



# Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

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## PRESS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

Date: April 23, 2019  
Re: Ezequiel Lee Bergara III  
Convicted killer denied parole

### **For More Information Contact:**

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**Modesto, California** - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Ezequiel Lee Bergara III, age 45, of Modesto, was denied parole during an April 19, 2019 hearing held at Valley State Prison in Chowchilla, California. Deputy District Attorney Sameer Shukla appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People to argue against Bergara's release.

On May 31, 1996, Bergara killed a 21-year-old woman and left her body near Tully and Rumble roads near Davis High School in Modesto. The victim's clothing was in disarray, there was dried blood around her mouth, bruising on her neck and indications of possible sexual activity. An autopsy determined the cause of death to be manual strangulation. An investigation by Modesto Police detectives led to Bergara's arrest and prosecution for the crime.

On February 16, 1999, Bergara entered a guilty plea to second degree murder. He also admitted having previously been convicted the year before of attempted residential burglary, a "strike" under California's "Three Strikes" law, which was used to double his punishment. Judge Glenn Ritchey ordered Bergara to serve 30-years to life in state prison.

While in prison custody, Bergara, who has admitted to being aligned with the Norteno criminal street gang, has committed several rules violations, including being in a gang-related fight with other inmates, refusing to stand for evening count, using alcohol and smoking marijuana. In a comprehensive risk assessment, a prison psychologist gave the opinion that Bergara posed a moderate risk of violence to the community if released on parole. Bergara himself told the commissioners during his hearing that he still has triggers for violence and that it was the quickest way for him to get results.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the Board denied Bergara's release for another five years. This was his first parole hearing.

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