

Senseless Bloodshed. The Brutal Killing of two Young Italian-Americans

G. P. (February 22, 2010)



On Thursday, February 18 the bodies of Michael Mirasola and Jonathan Beneduce were discovered in the latter's Ford Explorer in Teaneck, N.J. by a local resident. This callous act of violence has destroyed lives in countless ways, in addition to alarming communities in Queens and Bergen County of the danger of violence that often remain hushed or underground. An alleged suspect has been arrested in connection with the two men and their deaths

On Thursday morning Antonia Njoku left her Teaneck, N.J. home intending to head to work. The neighborhood was quiet as any starkly cold February morning, but something struck her eye. An SUV was parked outside of her home near Interstate 95, and when Ms. Njoku approached the Ford Explorer she saw the violently murdered bodies of Michael Mirasola, 27, of Ozone Park and Jonathan Beneduce, 28, of Howard Beach, Queens.

In what appeared to be a scene straight out of a gangster film, the two men were assessed by



[Bergen County Police](#) [2] to have been shot multiple times in the head in what looked like an illicit business deal gone terribly wrong.

Nicholas Kiriakakis, 25, co-owner of Pearl Restaurant and Lounge in Bayside, Queens, is being charged with the murder of Beneduce and Mirasola. Prosecutors say that Kiriakakis turned on his two 'friends', brutally killing them both while subsequently leaving the engine running and the car door wide open. The home of the alleged assassin was searched by NYPD on Saturday; prescription drugs and a stun gun were confiscated, yet no conclusive evidence points to Kiriakakis' direct involvement in the crime, besides hearsay from various confidential sources that place him with the two victims on February 17th, the day of the crime.

According to [Bergen County](#) [3] Persecutor James Molinelli, the current explanation for the double homicide is that it was a 'drug related.' This doesn't assuage the anger and pain of friends and relatives who are struggling to understand how such a seemingly trivial thing could have led to the deaths of the two young men. There must be more to it, and the police are going to have to dig deeper and pry mouths open in order to turn a piecemeal story into a vivid portrait of reality: what really happened, and what was the motive? Two young men are dead in an execution-style murder, signifying a potential illegal underground network that could be exposed in upcoming days. Some have noted that, being two Italian-Americans, Mirasola and Beneduce were portrayed by the Daily News in a less than positive light in an initial article quoting Molinelli as saying "Beneduce and Mirasola were both unemployed and lived with their parents". You can guess what this might possibly have to do with what happened... This stirred readers, some of whom added offensive, nonsensical comments to the online version of the article, alluding to notions that the crime was a "mob-style rubout" or "something Tony Soprano would do". Some even referred to Ozone Park and Howard Beach as "John Gotti's neighborhood" so why is anyone surprised to see this happen? No comment!

Meanwhile, the fact that the crime took place in an upscale and 'safe' town in New Jersey has gotten locals alarmed. But a wave of shock has swept through the two Queens Italian-American neighborhoods of Ozone Park and Howard Beach as well, where the legacy of past mobsters has permanently imprinted itself on the neighborhoods' reputation. On September 10, 2009 another Italian American young man, Geraldo Antoniello, was fatally shot in his home during what appeared to be a forced-entry burglary while he was trying to rescue his father who was being accosted. Antoniello was 29 and the son of the owner of Romeo's Pizzeria; his murderer is still at large. Only a few individuals who were close to Mirasola and Beneduce may know the truth about that wretched day and hopefully someone will tell it to the world. As of now, Kiriakakis is being held at the Queens Detention Center on \$3 million bail, but is likely to be extradited to New Jersey soon. While the investigators try to 'make sense' of why the crime happened, friends and relatives will hardly be able to accept the idea that these men may have stepped into their own deaths unknowingly.

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