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ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

TODD SPITZER

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PRESS RELEASE

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23-year-old Woman Sentenced to 21 Years to Life, through a Court offer, for Murder of Mother and Father while Driving Under the Influence

The couple's three young daughters, all under the age of five, were seriously injured

SANTA ANA, Calif. – A 23-year-old woman was sentenced today to 21 years to life for killing a young mother and father and seriously injuring their three young daughters while driving under the influence in December 2020. The family was driving around Newport Beach looking at Christmas lights when they were hit by a car that ran a red light at 75 miles per hour.

The driver, Grace Elizabeth Coleman, 23, of Newport Beach had a blood alcohol level of .22% - nearly three times the legal limit – and left the scene of the collision, leaving the injured children strapped in their car seats with the bodies of their parents. Coleman also refused to take a blood alcohol content test as required by law.

Coleman pleaded guilty in June exchange for a court offer of 21 years to life.

As part of the agreement, she pleaded guilty to two felony murder counts, one felony count of driving under the influence of alcohol causing bodily injury, one felony count of driving with a blood alcohol of .08% or more causing bodily injury, and one felony count of hit and run with injury. Coleman plead guilty to three felony enhancements of great bodily injury for causing injuries to all three of the couple's daughters and one misdemeanor count of driving with a blood alcohol of .08% or more in connection with an August 29, 2020 arrest in Laguna Beach. She admitted having a blood alcohol of .18% at the time of the August 29, 2020 arrest, which was 3 1/2 months before she killed Gabriel Andrade and her husband Henry Saldana-Mejia.

Coleman had faced a maximum sentence of 42 years and eight months to life in state prison.

Gabriela Andrade, 28, and her husband, Henry Saldana-Mejia, 27, were driving with their three daughters, ages 1, 4, and 5, near the intersection of Pelican Hill Road and Newport Coast Drive on December 8, 2020. At approximately 7:46 p.m. Coleman is accused of running a red light and crashing into the family's vehicle, killing both parents and seriously injuring their three daughters who were secured in car seats.

Andrade and Saldana-Mejia were killed and their three daughters were seriously injured in the collision.

"These young parents were just trying to share the magic of Christmas with their three little girls and it ended in the most horrific and completely avoidable tragedy," said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. "The magic of Christmas turned into a real life nightmare for this young family because a 22-year-old who knew the dangers of

drinking and driving got behind the wheel and did it anyway. Three little girls are now orphans and Grace Coleman is a convicted murderer who will have to live with the screams of three injured little girls trapped in their car seats playing over and over in her head for the rest of her life.”

Senior Deputy District Attorney Jennifer Walker of the Homicide Unit prosecuted this case.