



BCPO News

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February 25, 2021

Union City Man Sentenced for Mansfield Vehicular Homicide

Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina announced that a 21-year-old Union City man was sentenced yesterday to five years in New Jersey state prison for causing the death of a friend while driving impaired and crashing his vehicle in late 2019 on the New Jersey Turnpike in Mansfield Township.

Under an agreement with the Prosecutor's Office, Johnalex Grullon pled guilty last month to Vehicular Homicide (Second Degree) and Assault by Auto (Third Degree) in exchange for the five-year term. His sentence was handed down in Superior Court in Mount Holly by the Hon. Philip E. Haines, J.S.C.

Grullon acknowledged in court that he had been smoking marijuana in the car prior to the crash, as well as driving in a reckless manner. He did not refute the findings of toxicology tests that indicated, at the time of the crash, he had marijuana in his system at a level unfit to safely operate a motor vehicle.

"As marijuana becomes legal in New Jersey, we urge our residents to view this case as a cautionary tale about the dangers of driving while high," Prosecutor Coffina said. "Even if using marijuana has been decriminalized, driving while impaired has not, and doing so can lead to preventable tragedies like the death of Mohamedam Elbezaz here, and the serious consequences that this defendant now must face. Our hearts go out to the family of Mr. Elbezaz."

The investigation revealed that Grullon had two passengers in his Honda Accord on the afternoon of October 19, 2019, when his vehicle veered off the roadway, struck the guardrail along the shoulder and spun across all lanes before hitting the concrete median barrier and re-entering traffic, colliding with another car.

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Grullon and the other occupants were not wearing seatbelts and were ejected from the vehicle. Mohamedam Elbezaz, 21, the rear-seat passenger, was pronounced dead at the scene. The investigation revealed that Grullon and his friends were returning from a trip to South Philadelphia, where they had traveled to get cheesesteaks.

As part of the plea agreement, Grullon must pay nearly \$13,000 in restitution to Elbezaz's family for funeral and other expenses.

A statement was read to the court from the father of the victim in which he stated, "I feel like I died when my son died. The pain this accident caused will never heal."

Grullon was prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Josh Dennis, supervisor of the BCPO Collision Analysis and Reconstruction Unit. The investigation was conducted by the New Jersey State Police.

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2021-16