



718.286.6000
WWW.QUEENSDA.ORG



MELINDA KATZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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CONTACT: PRESS OFFICE (718) 286-6315
QDACommunications@queensda.org

MAN CHARGED WITH MANSLAUGHTER AS HATE CRIME
IN DEADLY ASSAULT AFTER FENDER BENDER

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Gilbert Augustin was arraigned today on an indictment charging him with manslaughter and assault as hate crimes in the death of 66-year-old Jasmer Singh, whom he is accused of attacking after a fender bender in Kew Gardens.

During a dispute that preceded the fatal beating, Augustin is accused of repeatedly referring to Singh as “turban man.” Singh was wearing a turban as part of his Sikh religious practice.

District Attorney Katz said: “This is a case of a fender bender immediately escalating to hateful language and then brutal, deadly violence. We will show in court that it was a rage inflamed by hate that led to this senseless tragedy. The defendant will have to answer to some very serious charges. I want to thank my office and the NYPD for thoroughly investigating this crime.”

Augustin, 30, of 111th Avenue in Jamaica, was charged in a 20-count indictment with manslaughter in the first degree as a hate crime; manslaughter in the first degree; assault in the second degree as a hate crime; assault in the second degree; two counts of aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle in the third degree; two counts of operating or driving a motor vehicle without a license; leaving the scene of an incident without reporting; three counts of operating a motor vehicle or permitting it to be operated in this state without having in full force financial security; three counts of operating, driving or parking a motor vehicle without proper license plates; operating or driving a motor vehicle with improper plates; reckless endangerment in the second degree; unlawful fleeing a police officer in a motor vehicle in the third degree; reckless driving; and stopping, standing or parking a vehicle within 15 feet of a fire hydrant.

If convicted, Augustin faces up to 25 years in prison. Queens Supreme Court Justice Kenneth Holder ordered him to return to court December 6.

According to the charges:

- On October 19, at approximately 11:50 a.m., Singh was driving a blue Toyota on the Van Wyck Expressway that collided with a black Ford Mustang driven by Augustin.

- Immediately following the collision, Singh and Augustin pulled over in front of 87-34 Van Wyck Expressway in Kew Gardens to assess the damage. A witness observed Augustin get out of his car and approach Singh, who remained seated in his vehicle, and engage in a verbal dispute with the victim.
- During the dispute, the witness heard Augustin say to Singh, in sum and substance, “No police, no police.” The witness also heard Augustin repeatedly refer to Singh as “Turban man.”
- While arguing angrily with Singh, Augustin told the victim that he was not going to allow him to go home and did not want him to call the police.
- According to witness testimony and video surveillance, Augustin reached into Singh’s car and grabbed Singh’s cell phone. Singh got out of his car and followed Augustin, who appeared to be holding two phones. The pair appeared to argue. Singh eventually recovered his phone.
- As Singh was walking back to his car, Augustin punched him three times in the head and face. One of the punches caused Singh’s turban to come flying off his head. As a result of the blows, Singh fell backward to the ground, the back of his head hitting the pavement. Singh suffered a brain injury and was taken to a hospital. He died the next day.
- After striking Singh, Augustin got into his car and drove away.
- The day after the assault, October 20, at approximately 1:30 p.m., an NYPD officer saw Augustin sitting in his car on 111th Avenue in Jamaica. The car was a black Ford Mustang that had scratches and a small dent on the rear driver’s side quarter panel.
- Augustin was unable to produce a valid driver’s license or insurance. A review of DMV records showed his driver’s license was suspended. He was taken into custody.

Assistant District Attorney Thomas Salmon of the District Attorney’s Career Criminal Major Crimes Bureau is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Joseph Randazzo and Assistant District Attorney Jaggnoor Lali under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Michael Whitney, Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Shawn Clark.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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