



Lyle and Erik Menendez

Joseph Lyle Menendez (born January 10, 1968)^[3] and **Erik Galen Menendez** (born November 27, 1970),^[4] commonly referred to as the **Menendez brothers**, are American brothers convicted of killing their parents, José and Mary Louise "Kitty" Menendez, at their Beverly Hills home in 1989.

Following the murders, Lyle and Erik claimed that unknown intruders were responsible for the murders, framing it as a potential mob killing. Police initially investigated this claim, but grew suspicious due to the brothers' spending and their hiring of a computer expert to delete their father's recently updated will. Erik confessed to the murders in sessions with his psychologist, citing a desire to be free of a controlling father with high standards, which led to their arrests months later.^[5]

Lyle and Erik were charged with two counts of first-degree murder with special circumstances for lying in wait, making them eligible for the death penalty, and charges of conspiracy to murder. During their first trial, the defense argued that the brothers killed their parents in self-defense after years of alleged sexual, emotional, and physical abuse. The prosecution argued that the murders were premeditated, that allegations of sexual abuse were fabricated, and that the brothers were motivated by hatred and a desire to receive their father's multimillion-dollar estate after being disinherited from his will.^[6] The juries were unable to reach a verdict, resulting in mistrials for both brothers.^{[7][8]} In a second trial, they were convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

Lyle and Erik currently serve life sentences at Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility near San Diego, California. Multiple legal appeals of their convictions have been rejected by reviewing judges.^[9] In October

Lyle and Erik Menendez



Mug shots of Lyle (left) and Erik (right) Menendez taken in 2023

Born	Joseph Lyle Menendez <div>January 10, 1968</div> <div><u>New York City, U.S.</u></div>
	Erik Galen Menendez <div>November 27, 1970</div> <div><u>Blackwood, New Jersey, U.S.</u></div>
Alma mater	Lyle: <u>University of California, Irvine (BA)</u>
Criminal status	Incarcerated at <u>Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility</u> (both) ^{[1][2]}
Spouses	Lyle: <div>Anna Eriksson (m. 1996; div. 2001)</div> <div>Rebecca Sneed (m. 2003)</div>
	Erik: <div>Tammi Saccoman (m. 1999)</div>
Parent(s)	José and Mary Louise "Kitty" Menendez
Conviction(s)	<u>First-degree murder</u> , <u>conspiracy to murder</u>
Criminal penalty	<u>Life in prison</u> without the possibility of <u>parole</u> (both)

Details

2024, Los Angeles district attorney George Gascón recommended a resentencing after reviewing a *habeas corpus* petition.^[10]

The highly publicized trials received international media attention, inspiring numerous documentaries, dramatizations, books, and parodies.

Background

José Enrique Menendez was born on May 6, 1944, in Havana, Cuba. At age 16, due to the Cuban Revolution, he moved to the United States. José attended Southern Illinois University, where he met Mary Louise "Kitty" Andersen (1941–1989). They were married in 1963 and moved to New York City where José earned an accounting degree from Queens College.^[11]

The couple's first son, Joseph Lyle, who goes by his middle name, was born on January 10, 1968, in New York.^{[12][13]} Kitty quit her teaching job after Lyle was born, and the family moved to New Jersey, where Erik Galen was born on November 27, 1970, in Gloucester Township.^[14] The family lived in Hopewell Township and both brothers attended Princeton Day School.^[11]

José became an executive at Hertz Corporation and later RCA Records.^[15] After he was appointed as the CEO of Live Entertainment, the family moved to Calabasas, California, where Erik attended Calabasas High School.^{[14][11]}

In 1988, Lyle and Erik committed multiple burglaries in their neighborhood, stealing more than \$100,000 in cash and jewellery, prompting José to move to Beverly Hills.^[16] The following year, Erik attended Beverly Hills High School where he earned average grades but displayed a talent for tennis, ranking 44th in the US as a junior.^[17] About two weeks before the murders, Erik and his friend Michael Joyce entered the 1989 Boys' Junior National Tennis Championship.^[18]

