street just prior to shots being fired, and Castro had been seen cleaning a "six shooter shortly after the shooting" with Jimenez nearby. Arrest warrants were obtained for both defendants. Jimenez was found and arrested in Longview, Washington, and Castro was arrested at his home in Santa Barbara on August 13, 2013.

District Attorney Dudley commends the dedication of Santa Barbara Police Department detectives, including Brian Larson, Michael Claytor, and Gang Officer Ben Ahrens, who worked countless hours on this case. Dudley said, "This investigation and resulting successful prosecution are the direct result of the hard work, commitment, and intelligence of Santa Barbara Police Detectives and the staff of the District Attorney's office, led by Senior Deputy District Attorney Kimberly Siegel. Together, throughout Santa Barbara County, we will zealously continue to eliminate gang violence in every way we can in order to protect the people we serve."

Jimenez is scheduled to be sentenced March 7, 2016, at 8:30 a.m., in Department 2, and Castro is scheduled to be sentenced April 5, 2016, at 8:30 a.m., in Department 2, before Judge Brian Hill presiding. Jimenez and Castro are expected to be sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole with an additional 25 years to life sentence for the firearm enhancement.

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