

# Mother's Crusade in Search of Justice for Murdered Daughter

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The roadblocks and obstacles thrown in the way of Leslie Brill Meserole in her nearly seven year quest to find justice for her murdered daughter, Amanda Wienckowski, are so diabolically Kafkaesque in their ingenuity that one might be forgiven for thinking that such things don't happen in the United States of the 21st Century.

But they do happen. And in addition to grief at the loss of her beautiful 20-year-old daughter and outrage over the fact that the girl's killer has never been brought to justice, Meserole has had to deal with the frustration of a bureaucracy gone mad in an apparent effort to cover up its own mistakes in handling the case.

"I can't give up and I never will," said Meserole. "It has been a battle all the way through. I want the facts and I want the facts in front of me."

In August, Meserole's determination paid off when Buffalo Police turned over 1,225 pages of documents and a DVD about the investigation to comply with a Freedom of Information Request she submitted.

"I do not understand why for six years I had to fight every day for answers. I just want to know what happened to Amanda," said Meserole, who is also the administrator for her daughter's estate.

Not included in the release of information was the coroner's report or body photos - something that angered the Wienckowski family which filed an Article 78 Petition in state Supreme Court seeking the information from Erie County and New York State Police.

Also not included were records pertaining to visits, phone calls and statements made to and by Antoine Garner after he was incarcerated for a series of crimes in 2013. Garner was the last person to see Amanda alive, and is considered the prime suspect in her murder.

He was never charged in the case, in large part due to the fact that the Erie County Medical Examiner's office has maintained for years that Amanda's death was "accidental."

First the office said she died of an accidental heroin overdose. When the toxicology report came back showing she didn't have enough heroin in her system to cause her death, the ME amended its' report to say she had died of accidental asphyxiation, either due to a large amount of the "date rape drug" GBH found in her system or because she was having sex with a grossly obese man.

Finally, after several nationally known forensics experts retained by the family unanimously agreed she'd been beaten and then strangled to death, the ME's office amended its' report once again, saying that the cause of death was officially undetermined.

Ironically, at the same time officials claimed that Amanda's death was an accident, they used the argument that it was part of an official criminal investigation as the reason for keeping the records out of the hands of the distraught mother.

"For six years they denied our FOIL requests by saying it was an open investigation," Meserole said. "Then we find out that it has never really been an open investigation. We're not stopping until we get justice for Amanda."