



COUNTY OF YOLO
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
JEFF W. REISIG, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

301 SECOND STREET - WOODLAND, CALIFORNIA 95695 - 530.666.8180 - FAX 530.666.8185

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 26, 2009 **Contact:** Ann Hurd, Chief Deputy District Attorney
Phone: (530) 666-8356

MySpace Jury Tampering Could Not Prevent Guilty Verdict

(Woodland, CA) – August 26, 2009 District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced that on August 21, 2009, after a three day trial, a Yolo County jury convicted Miguel Dagoberto Lopez, of Woodland, of felony domestic violence for the February 2009 beating of the mother of his child, Angela Gonzales, despite the victim’s efforts to lie for Mr. Lopez and even tamper with the jury using MySpace. According to Ms. Gonzales’s initial report to the police, Mr. Lopez became angry when the victim did not have money for cigarettes and so he struck her in the face repeatedly while she held the couple’s 16-month-old child, then held her by her hair and battered her head against the floor of their apartment approximately eight times. During the trial, however, Ms. Gonzales testified that she lied about the assault because she was angry with Mr. Lopez, that Mr. Lopez has never struck her, and that the swelling and bruising on her face, which was photographed, was the result of her throwing up due to migraine headaches. In response, prosecuting attorney Ryan J. Couzens introduced evidence showing that Gonzales was attempting to help Lopez get away with his crime, including evidence of a restraining order sought by Ms. Gonzales over two weeks after the incident. There were at least three prior instances where Mr. Lopez had assaulted Ms. Gonzales. Amongst those prior events was a 2007 incident where police responded to reports of “screaming and choking” coming from the couple’s apartment, where a distraught Ms. Gonzales, then pregnant, was found amongst broken and disordered items in their apartment with various injuries, including scratches, bruising and a cut to her hand. Ms. Gonzales told police that she had simply knocked over a vase, but officers reported that Gonzales kept nervously looking over her shoulder in the direction of Mr. Lopez.

“It is a tragic reality of many domestic violence cases that the victim will report an assault then, because of self-blame, humiliation or coercion, will attempt to cover up the

crime, only to be assaulted again,” reports Couzens. “Fortunately,” continued Couzens, “our system allows a jury to hear both explanations and decide which one they believe.” In this case, however, Ms. Gonzales took the additional step of locating one of the jurors on MySpace, prior to the end of the case, and pleading with the juror to acquit Mr. Lopez. The court excused that juror and allowed the case to continue to jury deliberations, during which the jury convicted Lopez of felony domestic violence. Based on the subsequent investigation, the District Attorney’s Office will be filing criminal charges against Angela Gonzales for jury tampering. “It is regrettable that a victim of a crime must be charged with a crime herself,” said District Attorney Jeff Reisig, “but communicating with an empanelled jury risks the integrity of the justice system and cannot be allowed.” For more information, contact the District Attorney’s office at (530) 666-8356.

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