Lyle attended Princeton University, where he was placed on academic probation for poor grades and eventually suspended for plagiarism.^{[19][20]} He lived in the Gauss Hall dormitory, where he threw out his roommates' belongings as he did not wish to share a room, left sinks overflowing causing damage, and repainted his room in violation of university rules.^[21]

In high school, Erik wrote an amateur screenplay with his classmate called "*Friends*"; a story about a rich young man who killed his parents in the "perfect murder" for the inheritance money.^{[22][23]}

Murders and investigation

Murders and alibi

Victims	José and Mary Louise "Kitty" Menendez
Date	August 20, 1989
Location(s)	<u>Beverly Hills, California</u> , U.S.
Target(s)	José and Mary Louise Menendez
Weapons	<u>Mossberg 12-gauge shotgun</u>
Date apprehended	Lyle: March 8, 1990 Erik: March 11, 1990

On August 18, 1989, Lyle and Erik went to several gun stores in Southern California to buy handguns.^{[24][25]} However, due to issues with Lyle's California driver's license and a two-week waiting period mandated by gun laws, the brothers decided to purchase shotguns instead.^[26] They acquired Mossberg 12-gauge shotguns along with boxes of birdshot and buckshot ammunition in a Big 5 Sporting Goods store in San Diego, California, where Erik used a stolen driver's license from Lyle's friend, Donovan Goodreau.^{[24][26][27]}

On the evening of August 20, 1989, José and Kitty were watching *The Spy Who Loved Me* in the theatre den of their Beverly Hills mansion when Lyle and Erik entered the den, carrying loaded shotguns.^{[28][29]} José was shot six times, including a fatal shot to the back of his head.^[30] Kitty was shot ten times in total.^[31] Before the fatal shot to her cheek, she was on the ground, crawling away.^{[25][32]} Lyle ran to the car where Erik handed him ammunition to reload before firing the fatal shot to her face.^{[33][34]}

Immediately after the killings, both brothers remained in the house for a few minutes, expecting the police to respond due to the noise of the gunshots.^[35] They left to dispose of their clothes that were stained with blood, and later buried the shotguns somewhere along Mulholland Drive. They also went to a movie theater and attempted to purchase tickets for the film *Batman* to use as their alibi but abandoned the plan due to the timestamp on the ticket stub.^[36] They then headed to the "Taste of L.A." festival at Santa Monica Civic Auditorium.^[37]

After returning home and finding no police presence, Lyle called 911 and emotionally told the operator, "someone killed my parents", saying that he had just come home and discovered their bodies.^{[38][39]} Erik was heard screaming and crying in the background. When the officers arrived, Lyle and Erik ran from the home toward the officers while screaming.^[39] When the police arrived, they did not seek gunshot residue tests from the brothers, which would have indicated whether they had recently discharged a firearm.^[16] Lyle and Erik both falsely told officers that they were elsewhere at the time of the killings. Lyle told officers he thought the killings might be "business-related", implying a Mafia hit.^[39]

Police officers and forensic staff who worked on the crime scene described it as "the most brutal" one they had ever encountered, noting the blood and brain matter splattered throughout the room.^{[40][41]} Retired police detective Dan Stewart stated, "I've seen a lot of homicides, but nothing quite that brutal. Blood, flesh, skulls. It would be hard to describe, especially José, as resembling a human that you would recognize. That's how bad it was."^[41] According to the autopsy report, one blast caused "explosive decapitation with evisceration of the brain" and "deformity of the face" to José, while the first round of shots struck Kitty in her chest, right arm, left hip, and left leg, with the contact shot causing "multiple lacerations of the brain".^[41]

Investigation and arrests

Detectives initially investigated Lyle's suggestion that the murders were a result of mob-related activity due to its heinousness and José's business connections.^{[39][42]}

