

THE COURT: Are there any family members of the victim, or the victim, that wish to address the court? All right. Ericka, would you come forward, please?

ERICKA RODRIGUEZ: Your Honor.

THE COURT: Good morning.

ERICKA RODRIGUEZ: I'm here hoping that to lay this matter to rest once and for all. It's been mentioned by Manuel's supporters that -- sorry (witness crying) -- maybe he should be punished for a crime that he committed so long ago, because he was a different --he's a different man now. But I could tell you 8 this much, what Manuel did to me, it doesn't matter how much time elapsed since the day he raped me. It doesn't change the fact he's a rapist. It doesn't change the fact that I 11 have to live with it every day of my life. I have to live with the fact that he raped me. And it's going to affect me the rest of my life.

You know before the molestations and the rape 15 started he was a great friend of the family. He was a Jehovah's witness Elder, Ministerial Servant, and as one I looked up to him. He was a supreme authority in my life. We're taught to double honor them, to love and respect them, and at that age I didn't know any better than to love him with all my heart. Sorry. It's just something I will never 21 forget, something I have to live with forever. Manuel took that precious relationship that we had 23 and he twisted it around into this maze of confusion. He stripped away everything, my complete core belief and everything. He took my innocence away as a child, and did something that's going to affect me the rest of my life. It started when I was four, and I'll be 23 within a couple of 3 weeks. That's 18 years that he has sealed me in my own prison. I know you can't include everything since I was a little kid, but if you include what happened in 1990 till now that's 11 years. And it's something that's going to go on forever. There's nothing I can say to you other than it's gonna --I'm going to be in my own prison forever. There's nothing that could take it away. I just ask you to make the punishment fit the crime. Thank you, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Thank you. Anyone else? Yes, sir. Would you state your name for the record, please?

MR. GARZA: My name is Reuben Garza. I'm Ericka's father. And I just want to say, Your Honor, that since the day we found out what Manuel Beliz had done to our daughter it's changed our lives, mine and my wife. My wife's been pretty sick about it. She couldn't be here today to talk. But I just want to say that what he did to our daughter was something despicable, and it affected us so much that we can't even look at our daughter's childhood like it should be for growing up. We look at pictures of her, and we can't stand it. We can't stand to see pictures of her when she was four on, because we start crying or it gets us sick. So that's out of the question. We don't look at pictures of her no more. I know that she was the main one affected here, but I just want you to know as parents we're deeply affected, and that just to know he was doing this to our daughter since she was four years old gets us very sick, Your Honor. So all I can say is for you to give him the maximum allowed by law, and I beg you to do that. Thank you.

THE COURT: Anyone else? Again, would you state your name for the record, please?

MS. GALVEZ: Sherry Galvez. I'm a long-time friend of Ericka's. I've known her since she was 15 years old. Ericka has lived with me and my husband periodically and now permanently since she was 16 years old. I have witnessed on a daily basis the destruction that the acts perpetrated upon her by Manuel Beliz, the effect that it has had on her, unending. This ranges from a pervasive sorrow, the loss of her childhood innocence, the nightmares that never quite go away, Ericka suffers on a daily basis. Manuel Beliz was convicted twice of First Degree Child Rape and First Degree Child Molestation in spite of his 23 transparent denials, because the truth and the purity of Ericka's testimony cut clear through all of the courtroom smoke screens. It cut straight through to the minds and the hearts of the jury, and all decent observers. At this time, as we all know, our great nation is facing horrendous acts of terrorism. America will not stand for that. America stands ready to met out judgments and exact justice against these foreign foes. At this time of all times why would we in any way tolerate any form of evil, any form of private terrorism, which is exactly what has happened here. Unfortunately it happens multiple times over, but in this case private terrorism against a child who had no choice but to be locked into a scenario involving this cult of Jehovah's Witnesses, being manipulated, being stripped of everything from her innocence, as Ericka herself mentioned her core belief system ripped away from her. And, yes, affecting her to this date and for the rest of her life.

