

## SENTENCE IN HIT-RUN DELAYED BY THREAT

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A threat against the attorney of the motorist who struck and killed a Queens honor student forced a delay yesterday in the convicted man's sentencing.

The threat sent to the office of lawyer Robert DiDio was made of cut-out newspaper letters. According to a source near the case, the note said DiDio would pay for the death of Melissa Tang, killed in March before her 13th birthday.

The note was signed "The Community" and included a newspaper picture of DiDio and a photo of bottle of alcohol, the source said.

The city's Asian community was outraged last month when Edgar Morales, accused of killing Melissa, was acquitted of manslaughter, drunken driving and other charges that could have sent him to prison for 15 years. The Tang family had collected 26,000 signatures before the nonjury trial, urging the judge to throw the book at Morales, 28, of Bayside.

Justice Pearl Corrado convicted Morales of criminally negligent homicide, assault and reckless endangerment. He faces no more than four years behind bars.

Melissa's father, Herman, accused the judge and the defense attorney of plotting to postpone a sentencing that could reignite anger in the Asian community.

"Maybe he did it himself," Tang said of the threat to DiDio. The judge and DiDio "are playing a game," he said at another point. "They want to postpone and postpone until no one shows up."

Some 20 friends and relatives of the Tangs were in court for the sentencing, which was delayed until Dec. 5 so cops can check the threat.

"They are just jerking people around because [Tang's] friends, family and politicians have criticized how this case has been handled," said Lillie Huey, head of the Asian Committee of the 104th Precinct Community Council.

The sentencing was first postponed from 9:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. But at 2:30 p.m., DiDio, Assistant District Attorney Scott Kessler, Corrado and Herman Tang went behind closed doors to discuss the threat to DiDio.

When the doors opened, DiDio, flanked by two court officers, was whisked from the building. Before the sentencing, DiDio praised Corrado for her "courage."

"She didn't bow to community pressure or pressure from the DA's office," DiDio said. "She based her verdict on the evidence."