



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

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**PRESS RELEASE**

5/26/17

**TULARE MAN SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON FOR ATTEMPTED  
RAPE, SEXUAL ASSAULT**

Today in Department 10 of the Tulare County Superior Court, Visalia Division, Judge Kathryn Montejano sentenced Ernest Lee Richardson, age 35, of Tulare, to 50 years to life in prison for attempted rape and sexual assault.

On May 8, 2017, a Tulare County jury convicted Richardson of burglary with the intent to commit rape, attempted rape, attempted forcible oral copulation, first-degree residential burglary person present, and assault with a deadly weapon, each with the special allegations of being armed with a deadly weapon during a sex offense, use of a deadly weapon during a sex offense, and great bodily injury.

The court also found true that Richardson possessed a prior serious felony and prison term. In 2012, Richardson began beating his girlfriend in a local convenience store and broke the jaw of a good Samaritan who tried to help. He was convicted of corporal injury on a spouse or cohabitant and battery with serious bodily injury, which is a strike under California's "Three Strikes" law.

In the early morning hours of August 6, 2015, Richardson broke into the Visalia apartment of an adult female victim and savagely attacked her. Richardson sexually assaulted her and tried to rape her while beating her face, head, arms, and shoulders with a tire repair tool. The victim fought back, and was ultimately able to push past Richardson and run out of her apartment to her neighbor's to call 911. The victim lived in an apartment for persons with special needs, and had met Richardson earlier that evening through some friends. Richardson was arrested later that day in Tulare on a parole violation and was identified as the assailant. He was further identified by DNA.

The case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Noell Niayesh of the Tulare County District Attorney's Office and investigated by the Visalia Police Department.

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