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Press Release

OLYMPIC HOPEFUL FOUND NOT GUILTY IN BRUTAL BEATING DEATH

Chicago—After over a year in juvenile custody, 17 year old Semajay Thomas, a Junior World Championship boxer was found not guilty of 1st Degree Murder after a jury deliberated for only 45 minutes at the Criminal Courts Building at 26th & California. Thomas was charged along with two others in the brutal street beating of 50 year old Reynaldoo Ortiz last July 13, 2009 on Chicago's near west side West Town neighborhood. It was alleged that Thomas along with 2 members of the Satin's Disciples street gang beat the victim with their fists and then stomped and kicked the victim to death.

Semajay Thomas, who is not affiliated with any street gang, was ranked 5th in World in his weight class in 2009 and represented the United States in Armenia at the Junior World Championships in 2009. Semajay is expected to compete in the US Olympic Trials in 2011.

"Semajay is a great kid with a great future, said his attorney, Michael Oppenheimer of Erickson & Oppenheimer. "The street gang committed this brutal murder, then closed ranks and blamed the one beacon of hope in the blighted neighborhood," said Oppenheimer.

In dramatic testimony, Semajay testified that he was in fear for the safety of his mother and his sisters when he told a packed courtroom who actually committed the murder.

Co-defendant William (Kill Bill) Castillo was found guilty of 1st Degree Murder in the double jury trial after his jury deliberated for 3 hours.

"Semajay is a kid with a dream. A dream of rising out of the poverty and despair that is his neighborhood and reality and making a better life for his mother and sisters," said Oppenheimer. "A violent street gang tried to kill that dream, yet as of today, his dream lives on."