

Gallardo gets 49 years to life

By Denise Nix

A Hawthorne man was called a litany of names before a judge sentenced him Thursday to 49 years to life in prison for raping and killing a housekeeper in a Manhattan Beach home.

Libia Cabrera's family and friends - as well as the prosecutor and judge on the case - took turns denouncing Milton Gallardo, 28, for preying on a loving, optimistic and dedicated woman.

While they grieved for the married mother of two who came to the United States from Colombia to pursue the American Dream, they expressed hope that Gallardo would never walk free again.

"If there is a place called hell, the hottest place is reserved for this defendant," Torrance Superior Court Judge Mark Arnold said. "He lacks a soul."

After ordering bailiffs to "remove this defendant," Arnold walked over to the crying audience members to offer his condolences and shake hands.

Cabrera, 41, of Lawndale died on April 11, 2005, inside a home she regularly cleaned in the 100 block of 28th Street.

Gallardo bound and sexually assaulted her, slit her throat and then set her on fire. He was in state prison when he was arrested more than two years later after a "cold hit" linked his DNA to evidence from the crime.

Gallardo was convicted by a jury last month of murder, burglary, rape, sodomy and arson.

Cabrera's son, Edwin Rosero, said in court that it's been a long and difficult five years without his mother.

"No human being should suffer what my mom did," he said. "No mother should have to lie in a pool of blood, having been violated, caught between wishing for death and hoping to live long enough to say goodbye to the ones that she loved."

Cabrera's first husband, William Rosero, spoke with the aid of a Spanish-language interpreter, his voice growing angry at the memory of Gallardo's courtroom testimony that he and Cabrera were engaged in a six-month affair.

"Milton Gallardo, the murderer, lied in this court making up stories trying to hurt Libia Cabrera's reputation with the intent of covering up his crime," he said.

"Milton Gallardo, may the years go by very slowly so that each second is a torture. May Libia's name repeat in your head as a sharp echo and give you no peace because you took an innocent

girl's mother away and the same for a young man of 21," William Rosero said, referring to Cabrera's children. "You deserve ... the worst punishment."

Deputy District Attorney Jodi Link said Gallardo tried to make a mockery of the justice system with his lies, but that the truth prevailed.

"May he never, ever be free," Link said. "And may every day be the lowest, most miserable day of his miserable life."

Link, though, wanted to be clear that the hearing was not about Gallardo, but about Cabrera and the void left in the lives of her friends and family.

"It's five years and 11 days after he committed the most unspeakable acts of violence to the most innocent woman and, to them, it's like it happened yesterday," Link added.

Belarmina Arteta described her best friend as a woman who put others before herself. She was a "beautiful" person who was full of "happiness" and "goodness," all of which she gave freely to her friends and family.

"With Libia," Arteta said, "I have lost a large part of my soul."