**Case #2: The Menendez Brothers**

Two brothers, 18 and 21, barge in upon their wealthy parents who are at home in their mansion watching television and eating ice cream. The sons slay their father and mother with a salvo of 15 shotgun blasts. The police search for the killers for six months before the two sons concede that they did it.

On trial for first-degree murder and facing possible execution, the sons give emotionally compelling (but uncorroborated) testimony describing how their father sexually molested and emotionally abused them when they were little boys. The brothers contend they acted in self-defense, believing that their parents were about to murder them to keep the alleged incestuous acts a family secret. The prosecution argues that the boys killed their parents in order to get their hands on their $14 million inheritance (they had quickly spent $700,00 on luxury cars, condos, and fashionable clothing before they were arrested). The jurors become deadlocked over whether to find them guilty of murder or only the lesser charge of voluntary manslaughter, and the judge declares a mistrial.

In the second trial, the prosecution ridicules their abuse defense. They are convicted of premeditated murder and sentenced to life in prison without parole.

(Berns, 1994; Mydans, 1994; Associated Press, 1996).

**Resources:**

***Print:***

https://www.nytimes.com/1996/03/21/us/menendez-brothers-guilty-of-killing-their-parents.html

***Video:*** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3PA37erNYw