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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Approved by: CJZ**  
**DA Press Release #22-59**

**Guilty Verdicts For First Degree Murder in Domestic Violence Homicide Trial**  
**People v. Cody Joyave: Kern County Superior Court Case #BF190203**

Bakersfield -- Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a jury verdict in a homicide case today. On November 22, 2022, a Kern County jury returned verdicts finding the defendant, Cody Joyave (pronounced “joe-wave”), age 24, guilty of the first-degree murder of Lupe Melendrez. The case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorneys Hunter Starr and Larry Fields.

Lupe Melendrez, age 22, had been in a dating relationship with Joyave since they were in junior high school, but by April of 2022, the relationship had become violent, including at least one domestic violence incident in which Joyave had strangled Lupe into unconsciousness. This incident was not reported to law enforcement, but messages between Joyave and Lupe confirmed the event, which Joyave ultimately would admit that he had committed.

By May 19, 2022, Lupe told the Joyave via text messages that she planned to break up with him. That night, Lupe went to her and Joyave’s shared apartment in Oildale to meet Joyave. There, Joyave beat Lupe, choked her, and slashed her throat. Lupe’s injuries indicated that multiple slash and stab wounds were applied to her throat, and extensive blood loss was evident at the scene.

After murdering Lupe, Joyave made the first of many claims of how the death unfolded, all of which were proven false during the trial. In his initial statements to friends, 9-11 operators, and detectives, Joyave claimed that Lupe’s death was self-inflicted, and must have occurred when he was not present at the residence. When questioned about a series of inconsistencies in his claims that Lupe inflicted the wounds on herself when he was away, Joyave presented a different story, asserting that Lupe had somehow attacked him, and that the multiple stab wounds he inflicted upon her neck were a form of self-defense. Joyave testified during the trial as well, presenting additional claims, including an additional claim that he “just snapped” after facing what he claims as physical and emotional abuse from Lupe.

In finding Joyave guilty of first-degree murder, the jury rejected claims that suicide, self-defense, provocation, or heat of passion were involved in the murder. Instead, the jury found that Joyave committed the murder, and that the murder was willful, deliberate, and premeditated.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the conviction, stating, “This case was tragic. Our community lost a beautiful soul in Lupe Melendrez. While no verdict can bring Lupe back, the jury’s decisive rejection of the defendant’s lies and smears against the victim should be a warning to domestic abusers who think they can manipulate or outsmart jurors in Kern County.”

The sentencing and bifurcated court trial on aggravating circumstances will be held on January 26, 2023 in Department 18, where Joyave will face sentence of up to 25 years to life in prison for the murder, plus one additional year for use of a weapon during the crime.

Homicide **VICTIM**: Lupe Melendrez:



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Homicide **DEFENDANT**: Cody Joyave:

