

Lisa "Left Eye"s' mother, is suing an automaker alleging it ignored warnings that its SUV was prone to roll over.

The late hip-hop music star, rap artist Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes, member of the multiplatinum trio TLC on Arista Records; died in a one-car crash in 2002 while driving a red 2001 Mitsubishi Montero she rented while vacationing in Honduras.

Lisa "Left Eye" had also announced that she had aligned herself with Marion 'Suge' Knight's Death Row label. Lisa "Left Eye" had said that she would record a new solo album in Los Angeles under the name N.I.N.A. While "Nina" is slang for a 9 mm handgun, Left Eye said her Row moniker stood for "New Identity Non-Applicable"

The lawsuit against the Japanese company and its North America subsidiary claims Lisa "Left Eye" was driving at a normal speed when she swerved to miss a car stopped in front of her, causing her SUV to flip.

Savannah attorney Jeff Harris, who is representing the singer's mother, Wanda Lopes-Colemon, plans to use a study on vehicle rollovers to bolster his argument that Mitsubishi should have warned consumers about the potentially fatal design flaw.

Consumer Reports gave the 2001 Mitsubishi Montero Limited a "not acceptable" safety rating after testing the model and six other SUVs using sharp turns to simulate what it calls real-world emergencies. Only the Mitsubishi appeared prone to rollovers, the study claims.

Lisa "Left Eye" was in Honduras with an entourage of about 12, including members of Egypt, a fledging female hip-hop group based in Philadelphia. They were filming the vacation to possibly use as part of a video.

The video camera captured the group just before impact laughing and discussing plans to play cards that night as they drove down a two-lane highway. The camera recorded something on

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the roadway up ahead, and Lisa "Left Eye" grabbing the steering wheel and swerving to miss it, the attorney said. It cuts off before impact.

The sport utility vehicle rolled on the pavement and then flipped twice more before coming to rest in an adjacent field. Lisa "Left Eye" was thrown out the window and died at the scene.

The passengers don't seem to agree on how many people were in the vehicle, but Harris said he believes there were seven others with Lisa "Left Eye".

Some of the passengers, including T'Melle Rawlings, have filed suit against Lisa "Left Eye" estate, blaming her for their injuries.

Rawlings, who danced and sang with Egypt, was sitting in the row behind Lopes and was the most critically injured, said her attorney, Harry R. Levin of Philadelphia.

Rawlings, then age 19, almost lost her leg, the lawyer said. After several surgeries, she is still left with pain and a limp, Levin said.

Both Rawlings and Lopes-Colemon filed their suits in U.S. District Court in Atlanta. Another suit against Lopes' estate has been filed in DeKalb County, where Lopes owned a home.

Mitsubishi's attorney, Frank Faison Middleton IV of Albany, did not return calls left Thursday with his staff. He has filed a response to the suit by the Lopes family denying any wrongdoing on the part of the manufacturer.

Levin said he had to go forward with the suit even though his client respected Lopes, and he himself is a devoted fan of TLC's music.

Late Hip-Hop Star Lisa 'Left Eye' Legal News

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"I'm a middle-aged Jewish guy from up in Philly, but I understood what a talent she was — a shining star," Levin said of Lisa "Left Eye".

Attorneys for the survivors point to a Honduras police report noting that Lisa "Left Eye" may have been speeding.

But the Lopeses' attorney said there is no evidence of speeding.

"I think that's going to be hotly contested by us because of the forensics," said Harris, with the Atlanta-based firm of Scherffius, Ballard, Still and Ayers.

Last year, Harris' firm won a \$47 million verdict against Ford Motor Co. in a crash that left a 6-year-old Cobb County girl paralyzed from the chest down. A Fulton County jury found that Ford knew about safety concerns but failed to issue a recall warning consumers a defective latch allowed some rear fold-down seats to collapse during collisions in its 2000 Lincoln LS luxury sedan.

In Lisa "Left Eye" case, neither her family's lawyers nor those suing her estate have specified how much they are seeking.

"It's a multimillion-dollar lawsuit," Levin said. "No question."