In the months after the killings, the brothers spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on luxury items, businesses, and travel.^{[43][16]} Lyle bought Chuck's Spring Street Café, a Buffalo wing restaurant in Princeton, New Jersey, as well as three Rolex watches and a Porsche Carrera sports car.^[44] Erik hired a full-time tennis coach and competed in a series of tournaments overseas. The brothers eventually left the Beverly Hills mansion unoccupied, choosing to live in adjoining condominiums in nearby Marina del Rey.^[45] They also dined at high-end restaurants and took overseas trips to the Caribbean and London.^[46]

Their courtside attendance at a New York Knicks basketball game was captured in the background of a Mark Jackson trading card.^[47] During this time, they spent approximately \$700,000.^[16] Most of this money came from a \$650,000 personal life insurance policy, which was paid out,^[48] although a larger insurance policy for \$15 million with LIVE Entertainment as beneficiaries, not the Menendez brothers, turned out to be invalid. This spending caused police to begin to consider the brothers as suspects, with a possible financial motive. Family members disputed a connection between their spending and the murder of their parents, asserting that there were no changes in their spending habits after the killings.^[16]

Erik's high school friend, Craig Cignarelli, reported to the police that Erik had confessed to him.^[49] He also revealed that he and Erik had previously written a 66-page screenplay titled "Friends", which depicted a son killing his wealthy parents for their inheritance.^[23] In an attempt to get a confession, police arranged for Cignarelli to wear a wire during a lunch with Erik. When Cignarelli asked Erik whether he had killed his parents, Erik denied it.^[50]

Police also heard from Lyle's friend Glenn Stevens that one week after the killings, Lyle had made a sudden trip back home from Princeton to destroy something in the family computer. Stevens said that Lyle told him a family member "found a new will and I went there and erased it".^[11] A computer expert hired by Lyle, also said he was hired to ensure deletion of a new will José had prepared, that may have left less to his sons.^[11]

Erik eventually confessed to his psychologist, Jerome Oziel, who then told his mistress, Judalon Smyth. Oziel began recording his sessions with Lyle and Erik.^[51] After breaking up with Oziel, Smyth informed the police about the brothers' involvement in the murders.^[52] Lyle was arrested on March 8, 1990, outside their Beverly Hills home, while Erik turned himself in three days later after returning to Los Angeles from Israel.^[53] Both were held without bail and jailed separately at the Los Angeles County Jail.^[54]

Trials

Pretrial detention and legal disputes

In August 1990, Judge James Albracht ruled that tapes of the conversations between Erik and his psychologist Jerome Oziel were admissible evidence since Oziel claimed that Lyle threatened him and violated doctor–patient privilege.^[55] Albracht's ruling was appealed, after which the proceedings were delayed for two years. The Supreme Court of California ruled in August 1992 that most of the tapes were admissible, with the exception of the tape on which Erik discussed the murders.^{[56][57]}

After that decision, a Los Angeles County grand jury issued indictments in December 1992, charging the brothers with the murders of their parents; the special circumstances that the killings were committed for financial gain was deemed unsupported by evidence and was subsequently excluded from the charges.^[58] They were charged with two counts of first-degree murder with special circumstances for lying in wait, which made them eligible for the death penalty.^[59]

First trial (1993–1994)

Represented by lead defense lawyers, Leslie Abramson (for Erik) and Jill Lansing (for Lyle), the brothers stated that they killed their parents out of fear for their lives after a lifetime of abuse at the hands of their parents, especially sexual abuse at the hands of their father, who was described as a cruel perfectionist and pedophile. Meanwhile, their mother was described as an enabling, selfish, mentally unstable alcoholic^[60] and drug addict who encouraged her husband's behavior and was also violent toward the brothers.^[6] Lyle alleged that his father began abusing him at age 6, but stopped when he was 8 without explanation.^[61] Erik alleged he was abused up until adulthood, shortly prior to the murders.^[62] Erik testified that two weeks before the killings, he first told Lyle about the sexual abuse he was experiencing, leading to multiple confrontations within the family.^[32] Both brothers testified that their father had threatened to kill them if they did not keep the abuse secret. As a result, they purchased shotguns for "protection and self-defense". They alleged that the final confrontation occurred in their home's den on August 20, 1989, shortly before Kitty and José were killed. According to their testimony, José closed the den's door, which they described as "unusual". They testified that they were afraid that they would be killed by their parents, so went outside to load their shotguns, and Erik recalled, "As I went into the room, I just started firing."^{[32][63]}

