



Maricopa County Attorney

ANDREW P. THOMAS

301 W. JEFFERSON, SUITE 800
PHOENIX, AZ 85003
www.maricopacountyattorney.org

PH. (602) 506-3411
TDD (602) 506-4352
FAX (602) 506-8102

News Release

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For more information contact:

Mike Anthony Scerbo, Public Information Officer
(602) 506-3170 (office) or (602) 489-6913 (cell)

Hitchhiker Pleads Guilty to First Degree Murder Charge

County Attorney Andrew Thomas announced today Laveen resident Samantha Angela Somegustava, 25 (DOB 4/23/83), has pled guilty to a first degree murder charge that resulted from the shooting death of a man in 2005. Somegustava and co-defendant Richard Enos, 21 (DOB 8/15/87), of Phoenix, were indicted on March 24, 2005 for the murder of Valentin Cruz-Gabriel. Enos was found guilty of first degree murder after a trial and sentenced to life in prison on October 12, 2007. Somegustava pled guilty to First Degree Murder, a class one felony, on March 23, 2009. When she is sentenced on May 1, 2009, Somegustava will face a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

According to a Phoenix probable cause statement and courtroom testimony, Somegustava was hitchhiking on March 3, 2005 when Cruz-Gabriel picked her up in west Phoenix. She had him drive her first to a home so she could use the bathroom. She convinced him to wait. It turned out to be the home of Enos. She owed Enos money and told him that his "money is downstairs." Somegustava convinced the victim to also give Enos a ride. When Enos got into the victim's car, he had a sawed-off shot gun concealed in his clothing. He then pulled the gun and got in the driver's seat. Somegustava was given the shotgun to hold on the victim as Enos drove the car to a vacant field where they killed and robbed Cruz-Gabriel.

Somegustava was arrested on March 14, 2005 at her home. She had possession of Cruz-Gabriel's car. He had been reported missing and it was discovered that the defendant had used his credit card several times following the murder. An anonymous tip enabled Gila River Police to make the arrest. Somegustava admitted to police that she pulled the trigger.

"The victim in this case thought he was doing some people a favor," said Thomas. "They took advantage of his goodness and now they are facing the reality of life in prison for their horrific crime."

Deputy County Attorney Susie Charbel is prosecuting the case.

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