

# Man sentenced in 2018 killing of 2-year-old boy

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A Kern County Superior Court judge sentenced Kaleb Kessinger to 25 years to life in prison Tuesday for the 2018 murder of 2-year-old Ramon Chavez.

Kessinger will serve concurrent sentences in state prison for the felony convictions of first-degree murder, assault of a child under 8 years old resulting in death and reckless evading of a peace officer. He will also serve a concurrent misdemeanor sentence after being convicted of obstructing/resisting an officer.

"It's a happy day for little Ramon," said Kern County Deputy District Attorney Courtney Lewis, the prosecutor in the case. "He finally gets justice. It was a horrendous crime."

Lewis explained that while convictions for both first-degree murder and assault of a child under 8 years old resulting in death carry 25 years to life, they would be served concurrently because they stemmed from the same set of facts.

David Torres, Kessinger's lawyer, asked Judge John Oglesby during the hearing for Kessinger's sentence for the third felony conviction — reckless evading of a peace officer — to be served concurrently. Oglesby said Kessinger's felony conviction for evading the

officer was not the focal point of the case, and decided not to impose the three-year sentence consecutively.

However, the prosecution wanted to see Kessinger's third felony conviction served consecutively, which would have given him a total of 28 years to life in prison.

"Obviously, I wanted (Kessinger) to serve the maximum amount of time," Lewis said. "I feel that his crime was horrendous and I think that the evading was clearly a part of the crime."

During the investigation, officers went to Kessinger's house. When his vehicle approached, it quickly turned around and sped off, according to the DA's office.

Several patrol units pursued Kessinger, who lost control of his vehicle and crashed on Olive Drive, before he got out and fled, the DA's office said. Officers found Kessinger hiding out at the Travelodge Motel on Oak Street, where he resisted arrest.

Kessinger was denied probation by Oglesby during the sentencing hearing, with the judge citing the fact that Kessinger was on misdemeanor probation when the murder occurred.

"I'm not considering probation," Oglesby said. "Kessinger is not a suitable candidate for



Kaleb Kessinger during his arraignment on April 30, 2018.

CALIFORNIA FILE PHOTO

probation for the charges of this nature."

Lewis noted that the victim's grandmothers and aunt were present at the hearing and were

"relieved" by the verdict. She also said the victim's mother, Ayled Chavez, was also relieved. Chavez pleaded no contest to willful cruelty to a child in Ramon's death

and was released from prison in April 2019.

"Ms. Chavez was punished for her crimes. She did serve time in prison for trusting her child with the defendant," Lewis said. "People also have to remember, she has to wake up every day and her child is not here."

According to court documents, Chavez said she left her son in Kessinger's care while she went to see a friend. When she came back, she told police she noticed injuries on Ramon's head and that he died later that night.

Chavez said she and Kessinger took the body to the Kern River Canyon the following morning and dumped it before later returning to the scene of the body, according to court documents.

Chavez initially reported to police that her son had been kidnapped by an unknown Hispanic man, but ultimately admitted to officers that she made up that story and that Kessinger was the killer.

"I would say to be more vigilant about who you let into your life and who you let around your kids," Lewis said.

A separate case against Kessinger, related to stealing money from his elderly grandfathers, was dismissed in light of the more serious murder conviction, Lewis said.



COURTESY DERICK DONHAM

Aaron Porter (80) greets a senior citizen during an event at West High in 2017. Porter, a former West High football player, was killed in a February 2019 stabbing.

## 3 get prison terms in 2019 stabbing of West High athlete

THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN

Three men have been sentenced in the 2019 stabbing death of former West High School football player Aaron Porter, according to the Kern County District Attorney's Office.

Donnie Lee Nolen was sentenced on Tuesday to 16 years in prison after pleading no contest to voluntary manslaughter with a gang-related crime enhancement.

Isaiah Stars was sentenced on Tuesday to six years in prison after pleading no contest to felony assault causing great bodily injury and gang participation charges.

Armani Bonner was sentenced

to 10 years in prison on Sept. 15 after pleading no contest to two counts of felony assault, with one enhancement for causing great bodily injury and gang-related crime enhancement.

Porter was stabbed and seriously injured during an altercation in a parking lot in the 7400 block of District Boulevard on Feb. 2, 2019. While at a party, he intervened during a confrontation between a family member and an unknown person, as previously reported. Porter was stabbed multiple times in the abdomen.

Porter was treated at a local hospital, where he died on Feb. 11, 2019.

## COMMON SENSE HEALTH

# Go ahead and catch the travel bug

William Shakespeare wrote, "In the night, imagining some fear, how easy is a bush supposed a bear?" For many families having lost loved ones to the coronavirus, this has been a devastating year. The death numbers are broadcast relentlessly. Small wonder people have become paranoid about traveling. But does this anxiety make sense?

Normally airports are chaotic and unpleasant. Joyless crowds stand toe-to-toe in long lines through insufferable screenings and baggage checks, only to be herded like sheep onto cramped planes.

But now could be the best time to travel. Airports are not crowded and much cleaner. Some flights leave the middle seat empty — a welcome move.

Skeptics worry about contact with the coronavirus while seated for hours breathing shared air on flights. It's understandable given the enclosed space and large number of strangers. But the air inside an airplane is cleaner than you think.

Most commercial aircraft use High Efficiency Particulate Air filters, and the air flows in ways similar to an operating room, in one direction with little cross-over of circulation patterns. Cabin air is constantly refreshed, with about 60 percent from the outside and 40 percent passing through HEPA filters that block 99.97 percent of airborne particles over 0.3 micron in size.

Research by NASA notes that HEPA filters are exceptionally efficient — almost 100 percent at 0.01 micron — at capturing ultra-fine particles, including the very small globs carrying SARS-CoV-2 in exhaled air.

