

Ramirez Must Die, 'Stalker' Judge Decides

■ **Crime:** 'I will be avenged,' slayer declares at sentencing. Victims tell court of continuing psychological pain.

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Convicted "Night Stalker" Richard Ramirez was sentenced to death Tuesday but not before the husky-voiced killer delivered a chilling parting monologue in which he warned, "I will be avenged."

"You don't understand me. You are not expected to. You are not capable of it. I am beyond your experience," the 29-year-old devil-worshipping drifter from Texas told a courtroom crammed with spectators.

"I am beyond good and evil. I will be avenged. Lucifer dwells in us all. That's it."

Among those present were Ramirez's two brothers and a sister-in-law, two victims who survived his attack, several relatives of those he murdered, and four of the jurors who last month found him guilty of 13 murders and 30 other felonies and recommended that he die in the gas



JOSE GALVEZ / Los Angeles Times

Richard Ramirez turns toward courtroom spectators at his sentencing. The judge's decision: death in gas chamber.

chamber.

The El Paso native beat, strangled, raped, sodomized, shot and slashed the throats of his victims in a savage rampage of Satanic-tinged slayings that haunted Southern California in the summer of 1985. He was captured in August of that year by angry East Los Angeles residents.

"Evidence suggests that while monetary gain initially motivated defendant, at some point such rewards become secondary to his perverted gratification," a probation report read.

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SENTENCE

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In imposing sentence, Superior Court Judge Michael Tynan said, "There are no mitigating factors" in any of Ramirez's actions, which displayed "cruelty, callousness and viciousness beyond any human understanding." He cited Ramirez's "obscene" gouging out of the eyes of one victim, and his leaving a pentagram, a Satanic symbol, at another crime scene.

"It is the judgment and sentence of this court that Richard Ramirez shall suffer the death penalty. This penalty is to be inflicted within the walls of the state prison at San Quentin, Calif., in the manner prescribed by law at a time to be fixed by this court in the warrant[s] for execution," Tynan said.

Under state law, the death sentence will be automatically appealed to the state Supreme Court. No one has been executed in California for nearly a quarter century.

Defense attorney Ray Clark said a likely ground for appeal is possible jury prejudice, caused by the murder of one panel member.

"It's clear at this stage that he shows no remorse," said Deputy Dist. Atty. Alan Yochelson, co-prosecutor, after Ramirez said his piece, chatted with his attorney while the sentences were read, and smirked as he was led away.

Wearing jailhouse blues and his signature dark sunglasses, Ramirez told the court:

"I don't know even why I'm wasting my breath, but what the hell. For what is said of my life, there have been lies in the past and there will be lies in the future. I don't believe in the hypocritical, moralistic dogma of this so-called civilized society.

"I need not look beyond this room to see all the liars, the haters,

the killers, the crooks, the paranoid cowards. Truly the trematodes [a parasitic worm] of the earth. . . .

"You maggots make me sick. Hypocrites one and all. We are all expendable for a cause. No one knows that better than those who kill for policy, clandestinely or openly as to the governments of the world which kill in the name of God and country. . . .

"I don't need to hear all of society's rationalizations. I've heard them all before. . . ."

Saying he has been misunderstood, Ramirez then lapsed into incoherence, almost chanting: "Legions of the night, night breed. Repeat not the errors of the night prowler and show no mercy."

Ramirez's family declined to comment. But five victims, or their relatives, addressed the court after the sentences were read.

Virginia Petersen, who was attacked with her husband in their home, said she is in constant pain—physical and psychological.

"Nights are the worst," she said, "I scream in terror. I can still hear [my young daughter's] screams of terror. 'Mommy, please don't die,' as she lay bleeding.

"You have the profound sympathy of this court," Tynan said softly.

Her husband, Christopher, who still has a bullet in his head, told Tynan, "It is time for him to become accountable for his actions," adding that the gas chamber may give the serial killer "a greater understanding of the value of human life."

Murder victim Joyce Nelson's sons, Dale and Don, and a granddaughter, Colleen, also spoke of the family's pain.

Dale Nelson said he hopes the death penalty will be carried out quickly, and suggested that if there is a line [for the gas chamber], "this guy ought to be in the front."

"I just can't imagine how anyone

can do this to people. For every person he has killed he has caused so many others a lifetime of pain. . . ." said Colleen Nelson, fighting back tears. "My grandmother didn't deserve to die."

Several people said they had come to pray for the killer.

"He's been hypnotized by the devil's system," said one. "He needs the word of God."

Ramirez exited with the same nonchalance he has displayed throughout the 16-month trial, frequently flipping back his long hair and checking his reflection in the plexiglass-covered hallway, smiling at the image he saw.

"Where are the women?" he

asked as he clanked his way to a sheriff's van.

Nearby, a busload of female prisoners shouted "Killer!" when they saw Ramirez. The taunts brought more smiles from Ramirez and a quick, two-fingered hand gesture said to be a "devil symbol."

Spectators gathered along Spring Street to watch Ramirez leave, including some apparent fans. One woman in a skin-tight black spandex jumpsuit smiled and waved, while another black-clad woman commented that the trial "would have gone the right way" without the media.

"It has been lies," she said, "all lies."