There's no doubt about that. To hand down less than the maximum sentence allowable in this case, to allow this sexual predator to get away with less than the maximum punishment allowable for him would be an affront to every decent American. It can't be tolerated. Every decent American here who exercises complete faith in our judicial system, we beseech the Court to sentence this guilty, unrepentant child rapist in a manner that does reflect the heinous nature

of his crimes against this child. These are crimes of sexual perversion that were committed against a four-year-old baby for the duration of seven years, ending only because physical access to this child became geographically impossible for this predator. So I implore you, Your Honor, this day in the sight of God and all decent onlookers let it be made known that justice was served here today. Thank you.

THE COURT: Thank you. Anyone else? Would you identify yourself for the record, please?

MR. BOWEN: Yes, sir. My name is Bill Bowen, and I came to know Ericka Rodriguez in February of this year. And how I came to know her was I'm an advocate for child molestation victims, and she contacted me over the telephone. She told me her story, and I put her story, along with several hundred other stories, and then as her case began to develop we had several more conversations over the telephone. And the reason I bring this up to you is because I feel there's three basic reasons that I believe that Mr. Beliz continues to be a threat to children.

And that's --the first thing is in my time in knowing Ericka she's told her story to me, you could say, well over a dozen times. And if a person is not truthful, generally their story changes. And if they tell you one story and it changes a little bit, then you can say you question how truthful those words are. And I actually have victims that their stories do change, so I understand that. I don't condemn them for that, but I feel that that's a factor in knowing whether a person is telling you the truth. In my listening to Ericka, her story has always been consistent. She's always said the same thing. I believe her. I believe she's telling the truth. I was here in the month of August of this year, and I listened to Mr. Beliz's testimony on the stand. And I think it was evident to the jury that his story changed even as he sat here and testified. His comments, as I recall, was he had only touched her above

the waist one time. And he feigned poor memory loss. Now, those comments created a flashback for me, because I have served as an Elder in the church for close to 20 years, and I've sat in cases of child molestation victims sitting in on judicial hearings of those. And I found that Mr. Beliz's words mirrored the very same comments that were made to me as late as just the fall of last year where another child molester claimed the same things. He changed his story. He couldn't remember, and then he only confessed to a one-time event of a multiple molested child. So it led me to have pause to believe that Mr. Beliz was truly repentant, that he truly wanted to tell the truth and take whatever sanction the State would have to offer and let Ericka know that he wanted to be a better man. In my opinion he still continues to be a person that would be a danger to children. I was able to review the transcript of the sentencing hearing last time when Mr. Beliz was sentenced. In 1998 John White testified that a judicial committee of the church had disfellowshipped Mr. Beliz in the fall of 1996. Now, according to that testimony it's interesting to me because if a person --the pure sanction of disfellowshipping is for a person that's nonrepentant. That is, the judicial committee has to believe that the man or woman will repeat the act. There's still a threat. If there's any way we can find repentance, then we try to save that individual. We don't turn them out of the congregation. Well, for Mr. Beliz to be disfellowshipped in October 96 would indicate he was still a threat at that time. As I recall, Mr. White testified that in so many words that the church justice would be sufficient as he was reinstated, according to my understanding, in around June of 1997. I have knowledge of these matters. And as I said, if he was repentant he would never have been disfellowshipped. The fact that he was disfellowshipped raises questions about his danger to children. The third issue I'd like to mention is in August of this year shortly after the trial was convened, there was a person mentioned in the transcript of the '98 sentencing hearing. Her name was Mimi Martinez. Mimi contacted me over the telephone. She was quite upset that she didn't know about the hearing that was held here in Ritzville. I guess because she lives in Yakima she didn't know that. But she "told me --now, this is what she told me, but her words to me were that Mr. Beliz had molested her and her sister in the 1980s. Now, while I realize, and I understand that that's past the statute of limitations, perhaps wouldn't have any factor, it still shows that there's other people that have been evidently feel that they've been affected by this man in their life. And my personal opinion, I feel that there's other victims that may have been involved. So if I bring it all together I would say that because of these three matters, Mr. Beliz's evasiveness, his being disfellowshipped in 1996 by the judicial committee, and my personal conversation with Mrs. Martinez, I feel Mr. Beliz continues to be a threat to society and should have whatever stringent sanction the State of Washington would provide. We trust your judgment in that manner. I think Mr. Beliz, as Mrs. Galvez brought out, is a terrorist to children. He has enabled those who protect pedophiles through the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses to get away with it, and I feel that he should be brought to justice for those actions. Thank you.

