



Office of the Kane County State's Attorney
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AURORA GANG MEMBER GUILTY OF FIRST-DEGREE MURDER
46-YEAR-OLD SAMUEL ORTIZ-RODRIGUEZ SHOT DEAD IN MAY 2021

February 3, 2023

RE: Cesar J. Ponce: Age 19 (d.o.b. 3-20-2003), of the 500 block of East Downer Place, Aurora, Illinois. Case No. 2021CF944.

Kane County State's Attorney Jamie L. Mosser announces that a jury has found **Cesar J. Ponce** guilty of the offense of first-degree murder.

The jury deliberated for about three hours before reaching the verdict.

Kane County Assistant State's Attorneys Lori Anderson and Amanda Busljeta presented the following evidence in court:

On May 24, 2021 at 7:30 p.m., Ponce and two fellow members of the same street gang went in search of rival gang members. Co-defendant Bello was armed with a revolver. While walking through a part of Aurora that was considered to be territory of a rival gang, they spotted individuals outside of a residence. Ponce pointed out those individuals, one of them being 46-year-old Samuel Ortiz-Rodriguez of Aurora. The co-defendant then shot and killed him. Ortiz-Rodriguez was not a street gang member.

Judge David P. Kliment set Ponce's next court appearance for May 3, 2023, at 1:30 p.m. in Courtroom 305 at the Kane County Judicial Center for post-trial motions and sentencing. Ponce faces a minimum sentence of 35 years of imprisonment in the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Ponce remains in custody at the Kane County jail, where he had been held in lieu of \$1 million bail since his arrest. Judge Kliment revoked bond upon conviction.

ASA Anderson said: "Mr. Ponce and his co-defendant were basically hunting for a rival gang member to shoot and kill. Samuel Ortiz-Rodriguez did not need to die that day. I want to thank the numerous citizens who came forward and assisted the Aurora Police Department with this investigation. They are a necessary and vital part of the Aurora Police Department's efforts to keep the city safe. Also, a thank you to ASA Busljeta for her hard work on this case, the Aurora Police Department for an investigation that turned over every stone, and victim advocate Sheila Gray.

Co-defendant Fidel Bello 2021CF945 is charged with first-degree murder. His case is pending. The charges against Bello are not proof of guilt. Bello is considered innocent and is entitled to a fair trial in which it is the state's burden to prove his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The third individual was not charged.