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BRONX WOMAN CHARGED WITH MURDER FOR HIGH-SPEED CRASH
THAT KILLED PASSENGER IN UBER

*Allegedly Drove Up to 123 MPH Drag Racing on Whitestone Expressway;
Faces Up to 25 years to Life in Prison*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Melissa Rodriguez-Lopez was arraigned today on an indictment charging her with murder and manslaughter for a high-speed car crash that killed a passenger in an Uber allegedly struck by Rodriguez-Lopez while drag racing at up to 123 miles an hour on the Whitestone Expressway.

District Attorney Katz said: “We will not tolerate the use of our highways as raceways. This defendant’s alleged selfish actions and reckless disregard for the rules of the road resulted in tragedy. She will be held fully accountable.”

Rodriguez-Lopez, 28, of Kossuth Avenue in the Bronx, was arraigned on a six-count indictment charging her with murder in the second degree, manslaughter in the second degree, assault in the second degree, leaving the scene of an accident without reporting, assault in the third degree and reckless driving. Supreme Court Justice Michael Aloise ordered Rodriguez-Lopez to return to court August 29. If convicted, she faces up to 25 years to life in prison.

According to the charges, on May 27 at approximately 3 a.m., Rodriguez-Lopez – a self-described street racing enthusiast – was driving a 2015 Lexus northbound on the Whitestone Expressway with a friend, Marisol Cruz, in the passenger seat. She hit the back of a Toyota Corolla driven by Manishanker Roy, 43, an Uber driver who was transporting Steven Spaulding, 62, of Brooklyn.

Records from the Lexus indicate the car, which was registered to Rodriguez-Lopez, was going approximately 123 mph within seconds of the collision. The cars airbags had deployed.

Rodriguez-Lopez left the crash scene without reporting the collision, getting a ride from another drag racer.

Later that morning, Rodriguez-Lopez made a report at the NYPD’s 52nd Precinct that her car had been stolen. Body-worn camera footage shows that she had injuries to her arm consistent with an airbag deploying. Cruz sustained injuries to her lower leg and knee.

Roy and Spaulding were taken to New York-Presbyterian Queens hospital in Flushing. Roy had significant injuries to his neck and body and Spaulding had numerous spinal fractures and suffered a stroke following surgery. He died on June 10.

Assistant District Attorney Alyssa Mendoza, of the District Attorney’s Career Criminal Major Crime Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Michael Whitney, Bureau Chief, and Assistant District Attorney John Kosinski, Bureau Chief, Homicide Bureau, 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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