THE COURT: Anyone else? Would you state your name, please?

PAT GARZA: My name is Pat Garza. I'm not related to Ericka, even though I have the same last name.

THE COURT: Okay, go ahead.

PAT GARZA: I'm standing here before you as a friend of Ericka. I just recently met her. I was

here at the last trial. I stand here before you also as a victim myself of child molestation.

And so I know the things that Ericka says and feels are true. I understand the nightmares at

night. I understand the fear and the terror that strikes your heart when you see your

perpetrator again or have any contact with him. I understand the terror and the fear of loss at  
when the threats are made against you if you tell, because threats like that have been made to

me. One thing I know the victim needs very much and which Ericka has not received from Mr.

Beliz, and that is the victim needs to hear from the perpetrator that she was never at fault

that she never caused what happened, that it wasn't because she was here close by; it wasn't

because she was cute; it wasn't because she moved in a certain way or had a certain look on her

face. The perpetrator needs to accept total and complete responsibility for what took place,

and he needs to totally and completely absolve her from any fault whatsoever, and to tell

Ericka, " It was not your fault, Ericka. It was completely my fault and my responsibility, and

I take full blame for it." And Ericka needs also to not hear that it's her fault because it

came to court either. This is what the laws of our great country say is that child molestation

and child rape is not something that is permitted. Unfortunately -- well, I'd like to use

President Bush's words because they had special meaning for me, this act of terrorism on New

York. He said --he spoke right to the terrorists. He said, "YOU can run, but you can't run

forever. You can hide, but you can't hide forever. You may have safe harbor now, but it won't

be there forever. And your acts of terrorism may try to throw us into chaos and prevent us from

living free, but we won't let it happen."

And he also made the statement, "We will ferret you out." And he has called on the world to join with him and join with our country to rid  
the world of terrorism and terrorists.

Those words had special significance for me because as a victim when we're frightened into

silence, not only because of the perpetrator, but then when our religion frightens us into

silence. I was one of Jehovah's witnesses for 40 years. I am no longer. But when we're

frightened into silence, then we're not able to speak up. I forgot what I was going to say. And

so then what happens is that just as the terrorists in the world, they're hiding in the open.

And so among Jehovah's Witnesses, as I experienced I can speak from that, and like Mr. Beliz

for a time hid in the open because he had not been --it had not been told what he had done. He

was able to terrorize Ericka into silence. And who knows whether there are more victims that

are still terrorized into silence and have not come forward but may yet at some point in time

when they have the courage to do so. I look at him and I see a man who had to have seen the

fear in Ericka's face. He had to have seen the terror in her eyes. He had to have seen her cry

and wince when he raped her, and she felt the pain which she told us about on the stand. This

is a man who is merciless, had no compassion for this little child. He felt no feelings for her whatsoever or he would have never even attempted it. And I think it's unconscionable that while she is up here for a funeral --here the hearts and aching and breaking because somebody they love has died, and he uses this moment of all moments of most vulnerability to rape this child, and when her parents weren't there to protect her either. When she was in his custody, his safekeeping. And that didn't happen, he used it as an opportunity to rape her again. And one more thing is as I noticed him on the stand testifying, because of my personal experiences, and I have here a whole file of letters, correspondence I had with the Watch Tower trying to resolve a situation, which ended up never being resolved.

But as I watched him up there I saw in his face, his demeanor, his words the almost verbatim it seemed that of someone else who victimized me. And I was quite shocked when I saw it because that was the first time I'd ever experienced that. His demeanor, his face, his whole manner of acting, and his minimizing what he had done.

So for those reasons, and because of my personal experience I really feel that he is not sorry. And the fact that he's not apologizing in an appropriate way to his victim, and I doubt that he ever will, or at least not now. I would hope that he would. I would hope the wall of denial that he's hiding behind will come down for him so that he can receive the help he needs.

But at this point I also request that the Court give the maximum penalty. Thank you.

