

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CVL Street Gang Associates Plead Guilty, Sentenced to Serve Time for Gang Tagging in Canton
State vs. Gallegos, Gallegos, and Rocha

November 18, 2019 – District Attorney Shannon Wallace announces that three Bartow County men have been sentenced for a gang tagging incident that occurred in Canton last year.

Juan Estaban Gallegos, 25, pled guilty and was sentenced November 15, while Coty Lance Gallegos, 32, and Luis Albert Rocha, 25, pled guilty and were sentenced October 17.

The guilty pleas stem from a 2018 gang tagging incident on Railroad Street in Canton. Surveillance cameras caught the three men arriving in a Lincoln Town Car around 1 a.m. on October 21, 2018, then spray painting gang-related graffiti on the walls of a building.

The three defendants pled guilty to violation of the Street Gang Terrorism and Prevention Act, specifically that they are associated with Cartersville Locotes (aka CVL), a criminal street gang, and that they engaged in painting, tagging, and creating graffiti of CVL. The defendants committed this crime in retaliation for the beating of Juan Gallegos.

Senior Judge Frank C. Mills III sentenced Juan Gallegos to 7 years of probation with 90-120 days to serve at a probation detention center. The sentence stipulates that he is not permitted north of the Fall Line during his period of probation.

Chief Judge Ellen McElyea sentenced Coty Gallegos to 7 years of probation with 1 year to serve in the state prison and Albert Rocha to 7 years of probation with 6 months to serve in the Cherokee County Adult Detention Center, suspended upon 90 days to serve in the State Probation Detention Center. Both Coty Gallegos and Albert Rocha are banished from Cherokee County during their sentence.

In addition, all three defendants are prohibited from having contact with the other codefendants or with any member of a criminal street gang.

At the hearing before Chief Judge Ellen McElyea, the State called two witnesses, Investigator George Spamer with the Cherokee Sheriff's Office and FBI Agent Bryant Hill, to testify about the motivation behind gang crimes. According to FBI Agent Hill, respect is critical in gang culture and small acts of aggression often lead to greater violence.

“By tagging this building, these gang members were sending a message to other gangs. Their actions could have initiated a turf war, which could have led to gang violence on our streets,” said Assistant District Attorney Kelly Chavis, who prosecuted the case on behalf of the State. “Do not come to Cherokee County and commit gang crimes. We will hold you accountable and prosecute you to the fullest extent of the law.”

The Cherokee County District Attorney’s Office is committed to prosecuting gang crimes and working collaboratively with local and federal law enforcement agencies to investigate and detect gang activity. Canton, Cartersville, and Kingston Police Departments were all involved in the apprehension of these defendants.

“By investigating, detecting, and prosecuting gang activity in its infancy, our goal is to eradicate all gang violence within our county,” said Cherokee County District Attorney Shannon Wallace. “Three men spray painting a building represents much more than an act of vandalism. This criminal act was an aggressive message directed to other gang members. Our prosecution of this case, likewise, sends a message – we will not accept any gang activity in our county.”

In order to ensure Cherokee County is equipped to effectively prosecute criminal acts committed by gang members, the District Attorney’s Office recently hosted training on fundamentals and best practices of gang prosecution for prosecutors, investigators, and local law enforcement. This training was presented by John Melvin, Chief of Staff for the GBI, and Mike Carlson, GBI Legal Services.

“Cherokee County is one of the leaders in this State in attacking the gang crisis utilizing known, proven, results-oriented prosecution. The prosecution in this case is consistent with Governor Kemp’s directive to stop and dismantle gangs,” said GBI Chief of Staff Melvin. “Job well done because District Attorney Wallace and her office just made Cherokee county a safer place to live and work.”

The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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