



NEWS RELEASE

March 11, 2019
Contact: Sue Lindsay
303-835-5639

Aidan Zellmer Sentenced for First-degree Murder of 10-year-old Girl

Aidan Demmie Zellmer was sentenced Monday to life in prison with the possibility of parole after 40 years in the death of 10 year-old Kiaya Campbell in Thornton.

“In 27 years as a prosecutor, I have never seen a 15-year-old commit such a violent act,” District Attorney Dave Young said.

Kiaya was reported missing the night of June 7, 2017 while walking with Zellmer. An Amber Alert was issued and community members helped multiple law enforcement and rescue units search for her body, which was found the next day in a greenbelt area behind homes near 128th Avenue and Jasmine Street. She was beaten to death with a metal pipe.

Zellmer told police they became separated in a rain storm and that he didn't know where she was. He continued to mislead police, directing them to areas of Thornton away from where he had left Kiaya after murdering her.

Zellmer, who was 15 at the time of the murder, was charged as an adult. He pleaded guilty to one count of first-degree murder after deliberation on February 1.

“It is important for Mr. Zellmer to acknowledge that he is the only one responsible for Kiaya Campbell's death,” District Attorney Young told the court. Young discounted the defense argument that Zellmer was failed by his family and social services. “He is not a victim in this case. Everyone in this courtroom is a victim of this case. Everyone who spent hours and hours looking for Kiaya Campbell's body are victims in this case.”

Young also discounted theories of brain development in juveniles as an excuse for his crime. “Fifteen-year-olds make bad decisions but they don't commit cruel, heinous crimes like this,” Young said. “After striking her five times with the head with a metal pipe, he left her in a field. When he talked to police, he was calm, cool and collected. He misled and deceived police who were looking for her. This is a rare case. Thank God we don't have other 15-year-olds doing what he did.”

Adams County District Judge Sharon Holbrook imposed the mandatory life sentence with possibility of parole after 40 years, telling the family, “Kiaya will not be forgotten.”