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FAR ROCKAWAY MAN CHARGED WITH MURDER IN LABOR DAY STABBING DEATH

*Defendant Allegedly Used Knife to Kill Brooklyn Man During Argument;
Faces Up to 25 Years to Life in Prison if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that James Williams, 51, is facing murder and weapons charges for allegedly stabbing a 29-year-old Brooklyn man to death yesterday afternoon. The two men encountered one another near a Far Rockaway nail salon on the Labor Day holiday and started arguing with one another.

District Attorney Katz said, "The defendant elevated a fleeting disagreement and allegedly turned it into a deadly tragedy. Acting out with violence is never the answer to resolve a dispute. This altercation ended with a man brutally losing his life. This defendant is in custody and will be held accountable for his alleged rage-fueled criminal attack."

Williams, of New Haven Avenue in Far Rockaway, is awaiting arraignment in Queens Criminal Court on a complaint charging him with murder in the second degree and criminal possession of a weapon in the third degree. If convicted, the defendant faces up to 25 years to life in prison.

District Attorney Katz said that, according to the charges, shortly after 3:55 p.m. on Monday, September 7th, police responded to reports of a fight across from a nail salon in a common walking path off Beach 20th Street. Upon their arrival, police found the victim, Massiah Berkley, of Brownsville in Brooklyn, lying face up and bleeding from his chest. The 20-year-old victim was rushed to a nearby hospital, but died from the injuries.

According to the complaint, witnesses saw the defendant and the victim arguing. The heated dispute turned violent with Williams allegedly pulling out a knife and stabbing Mr. Berkley. Shortly after the bloody knife attack, police apprehended the defendant a short distance from the scene.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Drew Solomon of the New York City Police Department's 101st Precinct Detective Squad and the Queens Homicide North Detective Squad.

Senior Assistant District Attorney Jonathan Selkove, with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Rosanne Howell, of the District Attorney's Homicide Bureau, will be prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Brad A. Leventhal, Bureau Chief, Peter J. McCormack III, Senior Deputy Bureau Chief, John W. Kosinski and Kenneth A. Appelbaum, Deputy Bureau Chiefs and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Daniel A. Saunders.

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

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