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SETTLEMENT IN JESSICA HERNANDEZ MURDER FAR FROM REAL JUSTICE

Community still searching for answers and real accountability in Jessie's death

DENVER — The City of Denver issued an announcement yesterday that the family of murdered teenager, Jessica Hernandez, will receive \$999,999 in a pre-trial settlement in addition to a few other small concessions. Denver Justice Project continues to emphasize that monetary settlements do not equal justice. Cecelia Rodriguez, Co-chair of Denver Justice Project, said of yesterday's news, "Settlements are a misguided step towards justice, and it is never what the family seeks or foresees as justice." In yesterday's press conference, the city attorney's office attempted to frame this settlement as an acceptable and positive form of justice because a trial would have otherwise been too costly and time-consuming. Denver Justice Project disagrees.

While the other actions that the City agreed to in addition to the monetary settlement are unique, Denver Justice Project feels that our community was ultimately denied a real opportunity to pursue an important kind of justice - personal accountability and the possibility of jail for the DPD officers who killed Jessie. We are left to wonder if police accountability in Denver will ever include individual law enforcement personnel facing the kinds of consequences for their actions or even prison time that so many of our families are forced to face for our mistakes. Although DJP believes that we can and should strive for a world where we no longer rely on prisons to deal with problems in our society, we can't help but continue to be frustrated that, while the current system is in place, there remains a double standard in the way regular people and law enforcement are held accountable.

Co-chair of the Denver Justice Project Alex Landau is firm that, "We need a process to not only cease the practice of taxpayers funding settlements after police violence, but does not allow police and deputies to hide behind what they felt was 'objectively reasonable' when they decide to hurt and or kill someone in a scenario that could have been handled without harming members of our community." Denver Justice Project continues to call for law enforcement accountability measures that are tangible and effective enough that our communities and families like Jessica's aren't left searching for answers.