

Who Wrote Rob Card's Death Sentence at the Broome County Jail?

On January 8th, Robert Card entered the Broome County Jail in handcuffs. Less than 13 days later, he left lifeless on a stretcher. Rob, a 48-year-old Broome County man, who suffered from substance use disorder and a brain tumor, died at the hands of our Broome County jail. He was a skilled carpenter and artist. As a father, brother, son, and friend, he was loved by many and will be missed.

The Broome County Sheriff and jail refuse to acknowledge his death – but Rob's story needs to be heard.

Rob was arrested for misdemeanor drug possession and petit larceny on February 26, 2018. He was assigned to probation and drug treatment.

In the fall of 2018, Rob was diagnosed with a brain tumor. At the time of his arrest he was being treated by a doctor for the tumor and side effects, such as seizures. His condition was known to criminal justice authorities overseeing his case.

On January 8th, 2019, he was arrested on a probation violation and incarcerated at the Broome County Jail. This would prove deadly.

While incarcerated, Rob experienced headaches and loss of motor control due to the tumor. He was also suffering from an abscessed tooth causing his cheek and mouth to swell. In response, the jail offered him Tylenol – which he often was forced to purchase. As his condition worsened, due to the tumor, he fell multiple times, and had trouble walking and clothing himself. The jail refused him any meaningful medical care, including previously prescribed seizure medication. Visits to the medical unit were met with inhuman indifference.

In desperation, he called his family on Friday, the 18th, stating, "Broome County jail is killing me."

Over that weekend, Rob was transferred to the jail's medical unit one last time. The family believes that while in the medical unit, he had more seizures causing him to hit his head which created swelling in the brain, inducing a fatal stroke.

Somehow, January 20th, Sunday evening, Rob was released from custody at 7:46pm by a Broome County Judge despite being incapable of appearing in a court of law. That same evening Rob was transferred to the hospital without his family's

knowledge. It seems that no jail guards accompanied him into the ambulance. The family was not notified until the next day by the Sheriff's office.

Upon arrival at the hospital his family was informed that Rob had little brain activity. His condition declined and his family, feeling helpless, came to grips with the fact he would not recover. On Tuesday, January 22nd, Rob was formally declared dead at 1:11pm. He was kept on life support until Friday when -- per Rob's wishes -- his organs were gifted to save others.

The Broome County jail killed him.

Prior to being arrested, Rob was actively under the care of medical providers for the recently diagnosed tumor. His brain tumor and deteriorating condition were completely ignored by the jail despite his obvious and desperate need for medical care.

He is at least the ninth death since 2011.

Like all of those who have died at the hands of our county jail, Rob's life had value. He left behind six children and partner of almost 21 years. He left behind a large family and network of friends. There was a time when Rob was optimistic about his own recovery and seemed to be doing well. He was known as a caring man and, even in his death, showed this as an organ donor saving six lives upon passing.

After his passing, his family came to our organizations, JUST (Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier) and Truth Pharm, with a container of his ashes, pleading, "something needs to be done."

Rob's story reveals the deadly results of our criminal justice system and treatment-mandated programs. The jail, Sheriff Harder, Major Smolinsky in charge of the jail, the mysterious judge who ordered his release remain quiet. It has been almost a month since Rob's passing, and the jail has still not acknowledged his death.

Something does need to be done.

A jail stay should not be a death sentence. Public health crises are not solved through criminalization and incarceration. People who are incarcerated deserve to be treated as human beings and provided adequate medical care. As a community we need to reflect on how a minor drug and petit larceny charge resulted in a man's death. We need to rise up and proclaim, "this is not acceptable!"

Rob suffered from two medical conditions, substance use disorder and a brain tumor. Our elected officials who have decided to address the overdose epidemic through policing and coerced treatment are implicated in his death. These misguided and deadly reactions to a public health issue put Rob in jail and under care of Correction Medical Care who routinely fail to provide adequate medical care for inmates at the Broome County jail.

Rob did not deserve to die in a jail cell without the love and comfort of his friends and family or his doctor's medical care.

Unfortunately, there are many questions unanswered. Answers his loved ones and our community deserve answers to.

1. Why did Rob need to be incarcerated in the first place?
2. Why did the jail fail to treat his brain tumor?
3. Why wasn't he given his prescribed seizure medication?
4. How was he released from the jail while lying lifeless on a stretcher?
5. Which judge signed off on his release?
6. Who represented him while incapacitated prior to release?
7. What jail officials worked to release Rob before he formally passed?
8. Was Rob's medical care delayed while they worked to create a "discharge?"

We demand to know what happened to Rob Card. Sign our petition, [Who Wrote Rob Card's Death Sentence in the Broome County Jail?](#), and look out for updates in the coming days as we learn more about what happened to Rob, and to see how you can help support his family as well as upcoming actions. Rob deserves justice.

Justice and Unity for the Southern Tier
February 22, 2019