Even with this filtration, every three minutes, on average, cabin air is completely changed. That's 20 times every hour compared to 12 times in office buildings. Your airplane ride is

far safer than a bus or subway journey. It is not the air, but certain surfaces on planes where germs thrive — for instance, seatback magazines, pull-down tables and headrests where people put their hands as they walk the aisle. Another problem is the washroom after passengers fail to wash their hands. Airlines are aware of these hazards and have increased use of disinfectants.

So, go ahead and catch the travel bug. Do a more informed assessment of the health risks and benefits of travel. Travel can ease stress, a major source of ill health. It gets you up and moving. Travel often involves socializing and making new friends, also known to boost positive health outcomes. Good food choices while traveling, combined with exercise, can score a win-win. Don't forget the importance of rest. Choose a destination where you can enjoy some downtime.

Finally, far too late, top medical authorities are acknowledging the role of specific supplements. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, recently said, "If you are deficient in vitamin D, that does have an impact on your susceptibility to infection. I would not mind recommending, and I do it myself, taking vitamin D supplements."

He went on to add that vitamin C is a "good antioxidant" and recommended high doses. Dr. Fauci might have better brought home the point. These two vitamins protect us, and we should be ringing far louder alerts for everyone to supplement their intake. Good advice at any point, but especially as you prepare to travel, get your immune system in top shape.

This viral pandemic has been so prolonged and so intensely covered by the media, that it's small wonder travelers are seeing bears.

Everyday lifestyle diseases such as obesity and Type 2 diabetes cause more thousands of deaths than the coronavirus.

Life has its hazards, even getting up in the morning. But plane travel is one of the safest forms of transportation. We must not become so paranoid that we become afraid of our own shadow. Samuel Johnson, the historian, once remarked, "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life." Whether London or anywhere else, don't let yourself succumb. Walk your next trip.

The weekly column by Dr. W. Gifford-Jones has been published for 45 years. The same no-nonsense tradition now continues in a father-daughter collaboration. Sign up at [www.docjiff.com](http://www.docjiff.com) to receive their weekly e-newsletter. For comments, email [contact-us@docjiff.com](mailto:contact-us@docjiff.com).

## PUBLIC SAFETY

# Lawsuit settled in harassment claims against correctional officer

THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN

A lawsuit against the county has been settled involving a woman who said she was sexually harassed by a corrections officer as a teenager at Juvenile Hall, according to the law offices of Chain Cohn Stiles.

The suit reached its final dismissal on Sept. 14 after a settlement of \$250,000 was reached with the county in August, according to the law office's marketing and public relations director, Jorge Barrientos.

The suit was filed on behalf of Samantha Vasquez in 2016. Vasquez, who was in Juvenile Hall in 2015, reportedly alleged that corrections officer George Anderson made sexual comments to her, groomed her for sexual abuse, propositioned her for sex and watched her shower.

David Cohn, partner at Chain Cohn Stiles, said the suit was part of two separate lawsuits by young women who alleged "various misdeeds" on behalf of Juvenile Hall corrections officers.

"As you might imagine, those activities are not sup-

posed to happen at Juvenile Hall," Cohn said.

The suit was originally dismissed by U.S. District Court Judge Jennifer L. Thurston in 2017 when she made a summary judgment in favor of the defendants, as previously reported.

However, in January 2019, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Vasquez, clearing the way for her case to go to trial.

County counsel did not respond to a request for comment late Wednesday.

**The Kern County Sheriff's Office arrested a man Tuesday on suspicion of multiple narcotics-related charges following a traffic stop on Highway 99.**

Arturo Meza, 34, from Delano, was arrested and taken to the Central Receiving Facility where he was booked on suspicion of possession of a narcotic, possession of a narcotic for sale and transportation of a narcotic, according to a KCSO news release. Later, it was learned Meza



COURTESY OF THE KERN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

More than two pounds of suspected cocaine, with an approximate street value of \$35,000, was allegedly found in a suspect's car during a Kern County Sheriff's Office traffic stop on Tuesday.

had an active felony warrant for his arrest under another name for unrelated narcotic charges. He's currently being held in custody without bail.

According to KCSO, deputies stopped a vehicle on Highway 99 near Sandrini Road for unsafe speeds. During the investigation, deputies learned Meza was driving without a license. A KCSO canine searched the vehicle and found a large quantity of suspected cocaine, KCSO said. Detectives from the Kern County-High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area responded to the scene and assisted with the investigation.

More than two pounds of suspected cocaine, with an approximate street value of \$35,000, was seized from Meza's vehicle, according to KCSO.

Anyone with information regarding the investigation is asked to call 861-3110.

**The Kern County Sheriff's Office critical incident review board cleared a deputy who used deadly force in a Sept. 3 officer involved shooting that resulted in the death of Fernando Napoles.**

On Monday, the board

found Deputy Christopher Saldana's use of deadly force was within departmental policy and that the deputy has returned to duty, according to a KCSO news release.

During the Sept. 3 incident, the 37-year-old Napoles brandished a shotgun at Saldana, KCSO said. The deputy then shot and killed Napoles.

KCSO's critical incident review board consisted of Chief Deputy Damian Nord, Chief Deputy Larry McCurtain, Chief Deputy James Morrison and Acting Chief Deputy Avery Simpson.

**The Kern County coroner's office has identified the teenage victim in a car accident on Tuesday evening on Highway 46, west of Main Drain Road near Wasco.**

Florencio Zamora, 17, was the operator of an SUV that left the roadway and overturned at 10:05 p.m. He was declared dead at the scene from his injuries, the coroner said in a news release.