

## Killer gets 25 years in prison

Already serving an 80-year term for slaying of woman in Stamford

By Randall Beach, Register Staff

NEW HAVEN — Philip Vinci Jr. will never be able to play baseball with his dad or go fishing with him, the boy's mother noted Friday in Superior Court as Harry Gonzalez was sentenced to a 25-year prison term for Vinci's murder in Edgewood Park.

Melissa Vinci, who lives out of state and did not come to the courtroom, instead submitted a statement that was read aloud by Victim Services Advocate Beata Bagi.

Vinci noted their son was only 2½ at the time of the October 2005 slaying.

Asking for a severe sentence, she described Gonzalez' actions as "vicious."

"He hit him with a baseball bat, strangled him and threw him in the creek, just for a couple hundred dollars," she said. "Please do not ever allow this man to walk the streets."

Judge Richard Damiani noted Gonzalez already is serving an 80-year sentence for another murder, the stabbing of retired school teacher Joanne Trautwein in Stamford, which occurred about a week before the Vinci slaying. The 25-year New Haven sentence will be served concurrently.

"It'd be a waste for the (Vinci) victim's family to go through a trial," Damiani said.

Assistant State's Attorney John Waddock said Vinci's body was not found until several days after the murder when passers-by spotted it in the water. His death was initially believed to have been an accident, Waddock added.

Waddock said the murder might have gone undetected except for the hard work of two New Haven Police Department detectives, Michael Wuchek and Martin Daddio.

Another key to solving the crime was a report by a runner who said he saw Vinci being beaten. The runner said he was frightened, but called police after he left the park. At that time police could find neither Vinci nor Gonzalez.

Gonzalez, 41, formerly of 263 Dixwell Ave., New Haven, pleaded under the Alford doctrine to a murder charge in March. Under this arrangement, a defendant does not admit guilt but concedes the state has enough evidence to likely get conviction, and it results in a finding of guilt.

Gonzalez came to court dressed in a yellow prison jumpsuit. When Damiani asked him if he had anything to say on his own behalf, Gonzalez shook his head.

"I doubt anyone will shed a tear that he will be behind bars for the rest of his life," Waddock said. "That's what he deserves."

"He is a very dangerous man," Waddock added.

Gonzalez's alleged accomplice in the park attack, Jennifer Kos, is due in the same courtroom Wednesday, and might then be sentenced. Her attorney, Thomas Farver, anticipates a plea agreement now that Gonzalez has been sentenced.

Farver, who observed Gonzalez's sentencing, said afterward that Kos cooperated with prosecutors in their case against Gonzalez. "The state has agreed, due to her cooperation, to make that known to the court," Farver said. Kos faces a murder charge in the Vinci death, but lesser charges could be substituted. She is now serving a 10-year sentence for her role in Trautwein's murder.

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