THE COURT: Anyone else? Would you state your name for the record, please?

BRUCE BAKER: My name is Bruce Baker, Salem, Oregon. I'm a very recent friend of Ericka's. I was in the Watch Tower organization for 52 years in the state of Oregon. I had the most responsibilities of any Witness there, oversight responsibilities, and I was involved as a Chairman of handling two cases of child molestation. On one occasion the Watch Tower attorneys, Greg Olsen, told us not to report this to the authorities. I had two policemen at my door two days in a row telling me if I did not testify about this individual I would have a \$1,000 fine, \$1,000-per-day fine. I called the Watch Tower back, and they told me do not divulge this information about this individual. Fortunately someone else divulged the information that got me off the hook.

Another case involved a girl about Ericka's age. She had two children, but there was not a second witness to her case. She was very mentally disturbed and distraught because she did not have two witnesses. The case was thrown out of our judicial system. I believe today that her father is guilty of these multiple practices. It is believed because of distraught she ran in front of a cement truck with her two children. My point is that this organization has a tendency for its image to protect itself, regardless of what happens to children. Last year because of stating truths about this organization I was excommunicated instantly. No meetings. This organization gives a false sense of security to child molesters. And I'm happy that this Court, this judicial system is far superior than the one represented by Watch Tower Society. Sorry for my emotions. Thank you.

THE COURT: Anyone else? Yes, sir.

RICHARD RAWE: Richard Rawe, Soap Lake, Washington. I've been a Witness with this organization for almost 60 years; 25 of them full time. I have a little bit of inside information in regard to what actually happens within the organization. And I'd like to speak on Ericka's behalf in regard to a sentence far beyond the standard range. And it has to do with abuse of trust that has been mentioned

here. Ericka mentioned that the Elder, Mr. Beliz at that time, was accorded double honor. That's a phrase that no one outside of Jehovah's Witnesses knows really what it means.

That phrase to a four-year-old girl, or a six or eight or ten or whatever, would mean that that man was actually next to God himself. That's how important that person would be. Now, to maybe a 14 or a 24-year-old maybe that wouldn't mean that. But to a little, teeny girl or a little, teeny boy, as I was, that's what that really meant to them. I think that speaks to abuse of trust, a tremendous trust they would have in that individual. And if that trust was violated they may not know it at first, but as they grow older and older they would realize that that was not the case. This would then totally destroy them to a point of not even believing there's a God, let alone anything else. That's the kind of destruction that's visited on Ericka Rodriguez, and everybody else that has been 8 affected by child abuse by an Elder, or by even a member in the congregation. But especially that abuse of trust that he would have in that regard. Also, I understand that in a sense Mr. Beliz was an employer of Ericka when she was a little girl. She'd only get paid maybe ten cents or whatever, then she'd buy candy. But to her that trust was way, way beyond, together with all these other trusts was way beyond the standard range. And I believe that Mr. Beliz should get his sentence way beyond the standard range, because he certainly qualifies for the upper 5 percent of anything else, of all the child molesters in the state.

I'd like to say one other thing on Mr. Beliz's behalf. What you see in Mr. Beliz here today may not be his honest and true feelings. He may be acting under the direction of this organization. They tell him to act in a certain way. And if you don't act in that way, guess what? They disfellowship him again. Now, disfellowshipping is a very, very severe punishment, extremely severe. I know, I've enjoyed it for 30-some years. And I'll tell you, you're separated from families. You can't say hello to your mother, your father, your sister, your aunt, your uncle, or anyone else that you've known. As a Witness you are only relegated to them people that are Witnesses. All the rest of the people in the world are the devils. They're going to be destroyed in Armageddon. They're never going to live again.

It's that threat that Mr. Beliz feels this day why he acts in the way he does. If he acted on his own you may see a different person in that regard. And that's why I feel that he deserves an extraordinary sentence and far beyond the standard range. Thank you.

THE COURT: Anyone else?

Mr. Morgan?

MR. MORGAN: Thank you, Your Honor.

This is probably going to take longer than I'd anticipated based upon the various comments that have been made by those on behalf of Ms. Rodriguez, and also based upon some comments by Mr. Flyckt that I hadn't anticipated.