

RIVERHEAD, DOUBLE MURDERER SENTENCED TO LIFE

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Quotes: I know God says, 'Don't wish hurt to anybody else.' But I just want to feel some relief. There is no way this man should stay on this earth. He should be suffering." - Jose Villegas, left, whose mother and sister were killed in 2004 by Christopher Reynart, right, who was sentenced to life in prison yesterday for the murders

Face to face with the man who killed his sister and mother and orphaned his two nephews, Jose Villegas was torn about what to say about Christopher Reynart yesterday.

"I know God says, 'Don't wish hurt to anybody else.' But I just want to feel some relief," Villegas said, crying in the Riverhead courtroom where Reynart was sentenced yesterday for first-degree murder. "There is no way this man should stay on this earth. He should be suffering."

Minutes later, a Suffolk County Court judge sentenced Reynart, 36, to life in prison without parole for the stabbing deaths of his estranged wife, Karina Reyna, 30, and her mother, Azucena Villegas, 63, in their Bay Shore home on Easter 2004. In court, Jose Villegas and his sister Shirley Rivera spoke through tears about the devastation caused to their family, while Reynart's gaze was fixed on the floor. Rivera called Reyna her "little sister" and "best friend," who had much more life to live.

"My mother's loss to me is even greater," Rivera said. "She held the family together and without her our family has fallen apart at the seams." Rivera and her husband are now raising Reynart and Reyna's two young sons, Christopher and Kevin.

"Seeing their faces just breaks my heart," she said.

On April 11, 2004, Reynart, who had been kept away from Reyna for months by an order of protection resulting from his beating her with a computer cord, kicked down the door of his former home and repeatedly stabbed the two women, as his two young sons listened.

Reynart attorney Michael Brown said during the trial that his client suffered an extreme emotional disturbance during the killings, brought on by fears that Reyna's new boyfriend was endangering their children.

Reynart, who rambled during his testimony, did the same during a brief statement yesterday in which he recollected attending Lamaze classes and said he was a “God-fearing Christian.”

“I do repent and I do love my children,” Reynart said. “I’m sorry. I never wanted it this way.”

In asking for lenience from Judge Barbara Kahn, Brown said that, while there was no excuse for Reynart’s actions, she should take into account his difficult upbringing, which included an alcoholic and abusive father. “It appears that Christopher Reynart was doomed from the beginning,” he said.

But Assistant District Attorney Nancy Clifford said that life in prison without parole “is designed for a defendant just like this” - a double murderer and longtime spousal abuser with no remorse. “Your honor, if we are to believe that evil exists in this world, it is here, embodied in Christopher Reynart,” Clifford said.

“I’m just glad everything is over,” Jose Villegas said, after facing his brother-in-law for a final time in court. “He’s not human.”