Under California law, the brothers could only be acquitted for manslaughter if they could prove they were in immediate or imminent danger.^[64] The prosecution argued there was no evidence of imminent danger or self defense. Prosecutor Pam Bozanich argued this was contradicted by the brothers purchasing shotguns in advance.^[6] Prosecutors used the taped conversation between the brothers and their psychologist, in which the brothers said they had planned the murders "beforehand".^[5] Prosecution argued the murders were inconsistent with a self defense killing; after they had shot their mother Kitty who was "moaning and trying to crawl away", Lyle went to reload his shotgun and returned to finish her off.^{[65][66]}

The prosecution argued that the sexual abuse allegations were fabricated; as nobody mentioned abuse until seven months after the murders while a legal defense was being formulated. The prosecution told jurors that mention of sexual abuse was absent in discussions and tapes with their psychologist, Jerome Oziel, and that Erik did not mention abuse in his earlier confession to his friend Craig Cignarelli.^[67] The prosecution told jurors throughout the trial that Lyle and Erik were capable of lying frequently and in great detail to avoid being caught, and thus they were also capable of lying about child abuse to avoid death sentences.^[6] Prosecutor Pam Bozanich played Lyle's staged 911 call for the jurors with the intention of showing how good an actor he was.^[6]

Prior to the trial, Lyle offered his ex-girlfriend Jamie Pisarcik money if she would lie for him in the trial and claim that José Menendez had made sexual advances towards her; which Pisarcik reported to the police. Before Lyle was cross-examined by the prosecution, he pre-emptively admitted this under questioning by his own lawyer.^[68]

Lyle and Erik's cousin, Diane Vander Molen, testified that during a stay with the family in the mid-1970s, Lyle confided in her that his father was sexually abusing him. Vander Molen claimed she told Kitty about the incident, but Kitty sided with her husband, accusing Lyle of lying. Vander Molen recalled that after this, Kitty sent Lyle upstairs, and she never heard of the issue again. Under questioning from Pam Bozanich, Vander Molen said she had never witnessed any abuse.^[69] Lyle testified that Vander Molen was the only person he ever told of the abuse.^[68] Another cousin, Andy Cano, alleged that as a child, Erik told him about the abuse, which they both described as genital "massages". Prosecutors pressed Cano, asking him if he would lie for his cousin, which he denied.^[70]

The defense presented two faceless photographs of baby boys from the waist down, which Lyle alleged were taken by their father when they were little.^[61] The prosecution argued that there was no evidence the photographs were taken by José,^{[9]:12508} and the photos were found on a roll of film interspersed with photos from a children's birthday party.^[71]

Evidence from a taped therapy session between the brothers and their psychologist, Jerome Oziel, was also presented in court, after legal attempts by the defense to exclude it.^[57] The prosecution used the tapes to disprove the abuse claims, as the brothers made no mention of sexual abuse, and instead complained about their dictatorial father and suicidal mother.^[5] Lyle also stated that by killing their mother, they may be "doing her and [he and Erik] a favor... putting her out of her misery" and that they had "shown great courage by killing their mother".^[5] According to Oziel's account, "They didn't kill their parents for money but rather out of hatred and out of a desire to be free from their father's domination, messages of inadequacy, and impossible standards."^[57] Oziel said that Lyle had confided that "he knew his father would have been proud of him for killing him" for pulling off the task.^[65]

