



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

NEWS RELEASE

RE: Cause No.: 05-CR-1870-A
State of Texas v. Ernesto Berlanga – D. O. B. 11/07/1979

Brownsville Man sentenced to life in Prison for Murder

Brownsville, Texas – September 1, 2011 – Armando R. Villalobos, County and District Attorney for Cameron County, announces that Ernesto Berlanga, 31, of Brownsville, Texas, was sentenced today to life in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice – Institutional Division for 1st degree murder stemming from an August 4, 2005 incident in Cameron Park.

Assistant County and District Attorneys Oscar Guzman and Jonathan Gracia represented the State of Texas. They presented evidence and arguments to a jury in the 107th Judicial District Court during a four day trial. Closing arguments began this morning and after 2 ½ hours of deliberation the jury returned with a guilty verdict. The honorable Judge of the 107th Judicial District court, Benjamin Euresti Jr., honored the states' punishment request and sentenced Berlanga to life in prison.

Berlanga, 25 at the time of the incidence, was indicted November 11, 2005 on murder charges for the death of Patricia Sandra Salas, 43. Salas was stabbed in her neck with an ice pick by Berlanga after a verbal disagreement. Berlanga struck Ms. Salas on her head causing her to fall and lose consciousness. Berlanga then left the scene and quickly returned to fatally stab Ms. Salas in the neck as she lay on the floor. Salas died the next day.

"We are very pleased with the Jury's guilty verdict. This defendant is as violent and dangerous as they come. While awaiting this trial he viciously attacked and mutilated a fellow inmate in the Cameron County Jail. The Cameron County and District Attorney's office applauds the judicial fortitude of Judge Euresti's sentence. A life for a life. Justice has been done", said District Attorney Armando Villalobos.

Berlanga has been serving a 25 year prison sentence for Aggravated Assault for which he was found guilty and sentenced on February 16, 2011. On July 15, 2006, Berlanga and five other inmates assaulted Ruben Villanueva, an inmate incarcerated at the Carrizalez-Rucker Detention Center. Berlanga and the other co-defendants, who assaulted Villanueva, were said to be all members of the Valluco Prison Syndicate Gang.

For more information, contact the Cameron County and District Attorney's Office at (956) 544-0849.

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