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Couple won't face death penalty in Tracy slaying



Robert, left, and Jorge Morgan are escorted out of Dept 22 on Monday during their trial in the murder of a Tracy woman at the county courthouse in downtown Stockton.

STOCKTON - Two men accused of murdering a Tracy woman won't face the death penalty, prosecutors said Monday.

Instead, Robert Morgan, 39, and Jorge Morgan, 24, will face the possibility of life in prison without parole if they are found guilty of homicide with any of the three special circumstances attached: that the crime was committed during a robbery, that it was committed during a burglary and that they were lying in wait.

Cynthia Ramos, 58, was killed Aug. 6 in her home in Tracy, where she was stabbed more than four dozen times, bludgeoned and strangled.

San Joaquin County Deputy District Attorney Valli Israels told the court she was ready to set a trial date, but defense attorneys asked to speak with San Joaquin County Superior Court Judge Bernard Garber in his chambers. Once they re-emerged, the defendants were ordered to return to court Monday for trial setting.

Israels said the decision not to seek the death penalty was made by a committee headed by District Attorney James P. Willett.

"The committee had a lot of conversations about it," Israels said. "This is a seriously violent crime. We didn't take it lightly."

After the hearing, family members said they were told of the decision outside the courtroom and were prepared either way.

The defendants, who are domestic partners, were brought into the courthouse each with his hands shackled to his waist and his feet chained together. They had been housed separately at San Joaquin County Jail but were moved to Deuel Vocational Institution outside Tracy, where they were housed in the same cell for a short period, Israels said. They have since been separated.

Garber had ruled previously that the defendants should be housed separately.

Reader Reaction



★ **Indigo**

I don't know why we bother having a death penalty if it can't even be applied to a case like this that fits the guidelines to a "T." I guess it really doesn't matter anyway since these two would probably die in prison of old age before they ever saw their execution day.

And what about the fact they were house together briefly at DVI? What kind of classification staff does that prison have that would allow this, even for a day? None of this makes any sense.

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