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Three life sentences ordered for 2016 “Purge” murders

Johnathan Cruz pleaded guilty to three Life Without Parole sentences for murders

(Indianapolis, Ind.) Marion County Prosecutor Terry Curry announced that Johnathan Cruz was sentenced today to three consecutive sentences of life without parole for the May 2016 murders of Billy Boyd, Jay Higginbotham and Jose Alberto. Pursuant to the plea agreement, he was also ordered to serve a concurrent 16-year sentence for an armed robbery that occurred during the same three-day crime spree. In April, Cruz pleaded guilty to three counts of Murder and one count of Armed Robbery (Level 3 Felony).

Evidence obtained in the original investigation of the three homicides showed that Cruz had told witnesses that he was “purging.” His statements were in reference to a 2013 horror fiction film, *The Purge*, in which the United States government sanctioned an event in which all crimes, including murder, were legal for 12 hours.

“Pursuant to this agreement, Johnathan Cruz has admitted to the absolutely senseless murders of Billy Boyd, Jay Higginbotham, and Jose Ruiz, for which he will spend his life in prison with no possibility of parole,” Prosecutor Curry stated after the plea was accepted by the court last month. “We are pleased that this resolution will provide certainty and finality for the families of Billy Boyd, Jay Higginbotham and Jose Ruiz.”

Billy Boyd was shot and killed on a sidewalk in the 3900 block of North College Avenue at approximately 12:48 a.m. on May 12, 2016.

Later that same morning at approximately 4:23 a.m., Jay Higginbotham was shot and killed on a sidewalk in the 900 block of North Denny Street. IMPD officers and detectives arrived at approximately 4:30 a.m. to investigate.

On the morning of May 14, 2016, an assault and armed robbery was reported having occurred near East 10th Street and North Linwood Avenue at approximately 6:00 a.m. The victim reported that he had been robbed by two men at gunpoint for cash and two cell phones. A forensic examination of the defendant’s phone uncovered a photograph of the victim’s photo identification.

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PAGE 2 / Johnathan Cruz sentenced for three murders

Jose Alberto Ruiz was shot and killed on the morning of May 15, 2016, in a vehicle near the intersection of East Washington Street and North Linwood Avenue. IMPD officers were dispatched at approximately 4:39 a.m. to that location.

A second defendant, Elijah Brooks, has been charged with two counts of Felony Murder for his alleged involvement in the May 12, 2016, murders of Billy Boyd and Jay Higginbotham. Brooks' case remains pending in Criminal Court 3.

Additionally, a third defendant, Steven Clark (aka Rayvaughn Wood), has also been charged with Armed Robbery (Level 3 Felony) for his alleged involvement in the May 14, 2016, robbery. A hearing is scheduled in this case for June 6 at 10:00 a.m. in Criminal Court 3.

A charge of a crime is merely an accusation, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.