

Office of the Kane County State's Attorney



JOSEPH H. McMAHON

State's Attorney

Kane County Judicial Center
37W777 Route 38 Suite 300
St. Charles, Illinois 60175

General Offices: (630) 232-3500
Contact:
Christopher Nelson (630) 232-3500

FOURTH MAN CONVICTED IN 2005 GANG BEATING MURDER FIFTH MAN AWAITS TRIAL IN THE CASE

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An Aurora man is the fourth person to be convicted in the 2005 gang-motivated beating death of an Aurora man, a case that was indicted as part of a multijurisdictional cold-case sting.

Juan Vargas, 22 (d.o.b. 6-24-1989), of the 200 block of High Street, Aurora, was convicted late Tuesday, May 15, 2012, by a Kane County jury of one count of first-degree murder in the 2005 beating death of 21-year-old Jorge Caro.

The jury deliberated for less than two hours.

Early Sept. 4, 2005, members of an Aurora street gang were present at a party in the 600 block of Lincoln Street when they encountered Caro, of the 900 block of Wennamacher Street, Aurora. After several of the gang members questioned whether Caro was a true member of the gang and whether he had cooperated with the police in another murder, they planned to discipline Caro by kicking and punching him. Vargas, along with co-defendants Max M. Aguilar, 21 (d.o.b. 5-21-1990), Ruben Hernandez, 28 (d.o.b. 6-18-1983), Quentin Moore, 30 (d.o.b. 8-1-1981), and Roman Lucio, 31 (d.o.b. 4-14-1981), participated in the beating. At one point, as Caro was lying on the ground badly injured, Vargas gave Moore a baseball bat, which Moore used to strike Caro several times in the head. The men then took Caro's shoes and shirt and left him to die.

At about 4:15 a.m. Caro's body was discovered in the yard where he had been beaten and police were alerted. The autopsy revealed 22 injuries to Caro's head and face and 16 injuries to his upper body and arms, and that Caro died from blunt force trauma.

Aguilar was convicted of murder in the case and is serving a 20-year prison sentence. Hernandez was convicted of murder in the case and is serving a 35-year prison sentence. (Hernandez faces a life sentence after his recent conviction for the 2005 murder of Michael Moore of Aurora.) Lucio pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit first-degree murder, a Class 1 felony, for his role in this murder in exchange for a 26-year prison sentence.

Vargas' next court appearance is set for 1:30 p.m. June 28, 2012, in Courtroom 311 in front of Associate Judge Allen M. Anderson for post-trial motions and sentencing. Vargas faces a sentence of between 20 and 60 years in prison.

Vargas had been held in the Kane County jail in lieu of \$750,000 bail. Bond was revoked upon conviction.

Moore's next appearance is set for 9 a.m. May 31, 2012, in Courtroom 305 in front of Circuit Judge David R. Akemann. Moore is charged with first-degree murder.

The charges against Moore are not proof of guilt. Moore is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial in which it is the state's burden to prove his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The case was charged in June 2007, when a special Kane County grand jury indicted more than 30 men in 22 cold case homicides investigated by the Kane County State's Attorney, the Aurora Police Department, the FBI and the Kane County Sheriff's Department in a sting dubbed "Operation First Degree Burn."

"Individuals who choose the gang life and think they can engage in violent behavior at the expense of the community should know that we will work with the Aurora Police Department to identify and prosecute them no matter when and where we find them. For those who are convicted, we will seek lengthy prison sentences," Kane County State's Attorney Joe McMahon said.

"My thanks to the jury for reaching this just verdict, to the Aurora Police Department for its hard work and perseverance, and to Kane County Assistant State's Attorneys Mark D. Stajdohar and Jody Gleason, who prosecuted this case. I hope that Jorge Caro's family can find some comfort in the knowledge that justice is being served."