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D.A. BROWN: QUEENS MAN CONVICTED OF 1999 RAPE ON YOUNG WOMAN
Prosecution Result of DNA Cold Hit; Faces Up to 25 Years in Prison

_____ Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a Far Rockaway, Queens, man has been convicted of the 1999 sexual assault of a 23-year-old woman in Jamaica, Queens, based on DNA evidence.

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendant would have probably escaped punishment for his crime had he not been required to provide a DNA sample in the course of an unrelated prosecution in 2003. In re-testing evidence from sexual assault cold cases using newly available advanced scientific techniques in June 2005, the City's DNA laboratory at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner positively linked semen found in the rape evidence kit of a 23-year-old victim to the defendant's DNA profile. The case is yet another example of the crucial importance of DNA evidence which is irrefutable proof of guilt or innocence. This young woman is to be commended for coming forward and confronting her attacker at trial. She testified with dignity and grace during her four hours on the witness stand. The defendant changed her life forever eight years ago, and hopefully this conviction provides her with some small measure of help in overcoming the trauma she experienced during his assault on her."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Santiago Lugo, 45, of 333 Beach 32nd Street in Far Rockaway, Queens. The defendant, a former salesman, was found guilty yesterday by a jury of first-degree rape and four counts of first-degree sex abuse. Queens Supreme Court Justice John B. Latella Jr., who presided at the one-week trial, set sentencing for June 18, 2007. The defendant, who has been held in jail on \$350,000 bail since his arrest in July 2005, faces up to 25 years in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that according to trial testimony, the defendant attacked the victim, then 23 years old, by grabbing her from behind as she walked home from work at approximately 11:50 p.m. on March 3, 1999, in Jamaica, Queens. He pressed a hard object to her back and ordered her to not look at his face and to obey him if she did not want to be hurt. Thereafter, he led her to a secluded area where he sexually abused and raped her before fleeing on foot. The victim was treated at a local hospital which collected a rape evidence kit. The police later submitted that kit for DNA testing and it ultimately linked the defendant to the crime.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Richard Santangelo of the New York City Police Department's Queens Special Victims Squad, under the supervision of Lieutenant Arthur Hall and Sergeant Carmen Martinez.

Assistant District Attorney Eric C. Rosenbaum, Chief of the District Attorney's DNA Prosecutions Unit, assisted in the investigation and prosecuted the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Marjory D. Fisher, Bureau Chief of District Attorney Brown's Special Victims Bureau, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Charles A. Testagrossa.

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