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**D.A. BROWN: HOUSEGUEST CHARGED IN STABBING DEATH OF FRIEND
AND CLUBBING OF MOTHER IN HILLCREST HOME DURING BURGLARY**

Faces 25 Years to Life in Prison

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that an unemployed man who had once been a guest in the home of a teenage friend has been charged with the murder of the friend and the baseball bat assault on the teen's mother inside their Hillcrest home during the commission of a burglary earlier this week.

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendants' alleged actions are egregious and troubling in that the victims opened their home to him and he repaid them for their generosity by allegedly stealing their property, destroying their family and robbing a young man of his life. The crime is one more shocking example of mindless violence that takes innocent lives and recklessly endangers public safety."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Emmanuel Polanco, 21, a homeless drifter who had previously stayed at the victims' home for several months. The defendant has been charged with three counts of second-degree murder, four counts of first-degree robbery, four counts of first-degree burglary, two counts of first-degree assault and two counts of fourth-degree criminal possession of a weapon. If convicted, the defendant faces up to 50 years to life in prison.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the charges, the defendant repeatedly stabbed David Higgins, 19, in the abdomen, back and face when Higgins returned home on the afternoon of October 30, 2006, and discovered the defendant burglarizing his residence, a two-family house located at 77-10 162nd Street in Hillcrest. The defendant is additionally charged with assaulting Higgins' mother, Verne Culberson, 56, by clubbing her once in the head with a baseball bat when she returned home from work that day. The defendant allegedly robbed Ms. Culberson of her cell phone and cash before fleeing the scene.

According to District Attorney Brown, Higgins was taken to New York Hospital Medical Center of Queens in serious condition and died there yesterday morning. His mother was also hospitalized and required fifteen staples to close her head wound.

District Attorney Brown said that the defendant was apprehended last night by NYPD detectives and is being held pending arraignment in Queens Criminal Court in Kew Gardens. Detectives allegedly recovered a knife on the defendant.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Henry Szachacz of the New York City Police Department's 107th Precinct Detective Squad under the supervision of Sergeant Branko Yurisak and Detectives David Moser and John Warner of the NYPD's Queens Homicide Squad under the supervision of Lieutenant John Perdoch.

Assistant District Attorney Marissa B. Gillespie of the District Attorney's Homicide Investigations Bureau is prosecuting the case – and was assisted by Assistant District Attorney Kristin J. Fraser in the investigation – under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Peter T. Reese, Bureau Chief, Peter J. McCormack III, Deputy Bureau Chief, and Richard B. Schaeffer, Supervisor, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Charles A. Testagrossa and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney for Major Crimes Daniel A. Saunders.

It should be noted that criminal charges are merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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