



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: May 17, 2012 **Contact:** Jonathan Raven, Chief Deputy District Attorney
Phone: Jonathan.raven@yolocounty.org

Sacramento Gang Members Sentenced for Attack in Lowe's Parking Lot

May 17, 2012 (Woodland, CA) – District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced today that Yolo County Superior Court Judge Stephen L. Mock concluded sentencing on three gang members convicted by jury for an attack on three people in a Lowe's parking lot in West Sacramento on April 19, 2010.

Twenty-year olds Jose Antonio Duran and Salvador Benjamin Vasquez, Jr., and 21-year-old Joseph Vincent Sisneros, saw a victim who was a Starbucks employee and UC Davis Student eating in his car in the Lowe's parking lot just after 10 p.m. The three Sacramento men, all of whom a jury found to be active Norteño gang members, took the victim's iPod, wallet and keys. The men then did what Judge Mock described as a "senseless beating" of the victim, causing two facial fractures, while he begged them to stop. The men were laughing and shouting "Norte," the name of their gang, which caught the attention of four Lowe's employees as they exited the store. One employee, a U.S. Army Reservist, approached the assault and attempted to call the police. According to Judge Mock, the men then "targeted [him] because he was calling the police," threatened to shoot him, and chased him away. The men caught the second Lowe's employee, who was UC Davis physical therapy student. Although the student immediately raised his hands in surrender, defendants Duran and Sisneros repeatedly kicked the victim in the face, breaking his nose, while defendant Vasquez threatened to shoot him. Later, the defendants were pulled over by police as they left the area in Duran's car. After a two week trial, a Yolo County jury convicted all three defendants on February 27, 2012.

Judge Mock concluded that the defendants had "terrorized" the three victims and demonstrated the threat posed by criminal street gangs. He sentenced Sisneros to state prison for 15 years, Vasquez for 18 years and four months and Duran for 21 years and four months. For the gang-related witness intimidation, Judge Mock imposed the statutory term of 7-years-to-life on all three defendants.

Deputy District Attorney Ryan Couzens prosecuted the case. "Street gangs succeed as an enterprise because they routinely threaten and intimidate witnesses of their crimes," explained Couzens. "The 'life' commitment," continued Couzens, "lets witnesses of gang violence know that the justice system wants to protect them and deters gang members from interfering with investigations." Prior to trial, the prosecution offered each defendant a non-life prison term. All three defendants rejected that offer.

District Attorney Jeff Reisig thanked the Sacramento Police Department for offering their assistance, and thanked the citizens who were brave enough to stop the assault and to testify at the trial.

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