

Ex-SLT couple guilty of federal hate crime

By Kathryn Reed

It took about one hour Thursday for a jury to find Joseph and Georgia Silva guilty of a federal hate crime that took place in South Lake Tahoe in July 2007.

The Silvas split their time between the South Shore and Fairfield when the incident occurred at El Dorado Beach. The couple, both in their 50s, were found guilty of the racially motivated assault on Vishal Wadhwa of San Francisco. They were found not guilty of the same charge on his then-fiance Ayesha Wadhwa.

The extent of her injuries did not meet the criteria of the charge, the jury found.

The victims are Indian American. They were visiting Lake Tahoe when the crime occurred.

“When one of the victims attempted to call the police, Georgia Silva assaulted the victim, knocking him to the ground. Joseph Silva then struck the victim and kicked the victim in the head. As a result of this attack, the victim suffered fractures to his facial bones and other bodily injury and was taken by ambulance to a local hospital,” a press release says.

U.S. District Court Judge John Mendez heard the four-day trial in Sacramento where a slew of witnesses took the stand. One of the witnesses was Gary Moore, director of Parks and Recreation for South Lake Tahoe. He was there to explain the beach is public and added that he was a lifeguard there 30 years ago.

Prosecutors found a number of neighbors in Tahoe and Fairfield who had run-ins with the Silvas. One from Fairfield was

allowed to testify about the fight involving Joseph Silva wielding a baseball bat and uttering racial slurs at the Hispanic woman and her biracial daughter.

Sentencing will be June 1. They face multiple years in jail and fines.