



COUNTY OF FRESNO

Lisa A. Smittcamp
District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 10, 2022

JOSEPH ESPINOZA SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON WITHOUT PAROLE FOR THE ATTEMPTED ROBBERY AND KILLING OF 17-YEAR-OLD NICHOLAS KAULS

Today, March 10, 2022, Joseph Espinoza was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole for the attempted robbery and murder of 17-year-old Nicholas Kauls. Espinoza was also sentenced to an additional 35 years in prison for attempted murder, attempted robbery, assault, stolen vehicle, and gun charges stemming from the June 24, 2018, incident.

Espinoza's sentence was handed down approximately four years after he went on a brazen crime spree in an attempt to bail out a friend who was in jail on gun charges. Espinoza attempted to rob victim Manuel Gonzalez as he left the Chase Bank on Fruit and Shaw. Espinoza then drove into the Old Fig Garden area of Fresno where he pulled a gun on 17-year-old victims Nicholas Kauls and Patrick Quintana, attempting to rob each of them. As the two victims fled, Espinoza began shooting in their direction. Kauls was struck by Espinoza's gunfire and later died. Espinoza then followed victims Roberto and Victor Rita-Amado, shooting at their vehicle as well.

The Fresno County District Attorney's Office would like to thank the Fresno County Sheriff's Office and the Fresno Police Department for their dedication and collaboration in solving this senseless crime. Specifically, Sergeant Adam Maldonado and Deputy Adrian Villegas from the Sheriff's Office and Sergeant Joshua Knapp from the Fresno Police Department spent countless hours working on this case along with a host of other members from both agencies.

This case was prosecuted by Senior Deputy District Attorney Deborah Miller. Ms. Miller was assisted by District Attorney Investigator Virginia Rodriguez and many other investigators from the Fresno County District Attorney's Bureau of Investigations.

The Media may email FCDAMedia@fresnocountyca.gov with any questions.

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