

2 guilty of murder at '05 festival

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DETROIT -- For the first time since their son Joseph was stabbed to death at a church function in June 2005 in southwest Detroit, John and Ana Wagner of Ann Arbor can begin the slow process of healing.

After a six-day trial, a Wayne County jury deliberated less than two hours Tuesday before finding **Latin Count** gang members Mario Briones, 20, and Luis Hernandez Diaz, 16, guilty of first-degree murder.

Southwest Detroit can also breathe easier. Diaz and his brother Daniel Hernandez Diaz, 20, were convicted earlier this month of killing Anaastacio Rodriguez, 20, because he belonged to the rival Suernos gang. Luis Hernandez Diaz is also suspected of killing a third man in a carjacking, said Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Christine Kowal, who prosecuted the Wagner and Rodriguez cases.

Joseph Wagner, 21, was stabbed June 25, 2005, at a crowded festival in the parking lot of Holy Redeemer Catholic Church. Police arrested Briones and Diaz in February.

John Wagner said his family is greatly relieved after a difficult year. "It was not just our family that was affected, but this horrible crime these men committed impacted their own families and their community," he said.

Kowal said although there is no clear motive for Wagner's murder, testimony indicated he might have been mistaken for a Suernos member because he was wearing his blue Detroit Tigers cap tipped to the right in the Suernos gang style, and he was wearing a blue shirt, the rival gang's colors.

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