The defense consultant Ann Burgess argued Oziel was "manipulative" and "controlling", arguing he directed many of the statements made by the brothers in the tape recordings.^[72] Oziel's ex-mistress, Judalon Smyth, also testified that Oziel wanted to "control" the brothers by taping their sessions.^[52] Smyth's testimony was challenged by the prosecution, noting she was the one who notified the authorities of the confession tapes, but had now joined the defense to discredit Oziel after a tumultuous breakup.^[73]

Erik testified that he put cinnamon in his father's tea and coffee to make his semen taste better. The plausibility of this claim was disputed because cinnamon is a detectable flavor.^[74] Prosecutor Lester Kuriyama proposed that José had not forced Erik into sex acts, but was furious that his son was potentially homosexual, and this may have caused tensions within the family.^{[75][76]} Judge Weisberg refused to allow Kuriyama to discuss the idea.^[5] The defense argued Kuriyama's idea was "disgusting",^[75] while Kuriyama argued it was relevant because one witness claimed to have seen gay porn magazines in the house, implying that José was sexually attracted to men; however, the meaning would change if they belonged to Erik.^[5] Erik alleged his mother "made it seem like it was worse than death to be gay, and I didn't think I was, I just—I don't know", and followed up by saying he liked girls and enjoyed his relationship with his girlfriend.^[77]

The prosecution wanted to allow the jury to see a screenplay that Erik had written with his friend Craig in high school, a story about a wealthy young man who killed his parents for the inheritance money. Judge Weisberg ruled against it, saying the play was written too long before the shooting to have relevance.^[78]

The defense also won a ruling against the use of the word "sociopath" in front of juries. Oziel told the court he had described to the boys the difference between a crime of passion, and a crime of assault, and that in response they described themselves as "sociopaths". The judge said the label was too prejudicial to announce in front of a jury.^[79] A defense witness, psychologist Anne Tyler, described Erik's burglaries of more than \$100,000 in cash and jewellery as the "acting out behavior" of an adolescent.^[80]

Both verdicts for the brothers were divided by gender; female jurors suggested voluntary manslaughter, while male jurors pushed for first-degree murder.^[81] After a month of deliberations, the trial ended in a mistrial due to the two deadlocked juries.^[82] As a result, Los Angeles County District Attorney Gil Garcetti immediately announced that the brothers would be retried.

Second trial (1995–1996)

The second trial was less publicized, in part because Judge Stanley Weisberg did not allow cameras in the courtroom because it would "increase the risk that jurors would be exposed to information and commentary about the case outside of the courtroom".^{[83][84]}

Erik testified over 15 days about allegations of abuse. Judge Weisberg limited some of testimony about some of the allegations of abuse on the third day.^[84] Judge Weisberg limited the defense to 64 total witnesses in the retrial.^[84] Erik alleged that José had told him he was written out of the will.^[84]

Lyle's former fiancé, Jamie Pisarcik, testified that Lyle had tried to bribe her to testify falsely in the first trial. Pisarcik said that Lyle told her fictitious stories about the mob killing of his parents, which she originally believed. She testified that during a regular visit to see Lyle in prison, he offered her a large sum of money to claim that José Menendez made sexual advances towards her.^[85]

Lyle did not testify in the second trial.^[84] Prosecutor David Conn told jurors that Lyle had asked his friend Brian Eslaminia to fabricate a story in the first trial. A 7-page letter was found by the police, allegedly written by Lyle detailing how he wanted him to testify.^[86]

The prosecution also had another letter that Lyle had allegedly written to his ex-girlfriend Traci Baker from jail. It included instructions on how to testify, with the sentence: "We will decide later around what date this incident occurred."^[87] The defense disputed its authenticity. Baker was not reached for comment.^[87]

Conn challenged Erik's allegation that he was raped at the age of 18, when he had a vehicle and enough money to leave his parents' home. Conn asked him why he did not join the army. Erik said he would not be safe from his father in the army, because he was "the most powerful man I've ever met". Erik said there was no witnesses to his allegations of sexual abuse.^[84]

