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D.A. BROWN: TWO TEENAGERS CHARGED IN FLUSHING MEADOW PARK ATTACKS
Attacks Results in Death of One Victim and Near Fatal Killing of Another

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that two Queens teenagers have been charged in connection with a series of robberies in Flushing Meadow Park over the past two months resulting in the death of one victim and the near fatal killing of another.

District Attorney Brown. "The defendants are charged with committing a string of brutal muggings in and around Flushing Meadow Park over the course of the last two months that have left one man dead and another severely injured and in a coma. The 1,255 acre Flushing Meadow Park is the third largest public park in New York and the largest in Queens. Residents of our community should not have to fear being brutally attacked or robbed by thugs whenever they enter one of our parks. Thanks to great police work, the alleged attackers are now in custody. Those who would commit such heinous crimes are put on notice that my office will vigorously prosecute cases involving attacks on parkgoers to the fullest extent of the law."

The District Attorney identified the defendants as Yovanni Rivera, 17, of 109-55 54th Avenue in Elmhurst, Queens, and Marcos Polanco, 17, of 108-02 43rd Avenue in Corona, Queens, with no known employment. The defendants have been variously charged with regard to four separate attacks with second-degree attempted murder, first-degree assault and first- and second-degree robbery. Rivera is additionally charged with regard to an additional attack to second-degree murder, fourth-degree criminal possession of a weapon, fourth-degree arson and evidence tampering. If convicted, Rivera faces up to 25 years to life in prison on the murder charge, and additionally he and Polanco each face up to 25 years in prison on the attempted murder charge and each of the robberies.

District Attorney Brown said that, in the most serious attack, Rivera is charged with acting alone in the murder of Carlos Flores, 40, of Ridgewood, Queens, whose body was found half-submerged in a pond at Flushing Meadow Park (near the Long Island Expressway and College Point Boulevard) on the morning of December 5, 2006. According to the charges, Rivera is alleged to have approached Mr. Flores as he was walking through the park on the evening of December 4, 2006, and robbed him of \$20 in cash, his identification and MetroCard before hitting him numerous times with a machete, causing him to sustain deep slashes to his face and legs and gashes to the back of his head, fatally wounding him.

According to District Attorney Brown, the two defendants are charged with acting in concert in the following incidents:

– the December 25, 2006, robbery and attempted murder of 33-year-old Ja Woo Park, who was found unconscious near the Unisphere. The two defendants allegedly approached Mr. Park while he was jogging through the park at approximately 6:45 p.m. and punched, kicked and stomped him, causing him to sustain severe head trauma, before robbing him of cash and the keys to his 2007 Honda van. Mr. Park, who was only recently identified, is in a coma and being treated at a local Queens hospital. Rivera is additionally charged with taking Mr. Park's van – as well as credit cards and identification documents which were in the vehicle – and later setting fire to the vehicle.

– the December 9, 2006, robbery of a 40-year-old Asian male at the corner of 111th Street and 49th Avenue. The defendants are alleged to have approached victim as he was walking through the park smoking a cigarette at approximately 7:15 p.m. and asked him for a cigarette. One of the defendants allegedly then hit him in the head and knocked him to the ground before stealing his money, jewelry, cell phone and a Rolex watch, which they allegedly sold. The victim suffered a laceration above his right eye, as well as bruising and swelling.

– the December 2, 2006, robbery of a 62-year-old Hispanic male at the northeast corner of 46th Avenue and 111th Street. It is alleged that the defendants, armed with a machete, approached the victim as

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he was riding his bicycle through the park at approximately 6:30 p.m. and hit him in the arm with the machete before pushing him off his bike and onto the ground and robbing him of his cell phone, money and his medication pill case.

– the December 2, 2006, robbery of an 18-year-old male at the southwest corner of 46th Avenue and 111th Street. As in the previous incident, it is alleged that the defendants, armed with a machete, approached the victim at roughly the same time and scraped the machete on the ground before robbing him of his cell phone – which they allegedly sold – and a sum of money and fleeing

District Attorney Brown said that the defendants were arrested by detectives of the New York City Police Department's 110th Precinct Detective Squad and are being held pending arraignment in Queens Criminal Court in Kew Gardens.

The District Attorney noted that the investigation is continuing.

The investigation was conducted by Detectives Joseph DeFrancis and Bruce Koch of the New York City Police Department's 110th Precinct Detective Squad under the supervision of Lieutenant Edward Rutter, Commanding Officer.

Assistant District Attorney Neal J. Morse of the District Attorney's Homicide Investigations Bureau is prosecuting the murder and attempted murder cases under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Peter T. Reese, Bureau Chief, Peter J. McCormack III, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Charles A. Testagrossa and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Daniel A. Saunders.

Assistant District Attorney Shlomit Metz of the District Attorney's Career Criminal Major Crimes Bureau is prosecuting the robbery cases under the supervision of James W. Evangelou, Bureau Chief, and Robert J. Hanophy, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Senior Executive Assistant District Attorney for Trials James C. Quinn and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorneys for Trials John H. Larsen and Robert J. Masters.

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at www.queensda.org.