

You've got wrong guy, cries hate crime susp

BY THOMAS ZAMBITO
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LAMELL JONES says he has been living a nightmare since a hate-crime victim who spent two months in a coma fingered him in the attack.

Jones, 24, was arrested in February based solely on victim Risto Prendzov's ID — which came after two years of therapy piecing together memories of the beating.

"At first, I was in denial because it was so unbelievable," Jones told the Daily News last week. "I just couldn't believe I was being accused of these things."

He spent a month on Rikers Island, before Queens prosecutors conceded doubts about the reliability of Prendzov's identification of Jones. Only then did prosecutors agree to lower his bail from \$150,000 to \$10,000.

In their decision, prosecutors cited a call from Prendzov's psychotherapist, who helped him recollect the attack.

"We spoke with one of the victim's doctors who, based on the nature of the injury, expressed concern that the victim may be suffering a false memory of the incident," Queens District Attorney

spokesman Kevin Ryan said.

Jones made bail last month, but faces more than 25 years in prison for attempted murder as prosecutors decide whether to drop charges. His lawyer, Robert DiDio, blames them for lending credence to the ID.

"It's just simply not reliable, and I'm shocked that the prosecutor's office would require such high bail on such flimsy evidence," DiDio said.

The Nov. 21, 2008, attack began on an Ozone Park street when three men shouted anti-gay epithets at Prendzov, according to a criminal complaint.

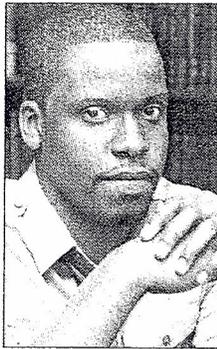
The beating left Prendzov in a coma for two months. He was treated for a skull fracture and had surgery to remove part of his brain.

He declined to comment for this story.

Since his release, Jones has been out to prove he was in his Ozone Park home at the time of the attack. He says prosecutors said they won't consider dismissing charges until a DNA test is done.

"I'm just hoping that I get a dismissal as soon as possible," he said. "I just want to get my life back on track."

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Lamell Jones