Guilty

New Paltz man faces 25 years to life for the murder of Asia Medina Pérez

by Jesse J. Smith

A NEW PALTZ MAN faces 25 years to life in state prison after he was convicted of second-degree murder in the June 2012 slaying of two-year-old Asia Medina Pérez. A seven-woman, five-man jury handed up the verdict against Joseph Rodriguez on Thursday, Nov. 14, following six days of often-horrific testimony and 12 hours of deliberations.

Rodriguez, 44, was accused of the brutal beating death of his wife’s niece back on June 20, 2012. The girl was spending the summer in New Paltz while her parents, César Pérez and Katidty Medina

New Paltz awarded Greenway grant for “Flats” trail

The Hudson River Valley Greenway has awarded the Town of New Paltz an $8,500 grant to develop a plan for a 0.8-mile pedestrian public access trail in the agricultural “Flats” area from the Wallkill River near downtown New Paltz to the intersection of Lewis Lane and Red Barn Road, near the Wallkill View Farm Market.

The proposed trail will run along the southern border of the Van Alst farm, which was protected in 2011 by the Open Space Institute (OSI). OSI has agreed to give the town access to the property to create the walking trail.

The town will use the grant funds to hire a landscape architect to conduct an inventory and analysis of the potential trail routes and report on conditions and estimate the cost for trail construction. The consultant will lead a public charrette process to encourage stakeholder and public input.

“This grant is an important next step in our ongoing efforts to make New Paltz an even more walkable and bike-friendly place, which we are committed... Continued on page 10

Offensive messages

SUNY New Paltz is hit by another racist posting; campus community gathers to discuss racial issues

by Maria Pianelli

VANDALS STRUCK AGAIN at SUNY New Paltz last Tuesday night in the second of a string of apparent racially driven attacks. A few weeks after a white board in Debois Hall was vandalized to read: “Emmett Till deserved to die,” similar graffiti appeared in Gage Hall.

A white board adorning a student dormitory was defaced to read: “[N-word] Alert.” According to college president Donald Christian, the slurs seemed to be directed at an individual student.

“We condemn this and other such messages as ignorant, offensive, hateful... Continued on page 18
Greenway grant (Continued from page 1)

to making a reality” said town of New Paltz supervisor Susan Zimet. “We thank Hudson River Valley Greenway for this funding and our colleagues at OSI and Mohonk Preserve for their commitment to this project and our community.”

The project will be led by the Town of New Paltz Flats Bicycle and Pedestrian (Bike/Ped) Trail Committee, a subcommittee of the town’s Bike/Ped Committee, which in addition to town officials and volunteers, also includes representation from OSI, Wallkill Valley Land Trust and Mohonk Preserve. Both the OSI and Mohonk Preserve will contribute funds to help the Town of New Paltz to match the grant award.

“The protection of the Van Afst farm helped preserve the most beloved landscape in New Paltz,” said Kim Elliman, OSI’s president and CEO. “The Open Space Institute thanks the Town of New Paltz for its leadership in creating a safe walking trail where everyone can experience the beauty of the Shawangunk Ridge. Thank you also to the Hudson River Valley Greenway for moving this plan forward with its generous grant.”

“We’re pleased to be working with OSI and the Town of New Paltz on this important initiative,” said Mohonk Preserve executive director Glenn Hougland. “This project will dovetail with the Preserve’s trail planning work on the Testimonial Gateway project in the Mohonk Preserve Foothills to provide exciting new opportunities for recreation and connectivity from the river to the ridge.”

Offensive messages (Continued from page 1)

and harmful to both individuals and our community,” he said.

Christian stated that the University Police Department (UPD) is investigating both incidents.

“Hate speech must be rebutted with educative, thoughtful, respectful speech that unifies rather than divides us,” said Christian in a statement addressed to SUNY New Paltz students. “We must create more opportunities to educate each other about the motivation for such incidents and their impact on our students and our community.”

He noted that residence hall staff led discussions on the incidents in both Dubois and Gage Hall. Since the occurrences, Christian has also met with both student leaders in order to discuss their responses.

“I know from my conversations that students are interested in having their professors acknowledge and discuss these incidents and their underlying issues,” he added. “I encourage such conversations, in and out of the classroom, difficult as they are.”

In 2011, a “colored only” sticker was placed on a water fountain in the Humanities Building. Two days later, police were notified about a poster in the LeFevre Hall elevator promoting a “synchron” program. In early 2013, a sign in the Shango Hall parking lot was vandalized to “Django Parking,” in reference to Quentin Tarantino’s film “Django Unchained.” The same week, posters promoting an advocacy panel for LGBTQ identified people in communities of color were also defaced.

The SUNY New Paltz community gathered last Saturday to address some of the recent racist incidents. The Student Association sponsored a symposium titled: “Let’s Talk About It,” which openly addressed race, gender and identity issues. Opening remarks were made by Manuel Teyeda, the president of the Student Association, as well as Christian.

“We are all aware of recent racist postings and writings on this campus,” said Christian. “These are examples of the kinds of offensive, obnoxious, ignorant and hateful speech that occurs on college campuses across the country. New Paltz is not alone in these experiences, but our response to such events is strong and rooted in our values of diversity, equity and inclusiveness.

“We need to learn to understand, live with and support people different from ourselves,” continued Christian. “And in doing so, we need to find common ground that brings us together so that we are one university community, not atomized into separate segments. Today’s symposium is one step in that journey. There will be more steps in the future.”

Other speakers at the event included actor Michael Fowlin, solo performance artist, comedian, writer, actress and producer Desiree Burch; and J Ma S III, a black/trans/queer poet.

The Student Association is in preliminary planning stages for another symposium in the spring semester.

The UPD welcomes any information that might aid their investigation. Anyone with information can call 257-2230 to access the department’s automated anonymous tip line.

Looking for 50 Homeowners to Qualify for a FREE Home Solar System

☐ Own Your Own Home
☐ Have a Southerly-Facing Roof
☐ Little to No Shading
☐ Pay an Electric Bill

The U.S. Government and State of New York have financial incentives that provide homeowners the opportunity to replace your electric provider with solar power.

Roof Diagnostics Solar is now qualifying 50 homes for a FREE home solar system. Call 845-694-3536 to see if your home qualifies!

845-694-3536