

Kin of Bulger's victims set to speak out in court

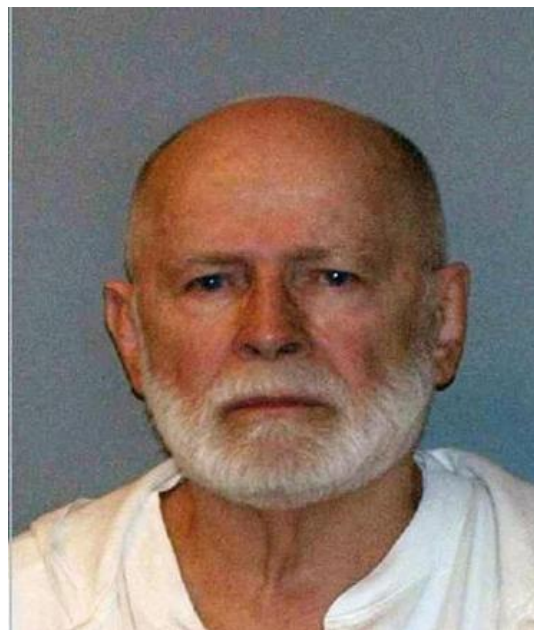
By [Shelley Murphy](#) | GLOBE STAFF NOVEMBER 11, 2013

James "Whitey" Bulger faces the rest of his life behind bars, but before he is sentenced on Thursday he will have to face the widows, children, brothers, and sisters of those he shot, strangled, and discarded in secret graves decades ago.

More than a dozen relatives of Bulger's victims, who have been allotted 10 minutes to speak, are poised to face the 84-year-old former South Boston crime boss in US District Court in Boston Wednesday and describe the grievous impact of his crimes.

For Patricia Donahue, whose husband, Michael, was gunned down by Bulger in 1982 while giving a ride home to a man who was the intended target, it is a chance to shift the focus from the convicted killer to his innocent victims.

"I just want Whitey Bulger to know the person he killed," said Donahue, who struggled while raising the couple's three young sons after the slaying of her husband, a 32-year-old Dorchester truck driver and devoted father. "He knew nothing of my husband. He knew nothing of my family."



US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE/REUTERS

James "Whitey" Bulger.

Tim Connors, who was just a baby in 1975 when Bulger shot his father, Edward Connors, in a Dorchester telephone booth, said he plans to make a statement, but is not sure what he will say. For him, Bulger's capture in Santa Monica, Calif., in June 2011 after more than 16 years on the run was the epic moment in the saga and the gangster's sentencing is almost anticlimactic.

"I don't even need to look at him," Connors said. "The only satisfaction is that I know he's going to die in jail, as opposed to with his freedom."

In August, following an eight-week trial, jurors found Bulger participated in 11 murders while operating a sprawling criminal enterprise from the 1970s through the 1990s that trafficked in cocaine and marijuana; extorted drug dealers, businessmen, and bookmakers; and corrupted FBI agents and other law enforcement officials. He was convicted of 31 counts of racketeering, extortion, money laundering, and weapons possession.

In a sentencing memorandum filed last week, prosecutors said Bulger "has no redeeming qualities" and faces a mandatory term under federal sentencing guidelines of life in prison, followed by another life sentence for possessing machine guns and another five-year term for possessing handguns.

Bulger's lawyers did not respond to requests for comment on his sentencing.

Jurors found that prosecutors proved Bulger participated in 11 of 19 murders he was accused of, including the strangulation of Deborah Hussey; the assassination of Tulsa businessman Roger Wheeler; and the slayings of Edward Connors, Paul McGonagle, Thomas King, Richard Castucci, Edward "Brian" Halloran, Michael Donahue, John Callahan, Arthur "Bucky" Barrett, and John McIntyre.

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Jurors found prosecutors failed to prove Bulger participated in seven additional murders: Michael Milano, Al Plummer, William O'Brien, James "Spike" O'Toole, Al Notarangeli, James Sousa, and Francis "Buddy" Leonard. The jury was unable to reach a verdict on whether Bulger was involved in the 1981 strangulation of another woman, Debra Davis.

US District Judge Denise J. Casper, who presided over the trial, has yet to rule on a request to let relatives of the eight victims speak even though Bulger was not convicted of those slayings.

Davis's brother, Steve, who attended the trial every day, has already written a victim impact statement and said he needs to be heard to purge the venom that has been festering inside of him.

"It's like being sick to your stomach all these years and finally just throwing up, getting rid of all that poison and then you feel so much better," Davis said. "People will remember [Bulger] as a gangster bully because that's all he was."

Although frustrated that jurors could not reach a verdict on his sister's murder, Davis said the decades-long battle to bring Bulger to justice had a "satisfactory ending" because Boston is a safer place with the gangster behind bars.

"Whitey was in the shadows all the time," Davis said. "He doesn't have control anymore. He's not running the streets of South Boston any more. . . . You don't have to worry about one guy putting a [expletive] bullet in your head or hurting someone in your family."

Paul McGonagle, whose father, Paul, was shot to death by Bulger in 1974, testified during the trial, but said his brother Sean will speak for their family during Bulger's sentencing.

"Obviously it had a huge impact on our lives and we took people's sympathy, but never their pity," McGonagle said. "And now in a strange way it's made us stronger. . . . We've survived and thrived."

Bulger's defense team spent much of the trial trying to persuade jurors he was not an informant, despite a hefty FBI file that indicated he was one from 1975 to 1990 and provided information against members of his own gang, as well as the Mafia. Bulger's lawyers said the gangster paid FBI agent John J. Connolly Jr. and other agents for information, and Connolly fabricated the file to cover up their corrupt relationship.

Bulger's former associates testified that he killed several men because Connolly warned him that they were informants and were cooperating against Bulger and his partner, Stephen "The Rifleman" Flemmi, another informant.

Flemmi testified that he and Bulger paid Connolly more than \$235,000 in payoffs over the years, and former FBI supervisor John Morris testified that he pocketed \$7,000 in bribes from the two gangsters and leaked them information.

Retired State Police Detective Lieutenant Bob Long, who testified that his efforts to target Bulger in 1980 were thwarted, said the gangster's sentencing marks the end of an era.

"There's always going to be an organized crime group that puts intimidation and fear in the community during participation in rackets, but it will never be like it was with Bulger and Flemmi," said Long, who now operates Bob Long Consulting Investigations Group in Boston. "It will never be as out of control and bad. I think law enforcement has learned its lesson."

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