

Two New Bedford Men Convicted of 2016 Manslaughter of 15-year-old Mateo Morales

Two New Bedford men pleaded guilty to manslaughter charges in connection to the August 24, 2016 stabbing homicide of 15-year-old Mateo Morales in New Bedford, Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III announced.

Jose Lopez, 19, pleaded guilty in Fall River Superior Court this week to charges of Manslaughter and Assault and Battery with a Dangerous Weapon. This defendant was sentenced by Judge Renee Dupuis to serve 17 to 20 years in state prison. Upon his eventual release from prison, this defendant will be placed on supervised probation for an additional two years. The defendant will be remanded to home confinement during the first six months of his probationary term, and will be fitted with a GPS monitoring device during the remainder of his probation.

Luis Class, 25, pleaded guilty in Fall River Superior Court this week to a single charge of Manslaughter. He was sentenced by Judge Dupuis to serve 15 to 18 years in state prison.

On August 24, 2016, both defendants attacked Mateo Morales and in the course of the attack, Defendant Lopez stabbed Morales, causing his death. The death was caused by a single, penetrating stab wound to the chest. This incident was the continuation of long-standing ill-will between youth from the south end and the west end of the city of New Bedford.

Mateo Morales was a 15-year-old resident of the Temple Landing Housing Development in the city's west end. Earlier in the afternoon, Mateo Morales and a friend had gone to the south end where they were jumped by a group of unidentified south end males who beat up Morales and took his chain. After this,

social media posts about the beating and chain escalated tensions on both sides.

At approximately 6:00 pm, Defendant Class, a south-ender, had his mother's white Hyundai and was driving on Chancery Street at the western border of Temple Landing when there was an alleged verbal altercation between him and Mateo Morales who was on foot on Chancery Street. Defendant Class states that Morales then threw something at his vehicle, possibly a plastic water bottle. Defendant Class then drove to the south end and gathered a group of confederates to return to the west end to beat up Mateo Morales. Defendant Lopez was one of these individuals.

At approximately 6:20 pm, video surveillance from Temple Landing shows defendant Class driving north up Chancery Street and parking on the wrong side of the street at Chancery and Middle Streets. The two defendants and three others exited the vehicle and head straight toward the group of west-enders congregating just north of the intersection. Video surveillance shows Class, dressed in a black shirt, and Lopez, dressed in a white shirt, chase Mateo Morales across Chancery Street as the other 3 males disappear from view as they travel westerly on Middle Street. Class and Lopez flanked Morales and then cornered him against a black Mercedes, parked on the east side curb of Chancery. Class throws punches at Morales as Lopez swings in a stabbing motion at Morales but misses. Lopez can be seen placing his left hand on the hood of the Mercedes and stabbing with his right hand, connecting with Morales's midsection. Once this occurred, the two defendants immediately ceased the attack and Morales ran off towards his mother's address a half block away.

When paramedics arrived minutes later, they found Mateo Morales on the front entryway to his mother's residence suffering from extreme blood loss. Morales was rushed to St. Luke's Hospital, where he was ultimately pronounced deceased.

The case was prosecuted by Co-First Assistant District Attorney Patrick Bomberg and Assistant District Attorney Robert Digiantomaso.

“The death of 15 year old Mateo Morales was a very tragic and unnecessary loss of life. It was the result of longstanding animosity between rival groups from the west-end and south-end of New Bedford. The assailants appear to have not understood the gravity of their actions and the resulting consequences. This senseless street violence has left the victim’s family scarred forever and two other families’ lives turned upside down. It is a very sad situation,” District Attorney Quinn lamented.