Psychology professor John Wilson, an expert witness for the defense testified that Erik had symptoms of PTSD which supported his allegations of abuse. Prosecution expert witness, psychiatrist Park Elliot Dietz countered that there was no way to know if he had PTSD because the allegations were unproven. He argued Erik did not show symptoms of "learned helplessness", as he had purchased guns and practiced with them at the shooting range.^[84]

Leslie Abramson argued that the brothers acted out fear that their parents would harm them for threatening to reveal the family's secrets,^[84] and that the killings were a "highly emotional overkill".^[84]

Judge Weisberg determined that there was insufficient evidence to support the claim that the brothers were in imminent danger when they murdered their parents. Weisberg did allow the defense to argue that the brothers shot José in the heat of passion, but not their mother Kitty. He concluded there was enough evidence to suggest that José might have provoked his sons into committing homicide, but not enough to indicate that Kitty did.^[84]

Klara Wright, wife of the attorney hired by the brothers, testified that the brothers had brought a safe to her home in hopes of locating a copy of their parents' will. The safe was opened two days after the murders, in the presence of Brian Andersen and Carlos Baralt, the brothers' uncles. It was found to be empty.^[84] Conn argued this was evidence the brothers were trying to access their parents' money as quickly as possible.^[84]

Both brothers were eventually convicted on two counts of first-degree murder with special circumstances for lying in wait, as well as conspiracy to murder; in the penalty phase of the trial, they were sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.^{[88][89]}

During the penalty phase, Abramson reportedly told defense witness William Vicary to edit his own notes of meetings with Erik to remove potentially damning information, but the district attorney's office decided not to launch a criminal investigation of Abramson.^[90] Both brothers also filed motions for a mistrial, claiming that they suffered irreversible damage in the penalty phase as a result of possible misconduct and ineffective representation by Abramson. On July 2, 1996, Weisberg sentenced the brothers to life in prison without the possibility of parole, to be served as consecutive sentences for the killings and the charges of conspiracy to commit murder.^[89]

Appeals

On February 27, 1998, the California Court of Appeal upheld the brothers' murder convictions and, on May 28, 1998, the Supreme Court of California declined to review the case, thus allowing the decision of the appellate court to stand.^[12] Both brothers filed habeas corpus petitions with the Supreme Court of California, which were denied in 1999. Having exhausted their appeal remedies in state court, they filed separate habeas corpus petitions in the United States District Court. On March 4, 2003, a magistrate judge recommended the denial of the petitions,^[91] and the district court adopted the recommendation. The brothers then decided to appeal to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. On September 7, 2005, a three-judge panel denied both their habeas corpus petitions.^[9]

In May 2023, the brothers requested a new hearing based upon an allegation that their father had raped former Menudo member Roy Rosselló, who, at that time, was signed under RCA Records.^[92] Specifically, on April 18, 2023, on a segment of the Today Show about a television documentary, Rosselló stated that when he was 14 years old, he was drugged and raped by José Menendez while he was visiting the Menendez family's home in New Jersey.^[93] The appeal cites a letter that appears to have been written by Erik to his cousin, Andy Cano, in 1988, where Erik talked about the abuse. Robert Rand, the author of *The Menendez Murders* says he found it in 2018 in a dresser in Cano's bedroom.^[94]

On October 3, 2024, Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascón announced in a press conference that his office was actively reviewing the appeal.^{[95][96]} On October 24, 2024, George Gascón announced he was asking the court for a resentencing of the case.^[97] If a judge accepts his recommendation, the brothers will be eligible for parole.^[97] Gascón stated "I don't believe that manslaughter would have been the appropriate charge given the premeditation that was involved," and "I do believe that the brothers were subjected to a tremendous amount of dysfunction in the home, and molestation."^[10] Gascón's recommendation considered the length of time the brothers had already served, and their behavior while in prison.^[10]

