



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

PRESS RELEASE

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DEATH SENTENCE HANDED DOWN IN 2009 MURDER

Today in Tulare County Superior Court, Visalia Division, Porterville man Adrian Ortiz, age 31, was sentenced to death for the 2009 killing of a 23-year-old husband and father in his own home.

Around 10:30 pm on April 21, 2009, in the city of Porterville, Ortiz and his girlfriend were arguing while driving in a car. Enraged, Ortiz drew a handgun and fired it into the dashboard causing the cabin to fill with smoke. Ortiz's girlfriend, who was driving, pulled over in front of a house occupied by one of her friends, her friend's husband, and their two-week old baby.

Ortiz's girlfriend ran from the car crying to the house to talk to her friend about the abusive relationship. The friend's husband, the victim in the case, was sitting on the couch with the baby. As Ortiz approached the doorway to continue the argument, the victim told him to stay outside. Ortiz and his girlfriend then left together. When the two reached the car, Ortiz began to punch her, who again fled to the protection of the house. The victim announced he was calling the cops, and the door to the house was locked.

Ortiz grabbed the gun from the car and threatened to kill the victim if he called law enforcement. Ortiz then kicked down the door and continued the threats while pointing the gun at the victim, who pleaded with Ortiz not to kill him. Pointing the gun at his head, Ortiz took the victim to the kitchen, sat him at a table, and shot him once in the neck.

The incident was the first time Ortiz and the victim had ever met. The victim died shortly later at the hospital. At the time of the crime, Ortiz was three-weeks shy of turning 20-years-old.

Ortiz fled the residence and later to Mexico where the US Marshall Fugitive Task Force, with assistance from Mexican authorities, captured him in August 2012. A preliminary hearing was

held in 2013, and the court found that Ortiz did not possess any mental disabilities at a hearing in 2017.

While in custody, Ortiz was convicted in 2013 for assault on a jail deputy with the special allegation that the crime was gang related. Evidence at trial showed that in 2015 Ortiz attempted to smuggle out a letter threatening to kill the victim's wife if she testified against him.

The criminal trial began on October 13, 2020, and concluded with a verdict on October 27. Ortiz was found guilty of first-degree murder with the special circumstance of burglary and the special allegation of willful discharge of a firearm, burglary, witness intimidation, negligent discharge of a firearm, being a felon in possession of a firearm, and misdemeanor domestic violence.

The penalty phase of the trial began on November 2, 2020. A jury of six men and six women voted for a death verdict on November 5.

At the sentencing, a District Attorney Victim Advocate read two victim impact statements written by the victim's family into the record.

Ortiz's priors include felony convictions for carrying a concealed dirk or dagger (2008) and evading (2008), as well as numerous misdemeanor convictions since 2007.

"As I said before, this was a vicious act of violence. The patience of the victim's family is commendable and we applaud the jury and the court for recognizing their loss and deciding the proper punishment," said District Attorney Tim Ward.

Ortiz will join 14 other men sentenced in Tulare County who are currently on death row.

The case was prosecuted by former Supervising Deputy District Attorney Mikki Verissimo with assistance from TCDA prosecution assistant Patty Wagner, and was investigated by the Porterville Police Department.

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