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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MERCED MAN ENTERS PLEA IN TAGGING INCIDENT

Merced resident Felipe Joe Ramos, 33, entered a no-contest plea to a felony vandalism charge on March 12. In exchange for his plea, Superior Court Commissioner Ralph Cook sentenced Ramos to the maximum term of 3 years in state prison.

The conviction stems from a December 6, 2008 incident in which a citizen witness saw Ramos and his 13 year old son spray painting gang graffiti on an empty commercial building on Main Street in Merced. The witness then called police, who attempted to detain Ramos and his son for investigation. When approached by law enforcement, the suspects fled the area on foot, and were later apprehended at their apartment. When questioned by police, Ramos denied any knowledge of the crime, but his son confessed his and his father's role in the offense. Police also found a spray paint lid that matched the color of the graffiti at the apartment, and noted paint on Ramos's hand.

"I am satisfied with the defendant's prison sentence in this case. It was an especially egregious crime due to the defendant involving his young son in criminal activity", said Deputy District Attorney Matthew Serratto, who prosecuted the case. "There continues to be a large graffiti problem in Merced. I would like to commend the hard work of the Merced Police Department in their continuing efforts to control this blight on our community", added Serratto.

After serving his prison sentence, Ramos will face a four year parole period. Ramos will appear in court on April 2, when the court will order fines and restitution for the damage he caused. Attorney Hayden Smith represented Ramos.