



ROBERT T. JOHNSON
DISTRICT ATTORNEY, BRONX COUNTY

PRESS RELEASE



L to R: Michael Canaj
(Dept. of Correction); Victim Erion Mecani (Courtesy of family)

DEADLY NEW YEAR'S EVE LEADS TO CHARGES NEARLY 3 YEARS LATER

Michael Canaj Charged With Execution-Style Murder of College Student

(Bronx, NY – November 13, 2015) – ERION MECANI was a hard-working 23-year-old, the Albanian-born young man living in the Belmont section of the Bronx. He was studying radiology at Long Island University and working as an Occupational Therapy assistant at Glen Cove-North Shore LIJ Hospital.

The last day of 2012 would also be the last day of his life. Today, two days after his 22nd birthday, MICHAEL “Mike Jelly” CANAJ has been charged in the student’s killing, announces Bronx District Attorney Robert Johnson.

CANAJ (sometimes spelled “Canag”) pled not guilty before Bronx Supreme Court Justice Steven Barrett to:

Murder in the 2nd Degree (Class A-1 felony)

Manslaughter in the 1st Degree (Class B felony)

Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the 2nd Degree (Class C felony, 2 counts)

If convicted of these charges, CANAJ faces up 25 years-to-life behind bars. He is also currently being held at Rikers Island on an unrelated Manhattan burglary charge.



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CANAJ and MECANI knew one another; both families are members of the Albanian community in the Bronx. But the relationship between the two was anything but smooth – it is alleged that CANAJ stole ERION MECANI’s car two years before the killing and totaled it during his joy ride.

It is further alleged that CANAJ and his family promised to make the MECANI family whole, but that didn’t happen.

The failure of the CANAJ family to pay up was seen as an affront, and MECANI kept trying to collect. Two days before the murder, it’s alleged that CANAJ had forked over some \$500, and promised MECANI he’d have more on December 30th. The meet was finally set up for the wee hours of the 31st – at which time MICHAEL CANAJ is accused of luring ERION MECANI to his death.

ERION MECANI was found in the driver’s seat of his father’s Cadillac, shot twice in the head, the car parked at the rear of 2324 Boston Road in the Bronxdale section of the borough.

CANAJ’ case has been adjourned until January 22nd, 2016 in Part 60, Bronx Supreme Court, 265 E. 161st Street (Hall of Justice).

The case against MICHAEL CANAJ is being prosecuted by Assistant D.A. David Slott of the Bronx D.A.’s Gangs/Major Case Bureau. The D.A. also wished to recognize the work of Detective Steven Smith, of the NYPD Major Case Squad, formerly of the Bronx Homicide Squad, for his work on this case.

An indictment is merely an accusation; all defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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