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NEWS RELEASE

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CORRECTION: Previous headline said defendant was convicted of capital murder.

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Man Convicted of Murder in Attempted Robbery, Carjacking Case

A 25-year-old man was convicted today of attempting to rob a man and then running the victim over with a car, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

The jury deliberated for a day before finding defendant Brian Mendez (dob 8/17/90) guilty of three felony counts in case VA127484: murder, attempted second-degree robbery and carjacking.

Jurors also found true the special circumstance allegations that the murder was carried out during the commission of a robbery and carjacking.

Mendez is scheduled to be sentenced on April 6 in Department H of the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Norwalk Branch. He faces a possible maximum sentence of life in state prison without the possibility of parole.

On Oct. 14, 2015, Mendez's co-defendant, Misty Ruiz (dob 8/17/93), pleaded no contest to a felony count of carjacking in the same case. Additionally, she admitted a special allegation that she used a deadly and dangerous weapon, a car, during the commission of the crime.

Ruiz is scheduled to be sentenced on March 21 in Department S of the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Norwalk Branch. She is expected to be sentenced to 11 years in state prison.

Deputy District Attorney Robert Villa, who prosecuted the case, said on Jan. 13, 2012, Mendez and Ruiz happened to meet victim Efrain Perez-Ortiz at a liquor store.

After the initial interaction, the three started to drink alcohol in Perez-Ortiz's truck, the prosecutor said, but then later decided to go to the victim's home to pick up some things.

Mendez, Ruiz and Perez-Ortiz drove together in the victim's truck, the prosecutor added.

While Perez-Ortiz was in his home picking up items, the defendants concocted a plan for Ruiz to offer sex to the victim and then rob him of his paycheck, the prosecutor said.

When the victim returned to the car, Ruiz propositioned herself to the victim, but he refused to hand over his money, according to the prosecutor.

Mendez then hit Perez-Ortiz, the prosecutor said, and the victim got out of the car. The two defendants also exited the vehicle and began to beat the victim.

The two defendants then got back into the victim's truck and Mendez ran over Perez-Ortiz, who was immediately crushed, the prosecutor said.

Ruiz and Mendez then fled the area in the vehicle.

According to the prosecutor, Mendez left his hat at the crime scene. During the homicide investigation, law enforcement was able to identify Mendez as a suspect through DNA left on the hat.

When authorities went to interview Mendez about the crime, he confessed to the killing and revealed Ruiz was part of the assault, the prosecutor said. The defendants were subsequently arrested and charged in connection with the fatal assault.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

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About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.