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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### JURY FINDS SURENO GANG MEMBER GUILTY IN ATTACK OF DOS PALOS MAN

A Merced County jury convicted 23 – year old Camilo Tapia, Jr. of charges stemming from the June 1, 2008 gang attack of a 17 year old Dos Palos resident. In Wednesday’s verdict, Tapia, also of Dos Palos, was found guilty of felony assault and vandalism, as well as being an active participant in a criminal street gang. Additionally, the jury found true allegations that both the assault and vandalism were committed to benefit a criminal street gang. The jury was unable to reach a verdict on similar charges against Tapia’s co – defendant, Jesus Ramirez Mosqueda.

According to Deputy District Attorney Christa Gonzalez, who prosecuted the case, Tapia is a validated Sureno gang member, originally from Salinas. The June 1 attack involved five gang members who attacked their victim for wearing a red shirt - Surenos “claim” the color blue, said Gonzalez. The attack involved rock throwing and punches thrown by the gang members against their victim. Expert testimony at the trial revealed that Sureno gangs will typically attack those wearing red, which is the color “claimed” by their rivals, the Nortenos. Gonzalez noted that this attack was upon an innocent citizen who happened to be wearing the wrong color at the wrong time, and has no ties to any criminal street gang.

“This was a long trial with a lot of conflicting evidence that the jury had to sift through. They deliberated carefully for three days before reaching their verdict. I am confident that justice has been done”, said Gonzalez. “This was a typically senseless act of violence by cowardly gang members who prey on innocent people in our community. I am grateful that the jury worked so hard to reach a verdict, and that Tapia will be punished for this unprovoked assault”, added Gonzalez.

Superior Court Judge Carol Ash presided over the trial. Deputy Public Defender Kimberly Boortz represented Tapia, while local attorney Hayden Smith represented Mosqueda. Tapia, who remains in custody, faces nearly ten years in prison when he is sentenced on January 9, 2009.