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Speaker Bates and Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission issue statement regarding guilty verdict in the killing of Navajo homeless men

WINDOW ROCK – Speaker LoRenzo Bates and the director of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission Leonard Gorman, said today’s guilty verdict in the second-degree murder case against Alex Rios for the senseless killing of two Navajo men, Kee Thompson and Allison Gorman, provides some level of comfort and relief to the family, friends, and relatives of the victims.

“When this tragedy occurred, it touched the hearts of many of our Diné Citizens, including my colleagues on the Navajo Nation Council. With today’s verdict, I hope the families feel that a certain level of justice has prevailed,” said Speaker Bates.

A jury found Rios guilty of two counts of second-degree murder on Wednesday. He will be sentenced at a later date for beating and killing the victims with cinder blocks, metal poles, and other objects as the two men slept in a vacant lot in the city of Albuquerque in July 2014. Two others teens were also charged in the killings.

“Alex Rios, the eldest of the three teens who attacked Gorman and Thompson, was held accountable for his actions in these deaths. A verdict was rendered in this case and we now await the sentencing phase which we believe will tell us if justice is indeed served,” stated Gorman.

Following the killings, Navajo Nation officials met with Albuquerque Mayor Richard Berry, which led to the creation of the Native American Homelessness Task Force to work in partnership with the city of Albuquerque to improve the quality of life for Native Americans in the city.

“The Navajo Nation will not sit quietly and observe our relatives living in border town communities being harmed by individuals who seek out defenseless and vulnerable individuals,” added Gorman. “The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission advocates for those who have no voice or for those who are afraid to speak because of retaliation. We must act accordingly to bring attention to these matters and insist that border town officials be held to a due diligence standard that is unwavering to any public and criminal scrutiny that is before the courts.”

Speaker Bates and Gorman agree that the brutality of the murders must be met with punitive measures that send a clear message that perpetrators of such crimes against Navajo people will be held accountable for their actions.

“On behalf of the Council, I thank the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission for their ongoing efforts in the pursuit of justice and equality for our Navajo men and women in urban areas,”

stated Speaker Bates. “Lastly, I ask our people and my colleagues on the Navajo Nation Council to keep the families of the victims in our prayers.”

One of the other teens charged in the case pled guilty to second-degree murder in September as part of a plea deal. The other defendant pled not guilty and is awaiting trial.

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