



## Years of Cruelty Recounted at Sentencing of NXIVM Sex Cult Leader

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[NINA PULLANO](#) / October 27, 2020



*This still from a video in the YouTube series "Keith Raniere Conversations" shows the NXIVM leader who will begin trial May 7 on sex-trafficking and other charges.*



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BROOKLYN (CN) — Moments before sentencing Keith Raniere to over a century in prison Tuesday, a federal judge rebuked the former sex cult leader's lawyer for arguing his client deserved a lesser sentence because "we're sentencing on his perspective."

Raniere, 60, maintains he is innocent.

"No, we're not sentencing him on a perspective," U.S. District Judge Nicholas G. Garaufis boomed during Tuesday's [five-hour sentencing](#). "I'm sentencing him on his behavior. His illegal behavior."

The remarks came after 15 of Raniere's victims gave statements describing decades of physical and emotional abuse, surveillance, threats and litigation from Raniere and his followers.

Raniere billed NXIVM (pronounced Nexium) as a self-help group, but the organization crumbled in 2018 after its leaders were arrested for running a secret inner ring called DOS or The Vow that prosecutors said operated as a pyramid scheme with sex slaves.

Raniere was known as "Vanguard" here, supervising a second tier of "first-line masters" to keep a bottom rung of sex slaves under his control. Both the masters and the slaves were all women, and everything about their lives, from that they ate or wore to when they cut their hair, Raniere controlled.

Testifying for the first time Tuesday was Camila, a former slave turned master named Camila whose last name is not public.

Camila described meeting Raniere at age 13; she had just taken second place in her eighth-grade spelling bee.

Two years later, Raniere had sex with her. He was 45 at the time. Camila said he photographed her nude and later told her he knew she was "special" when they first met.

Even today, Camila says she has lasting physical and emotional scars, like battling an eating disorder ever since Raniere directed her to maintain a weight of 100 pounds or less. Camila is 5 feet 5 inches tall.

When Camila asked Ranieri about seeking medical help after experiencing “frightening physical symptoms,” he told her to “lose the weight first,” she testified.

“It felt like I would never be free,” Camila said. “There was no way out.”



*In the sex-trafficking trial of NXIVM leader Keith Ranieri, prosecutors introduced this photo showing the “first-line masters” of DOS, a secretive sex cult within the group. Ranieri, their “master,” is pictured at center, with Lauren Salzman in the top-left corner. The government redacted the image of Camila as she is a sex-crime victim. (Source: US Attorney’s Office of the Eastern District of New York.)*

Camila’s three siblings and both parents were all involved with NXIVM. Her oldest sister and father remain part of the group, while another of her sisters, Daniela; brother, Adrian; and mother, Adriana, all testified Tuesday.

Daniela was involved with NXIVM between ages 16 and 26. Ranieri began a sexual relationship with Daniela when she was 18. Later, after Daniela told Ranieri she had developed feelings for someone else, he confined her to a room for two years for her “ethical breach.”

Ranieri confiscated Daniela’s birth certificate, a copy of which she was ultimately able to obtain with the help of an attorney at a human rights commission.

Daniela remarked during her testimony that, despite the alarming extent of the torture and abuse victims underwent — in various testimony, witnesses called him a “sociopath who thrills at our pain,” a “monster” and a “master manipulator” — Ranieri is “nothing special,” and his name will be forgotten soon enough.

“It’s all very obvious and boring stuff,” Daniela said. “You’re just a liar.”

As argued by his defense attorney, Marc Agnifilo, Ranieri has maintained that he meant no harm. Garaufis asked the lawyer how, then, he can explain Ranieri’s relationship with Camila.

“Don’t treat me, this court, as if it’s not the intent to do what he did,” Garaufis said. “Please.”

Garaufis said continuing to suggest Ranieri’s innocence would be “an insult to the intelligence of anyone who listens.”

In addition to a 120-years prison sentence, Raniere on Tuesday was ordered to pay a \$1.75 million fine, and he is forbidden from contacting anyone affiliated with NXIVM or its subgroup DOS. He is also banned from viewing pornography of any kind.

Raniere read a statement of his own just before sentencing in which he technically apologized for the victim's pain, while calling them liars at least five times and denying any wrongdoing.

"It is true, I am not remorseful of the crimes I don't believe I committed at all, but I am deeply remorseful of this pain," Raniere said. "I am truly sorry."

As he handed down Raniere's life sentence, Garaufis noted that the former cult leader "remains unmoved," despite crimes that are "cruel, perverse and extremely serious."

Raniere's treatment of Camila in particular made its mark on the judge: It was "cruel to the point of inhumane," Garaufis said. "The harm he inflicted upon her is incalculable."

NXIVM, which Raniere founded in Albany in the 1990s, has gathered more than 16,000 members in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Telling recruits he had a genius IQ and would help them find enlightenment, Raniere attracted prominent members including Seagramm's heiress Clare Bronfman and "Smallville" actress Allison Mack. Both have pleaded guilty to charges, along with three other women, as Raniere's co-defendants. Bronfman was sentenced last month to nearly seven years in prison.

Garaufis gave a nod to Raniere's purported genius status after interrupting arguments alleging the former cult leader's good intent.

"I've heard enough about Mr. Raniere's theories ... let's get down to facts," Garaufis said. "You don't have to be the smartest man in the world to manipulate and to harm other people."

Following the sentencing, acting U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York Seth DuCharme addressed reporters outside the courthouse.

"When justice catches up with you, as it did today," DuCharme said of the 120-year sentence, "it is severe."

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