A re-sentencing trial was initially scheduled to begin on December 11, 2024.^{[98][99]} However, during a court hearing on November 25, 2024, the trial would be pushed back to January 30 and 31, 2025.^{[100][101]}

Marriages

On July 2, 1996, Lyle married Anna Eriksson at a ceremony attended by Abramson and his aunt Marta Menendez, officiated by Judge Nancy Brown; they divorced on April 1, 2001,^[12] after Eriksson discovered that Lyle was cheating on her with another woman. In November 2003, Lyle married Rebecca Sneed at a ceremony in a visiting area of Mule Creek State Prison; they had known each other for around 10 years before their engagement.^{[102][103]}

On June 12, 1999, Erik married Tammi Ruth Saccoman in the waiting room of Folsom State Prison. Tammi later stated: "Our wedding cake was a Twinkie. We improvised. It was a wonderful ceremony until I had to leave. That was a very lonely night."^{[104][105]} In an October 2005 interview with ABC News, she described her relationship with Erik as "something that I've dreamed about for a long time. And it's just something very special that I never thought that I would ever have."^[106]

In 2005, Saccoman self-published a book, *They Said We'd Never Make It – My Life with Erik Menendez*; however, she said on CNN's Larry King Live that Erik also "did a lot of editing on the book".^[107] In an interview with People magazine, she stated:

Not having sex in my life is difficult, but it's not a problem for me. I have to be emotionally attached, and I'm emotionally attached to Erik ... My family does not understand. When it started to get serious, some of them just threw up their hands.^[104]

Saccoman also stated that she and her daughter drove 150 mi (240 km) every weekend to visit Erik, and that her daughter refers to him as her "Earth Dad".^[104] Discussing his life sentence, Erik stated: "Tammi is what gets me through. I can't think about the sentence. When I do, I do it with a great sadness and a primal fear. I break into a cold sweat. It's so frightening I just haven't come to terms with it."^[104]

In popular culture

Documentaries

- In 2000, "Menendez Brothers – Blood Brothers", an episode from the documentary series by Court TV (now TruTV) *Mugshots*, was aired at FilmRise.^[108]
- In 2015, Barbara Walters Presents: American Scandals featured the Menendez brothers in an episode, "Menendez Brothers: The Bad Sons".^[109]
- In 2017, the Menendez brothers were featured in a documentary, *Truth and Lies: The Menendez Brothers – American Sons, American Murderers* on ABC.^[110]
- In 2017, A&E aired a five-part documentary titled *The Menendez Murders: Erik Tells All*, in which Erik describes via telephone the murders and the aftermath. The series also shows never-before-seen photos and new interviews with prosecutors, law enforcement, close family and friends, and medical experts.^[111]

- In 2017, HLN launched the new series *How It Really Happened – with Hill Harper*, with an episode featuring the Menendez brothers story. The episode, "The Menendez Brothers: Murder in Beverly Hills", ends with a telephone interview of Lyle from jail with Chris Cuomo.^[112]
- In 2020, *BuzzFeed Unsolved* featured the Menendez brothers in a one-episode special, "How They Were Caught: The Menendez Brothers".^[113]
- In 2021, the Menendez brothers were the subject of ABC's *20/20* special, *Inside the Menendez Movement*. The special features the popularity of the brothers on the video-sharing social media application TikTok and their growing number of supporters from young adults outside and inside of the United States.^[114]
- In August 2022, Discovery+ released *Menendez Brothers: Misjudged?*, a two-hour documentary focusing on the Menendez brothers' case and trial.^[115]
- In May 2023, Peacock released a documentary series titled *Menendez + Menudo: Boys Betrayed*, which features Puerto Rican singer and former Menudo member Roy Rosselló alleging that he was sexually assaulted as a teenager by José Menendez.^{[116][117]}
- In March 2024, the case was the topic of the *48 Hours* episode *The Menendez Brothers' Fight for Freedom*.^[118]
- In July 2024, the brothers were featured in the third episode of *Mastermind: To Think Like a Killer*.^{[119][120]}
- In October 2024, *The Menendez Brothers*, a documentary film featuring prison interviews with the brothers, was released on Netflix.^[121]

