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For Immediate Release

**MANHATTAN D.A.'S DEPLORABLE FAILURE TO INVESTIGATE CLAIMS
OF INNOCENCE RESULTS IN THE CONTINUED WRONGFUL CONVICTION OF
JON-ADRIAN VELAZQUEZ**

ATTORNEYS FILE MOTION TO VACATE CONVICTION

**Eyewitnesses' Recantations and Confession by Real Killer of Retired Police Officer Provide
Convincing and Overwhelming Evidence That Velazquez is Innocent.**

(New York, NY - May 2, 2013) Jon-Adrian Velazquez, sentenced to life in prison for the murder of an off-duty police officer in Harlem on January 27, 1998, today filed a motion for a new trial in New York State Supreme Court after his innocence pleas were rejected by Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance's Conviction Integrity Unit.

Jon Adrian's attorneys Robert C. Gottlieb and Celia Gordon were joined today at the New York State Supreme Court by attorney Ron Kuby, representing the new witnesses to whom the real killer confessed. Jon Adrian's mother Maria and wife Zulay, as well exonerees Jeff Deskovic, Khorey Wise and Eric Glisson, family and friends joined to offer their support for a new trial.

Velazquez was convicted of the murder based solely on eyewitness misidentifications, the leading cause of wrongful convictions. There was no DNA or physical evidence tying Velazquez to the crime other than the testimony of a number of eyewitnesses, who have either recanted or raise serious questions about police procedures leading to their misidentification. Jon Adrian Velazquez was home with his wife and children at the time of the murder. He was on the phone with his mother for over an hour according to telephone records, discussing plans to visit the grave of his deceased father the next day - his father's birthday.

Attorneys Robert C. Gottlieb and Celia Gordon, representing Jon-Adrian, had presented new evidence to the Manhattan DA's office 18 months ago, soon after the Conviction Integrity unit was established. They were assured the case would receive a transparent and comprehensive reinvestigation, but that proved to be nothing but an empty promise.

"We received a 16- page rejection which was nothing more than a rehash of the case and a confirmation that the Manhattan District Attorney's 18 month reinvestigation was a farce; a sad joke. It became apparent over the past year that the Conviction Integrity Unit of the Manhattan DA did not, in fact, give a fresh look at these strong claims, but treated the case as just another prosecution and tried to undermine our efforts. Most disturbing though are the recent actions of the DA's office as it relates to compelling evidence we obtained from a number of witnesses who stated that a man they knew unequivocally confessed to the killing of Albert Ward."

“It became apparent over the past year and a half that the Conviction Integrity Unit did not give a fresh look at these strong claims, but instead focused solely on an effort to protect a wrongful conviction.”

According to two confidential witnesses, a man named Mustapha confessed on numerous occasions to being responsible for the murder of Albert Ward. The description of the killer given to the police was that of a black man with cornrows and/or dreadlocks. Jon-Adrian is a Hispanic man who at the time of the murder had closely cropped hair and looks absolutely nothing like the wanted poster prepared based upon eyewitness observations.

New Evidence

An off-duty police officer, Albert Ward, who ran a numbers parlor in Harlem, was shot and killed during a robbery. At the time of the murder, a sketch of the shooter, who looked nothing like Jon-Adrian Velazquez, was made public. The police received information from three independent sources identifying the shooter as a man from the neighborhood named “Moustapha.” The description given of Moustapha matched the police sketch.

Tragically, the police failed to conduct any meaningful investigation into the individual known as Moustapha and instead pressured one of the eyewitnesses into selecting an individual from hundreds of arrest photos he was shown at the precinct.

That eyewitness, 20-year-old drug dealer, Augustus Brown, whose selection of Mr. Velazquez’s photo set the case against Jon-Adrian Velazquez in motion and abruptly halted any police investigation into “Moustapha”, has repeatedly and consistently recanted his identification since 2004. Mr. Brown has stated time and again that the “police told him they knew he was involved in the murder and if he did not give up the shooter he would go down.” Mr. Brown stated that he picked out Jon-Adrian’s photo because he just wanted to leave the precinct, and that once he selected Velazquez police immediately backed off and stopped threatening him. Another, so-called eyewitness, Phillip Jones, who was in prison at the time of his interrogation, picked Velazquez out of a line-up. Jones now states that the person he picked out of the lineup was not the shooter, and that he felt that he had no choice but to testify against Mr. Velazquez. Mr. Jones told our investigator, “I felt threatened because the police were threatening to arrest me at the time and I decided testify because I felt pressured by the police.”

A Man Named Moustapha Confesses to the Murder

A man named Moustapha has, according to two confidential witnesses, confessed on numerous occasions to being responsible for the murder of Albert Ward. The description of the killer given to the police was that of a black man with cornrows and/or dreadlocks. Jon-Adrian is a Hispanic man who at the time of the murder had closely cropped hair and looks absolutely nothing like the wanted poster prepared based upon witness observations. The individual named Moustapha matches the description of the killer given to the police by witnesses. He has repeatedly told witnesses that he shot and killed a retired cop in New York City in a robbery gone bad. He also bragged about getting away with it stating that another guy was doing his time.

“There is no question that Jon-Adrian Velazquez is innocent of this murder and has served nearly 14 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. We have witnesses who have recanted their identifications and, most importantly, we have two new witnesses who have come forth to state unequivocally that a man with the same name given to police immediately following the murder, and matching the description given by the eyewitnesses, has confessed to being the killer,” added the attorneys.

Martin Sheen, actor and activist, reaffirmed his strong support of Mr. Velazquez and the continued effort to have him declared innocent of murder.

For more information on the case, see www.freejonadrianvelazquez.org.