

Aaliyah's Record Co Lawsuit Dismissed

Written by Keith ID665

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Aaliyah Aaliyah's record company cannot sue the video producer that arranged the airplane flight on which the singer and eight others crashed and died in the Bahamas in 2001, a Manhattan appeals court has ruled.

The state Supreme Court's Appellate Division dismissed the lawsuit brought by Blackground Records, which the singer partly owned, saying that in this case only the singer's parents had a right to sue for her wrongful death. The court said the parents did so and were compensated.

In a 4-0 ruling, the appeals judges reversed a lower court decision Justice Carol Edmead issued in May. Edmead ruled that Aaliyah, actress, R&B and hip-hop performer; whose full name was Aaliyah Dana Haughton, was an "asset" of Blackground rather than an "employee" and therefore could sue.

The appeals court disagreed.

"The concept that a person is a property asset of another is, of course, abhorrent to modern day thinking," the appellate judges wrote. "Courts almost universally reject the antiquated proprietary view of the master/servant relationship."

But whether Aaliyah was an "employee" of Blackground is "totally irrelevant" as to their right to sue for a person's wrongful death, the court said. In New York, where Aaliyah was born, that right is reserved for the dead person's personal representative, the court wrote.

The appellate judges also said that "permitting such a lawsuit to proceed would further subject the overburdened courts to frivolous lawsuits."

Blackground's appellate lawyer, Frank Penski, said Thursday he had not seen the decision and did not know whether his client planned to pursue the case.

Aaliyah had just finished shooting a music video when she and eight others were killed in the crash of a twin-engine Cessna as it left Marsh Harbor on Abaco Island in the Bahamas en route to Florida on Aug. 25, 2001. She was 22.

An investigation showed that the aircraft was overloaded by 700 pounds when it went down. An autopsy found cocaine and alcohol in the pilot's body, according to the coroner's inquest testimony of Dr. Giovander Raju.

In September 2003, Aaliyah's parents, Michael and Diana Haughton, filed papers in Los Angeles Superior Court saying they had reached an undisclosed settlement of their lawsuit against the plane's operator, owners and flight broker.

Aaliyah appeared in two movies, "Romeo Must Die" and "Queen of the Damned."

Aaliyah won top female R&B artist honors in 2003 at the American Music Awards and the Billboard R&B-Hip-Hop Awards.

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