Dramatizations

- In 1994, the Menendez brothers were depicted in the CBS television film *Menendez: A Killing in Beverly Hills*, with Lyle portrayed by Damian Chapa and Erik by Travis Fine.^[122]
- Also in 1994, the television film *Honor Thy Father and Mother: The True Story of the Menendez Murders* starred Billy Warlock and David Berón as Lyle and Erik, respectively.^[123]
- The case was dramatized in the Lifetime television film *Menendez: Blood Brothers* (2017). Lyle was portrayed by Nico Tortorella, and Erik by Myko Olivier.^[124] Courtney Love also starred as Kitty Menendez.^[125]
- Dick Wolf produced *Law & Order True Crime: The Menendez Murders*, which was released on NBC in 2017.^[126]
- *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story*, the second season of Ryan Murphy and Ian Brennan's Netflix anthology series *Monster*, was released in September 2024.^{[127][128][129]}

Podcasts

- In October 2024, the brothers participated in Netflix's *You Can't Make This Up*, an accompanying podcast to the documentary film *The Menendez Brothers*.^[130]

References, parody, and dark comedy

- In 1990, the *Law & Order* season 1 episode "The Serpent's Tooth" is loosely based on the Menendez brothers case, although the show contains its usual disclaimer that the story and characters are fictional.

- *Saturday Night Live* parodied the Menendez brothers' first trial in the fourth episode of its 19th season, aired on October 23, 1993. Actor and host John Malkovich and comedian Rob Schneider starred as Lyle and Erik Menendez, respectively, accusing their identical twin brothers of murdering their parents.^[131]
- In the crime film *Natural Born Killers* (1994), archived footage of Erik's testimony from the first trial is included in the credits, which references various crime cases in the United States.
- The media hype surrounding the first trial was parodied in the dark comedy film *The Cable Guy* (1996).^[132]
- In 1997, Gary Indiana published his novel *Resentment: A Comedy*, which is drawn in part from the Menendez murders and trial.^[133]
- In *The Sopranos* episode "Boca", Junior Soprano makes a reference to the brothers' case, citing how their psychiatrist had appeared as a witness in the trial.^[134]
- In the pilot episode of *Gilmore Girls*, Lorelai tells Rory to make it through dinner and then she can "pull a Menendez".^[135]
- In 2016, the Menendez brothers were mentioned several times in the FX drama *The People v. O. J. Simpson: American Crime Story* (2016). Based on O. J. Simpson's homicide case, the series was set at the same time as the Menendez brothers' trials. There are several characters who have worked in the brothers' and O. J. Simpson's respective cases, such as Robert Shapiro, Lance Ito, and Gil Garcetti. Shapiro (portrayed by John Travolta) mentioned Erik in Episode 2 stating, "In fact, I arranged the surrender of Erik Menendez from Israel." This statement is based on the actual speech by Shapiro during Simpson's infamous Bronco chase, in an attempt to have him surrender to the police.^[136]

Others

- The Menendez brothers are seen in the background of the 1990–91 NBA Hoops' Mark Jackson basketball card, in which the New York Knicks point guard is seen making a bounce pass. They are sitting courtside behind Jackson.^[137] In December 2018, eBay began terminating auctions in which the brothers are mentioned in the listing. Some eBay sellers have continued to sell the card by altering the images accompanying the listing so that the Menendez brothers are neither mentioned nor seen in photos of the card accompanying the listing.^[138]

See also

- List of homicides in California
- Trial of the century
- Bathtub Girls murder, the 2003 killing of a Canadian woman by two daughters who lived lavishly off the inheritance for a year until a boyfriend told the police, then alleged she had neglected them due to her alcoholism.
- Robert and Michael Bever, two American brothers who were convicted in 2018 of murdering their parents and three siblings in 2015 after being raised in an allegedly abusive home environment.

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