

'Suge' Knight Loses Suit

Written by Robert ID1081

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Lydia Harris who said she and Marion "Suge" Knight started Death Row Records nearly two decades ago has been awarded \$107 million in damages, after four years of legal wrangling over profits she said that rap music mogul and west coast hip-hop culture legend 'Suge' Knight owes her.

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Ronald M. Sohigian earlier this month ordered 'Suge' Knight and his companies, Death Row Records and Tha Row Inc., to pay Lydia Harris \$45 million in economic damages, \$2 million in noneconomic damages and \$60 million in punitive damages.

Sohigian ordered the judgment after finding that 'Suge' Knight and his attorneys violated court rules requiring them to answer questions and provide information to opposing counsel during the discovery process. The lawsuit, filed in 2002, never reached trial.

In her lawsuit, Harris said that in 1989 she and Mr. Marion 'Suge' Knight became equal founding partners of the music label and that, when he recognized its money-making potential, he pushed her out of the business.

She also alleged that Mr. 'Suge' Knight defamed her in hopes of destroying her credibility within the music industry and with new artists.

"His conduct made it clear that he did not intend to honor his agreement or pay the shares of profit due her," said attorney David Casselman, who represents Harris. "He also publicly insulted her and falsely accused her of promiscuity and incompetence."

Harris was vice president of Death Row Records at its inception, Casselman said, but was later removed without her knowledge.

The lawyer said he plans to collect his client's judgment by seizing 'Suge' Knight's assets.

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Mr. Knight's lawyer declined to comment on the case Tuesday. But his client has denied the allegations in court papers.

This is the second major civil judgment against 'Suge' Knight in recent years. In 2003 'Suge' Knight was ordered to pay \$5.5 million to artist managers who accused him of stealing one of their acts.

Harris' husband, Michael "Harrio" Harris, told The Times in 1997 that he put up \$1.5 million in 1991 for a half stake in an entertainment company called GF Entertainment that would include a record division called Death Row.

Mr. Marion 'Suge' Knight has repeatedly denied that contention.

At the time, Michael Harris had already begun serving a 28-year sentence for selling crack cocaine and attempted murder but insisted in the jailhouse interview that he and his wife (Lydia Harris) have negotiated deals with major music labels from behind bars. He went to state prison in 1987.

During an initial deposition in the case, Mr. 'Suge' Knight denied knowing Lydia Harris, Casselman said. He later said he knew her.

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