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Romanucci & Blandin Settles Chicago Police Pursuit Carreon Case for \$19.25 Million

December 12, 2019

Romanucci & Blandin, LLC announced today it has reached a \$19.25 million settlement with the City of Chicago after two of its police officers were found liable for the death of 37-year-old Maria Carreon. In April 2019, the Carreon family was awarded \$21.3 million after a jury found that the City of Chicago and Chicago Police Department officers showed an utter indifference to or conscious disregard for their own safety and the safety of others, particularly the Carreon family, when the officers initiated and engaged in a police pursuit of a vehicle which they believed to be stolen back in 2015. This disregard led to the loss of a mother of five and lifelong injuries for her family members. Circuit Court Judge Joan Powell entered the order approving the settlement after a hearing on December 11, 2019. Attorney James Ormond and Emily Zapotocny appeared for the City of Chicago.

“Clearly the City realized they had substantial risk with post-trial motions and an appeal with this case, while our plaintiffs’ risk was less so,” said Antonio M. Romanucci, the plaintiffs’ attorney and founding partner at Romanucci & Blandin, LLC. “The value of the dollars now in the family’s hands versus years from now was worth the City’s offer to our clients and we appreciate that recognition.”

On the evening of the incident, members of the Carreon family were travelling eastbound on 71st Street in Chicago in a black Dodge Durango van. They were on their way to visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Des Plaines, a trip they had taken previously together. At approximately the same time, two Chicago Police Department officers began to pursue a vehicle they learned had been reported stolen. The officers chased the vehicle through numerous narrow residential streets, on a dark early evening, failing to stop at at least three stops signs, driving more than 18 mph over the speed limit, and accelerating through speed bumps. As the vehicle attempted to elude the police, the police accelerated, driving recklessly to keep up. The pursuit lasted approximately five blocks and 40-45 seconds, until the vehicle blew through a final stop sign at the intersection of 71st Street and S. Carpenter Street, T-boning the van carrying numerous members of the Carreon family.

Maria Carrion Adame, a 37-year-old mother of five children, was killed and numerous family members were seriously injured. Maria’s 15-year-old daughter Leslie Carrion, Maria’s brother Ricardo Carreon, Maria’s sister Ericka Carreon, Maria’s sister Viridiana Castillo, and Maria’s niece Jaslin Castillo all sustained serious and permanent injuries including: serious pelvic fractures, clavicle fractures, broken ribs and vertebrae, and injuries to internal organs, including lacerations of the spleen, kidney, and liver.

The officers involved violated numerous CPD policies pertaining to police pursuits during this incident, including failing to terminate the pursuit when stop signs were blown, given that the pursuit was initiated for a property crime only, failing to have a marked squad car as the primary pursuit vehicle, and most importantly, failing to have their lights and sirens on during the pursuit which was required by the CPD's General Orders in order to alert other innocent motorists that a dangerous situation was approaching. The Carreon family, which all parties agreed were innocent bystanders, were T-boned without any warning that the dangerous situation was approaching, preventing them from protecting themselves. Furthermore, during the pursuit, a Sergeant from another District got on the radio and ordered the officers to terminate the pursuit immediately once he learned it was for possession of a stolen vehicle.

In addition to Romanucci, Romanucci & Blandin Senior Associate Bhavani K. Raveendran and Associates Martin D. Gould, Nicolette A. Ward and Debra Thomas were also instrumental in representing the Carreon family.