LA Snuff Film

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As if following the script of a homo-horror movie, in 1994 Los Angeles police charged Juan Chavez, now 35, with killing five gay men between 1986 and 1989. In March, to avoid the death penalty, Chavez finally 'fessed up to the crimes. "I wanted to get them before they got me," Chavez said of his victims. "They're spreading AIDS." On June 21 the saga ended in a courtroom just outside Hollywood, where Chavez was sentenced to life—five times over.

The fact that it took the LAPD five years to connect Chavez with the murders broadcasts "serious problems with its treatment of hate crimes," said Jon Davidson of LAMBDA Legal Defense Fund. But LA District Attorney Michael Duarte said Chavez just wasn't the serial-killer type: "He didn't take souvenirs from the crime scene."

"What is this, *Silence of the Lambs*?" said Davidson. "Either way, Chavez killed those men because of the persistent stereotype that all gay men have AIDS."

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