

At What Cost? Kardin Ulysse One Year Later

By Sam Akhtar

Being a teenager is already a transformational time in people's lives. During these formative years, young adults are questioning authority, conventional truths and shaping their own identities.

For Kardin Ulysse, however, his teenage years are being spent trying to recover from a brutal attack, which left him blind in his right eye.

In an exclusive interview with the *Canarsie Courier*, the Ulysse family spoke about the recovery process and what it has been like for their 14-year-old son since the June 5, 2012 attack at Roy H. Mann Junior High School.

The family, and their attorney Sanford Rubenstein, recalled the vicious attack allegedly carried out by two school bullies at the Bergen Beach junior high school.

According to the Department of Education's (DOE) incident report, Ulysse, who was wearing a wig at the time as a joke, was being called a "f—g f—t," a "p—," a "transvestite" and gay during the brutal beating in the school's cafeteria.

The incident, which was captured on surveillance camera, shows the two bullies — ages 12 and 13 — beating Ulysse to such an extent that his eyeglasses shattered into his eye.

"He's had eight total surgeries since the attack," explained the father, Pierre Ulysse. The surgeries have included two corneal transplants — both of which were unsuccessful.

Each transplant has been preceded by three preparatory surgeries to prepare the youngster for the transplant. Even today, Kardin is awaiting a third transplant with no assurances that it will actually be successful.

Both of his parents said they have noticed a significant change in their son since the vicious attack. "He was very playful, athletic. He wanted to join the army to become a pilot but all those dreams are flushed down the toilet," Ulysse's father said. "A child doesn't deserve to be like this."

As a result of the attack, the young

victim has suffered from constant pain including debilitating headaches. Since the traumatic event, Kardin has consulted a psychiatrist trying to cope with the consequences of that fateful June attack. He uttered very few words and seemed withdrawn even as his parents spoke about him in the same room.

His mother said she has noticed such a profound change in her son. She said the family goes to a water ride park every year but since the beating, Kardin doesn't feel up to it and cites his doctors' orders to not go. "It's not the doctors. It's Kardin. He doesn't want people to see him like that," she said with her soft voice, breaking with emotion.

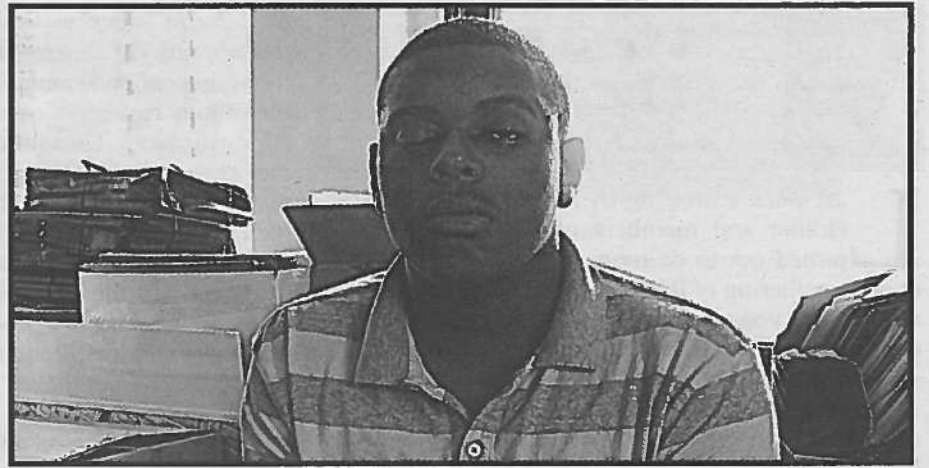
Ever aware of his condition, the now tenth grader asked his mother to stay home on Wednesday, June 5th because it was the one year anniversary of the traumatic event. She said her son tells her 'Mommy, leave me alone. Let me stay in my room.' She says that's not the boy she knows.

The family is currently suing the DOE for \$16 million for negligence of supervision. According to the notice of claim filed last year, this was not the first time the teenager was bullied. Last year, the father said he told the school about the bullying (*Bullies Charged In "Hate" Crime, July 19, 2012, Canarsie Courier*).

Just last month, the court made guilty findings against each of the defendants to assault in the third degree as a hate crime.

The civil lawsuit is moving through the court system now. "Once that's completed, we are looking forward to a jury made up of the people of Brooklyn to decide the issues of fault and damages," Rubenstein said. "How much should this young man get for losing his eyesight for what appears to be the rest of his life?" he asked.

For Kardin, maybe surgery can bring back his vision, but what could ever restore his anguish during this difficult year?

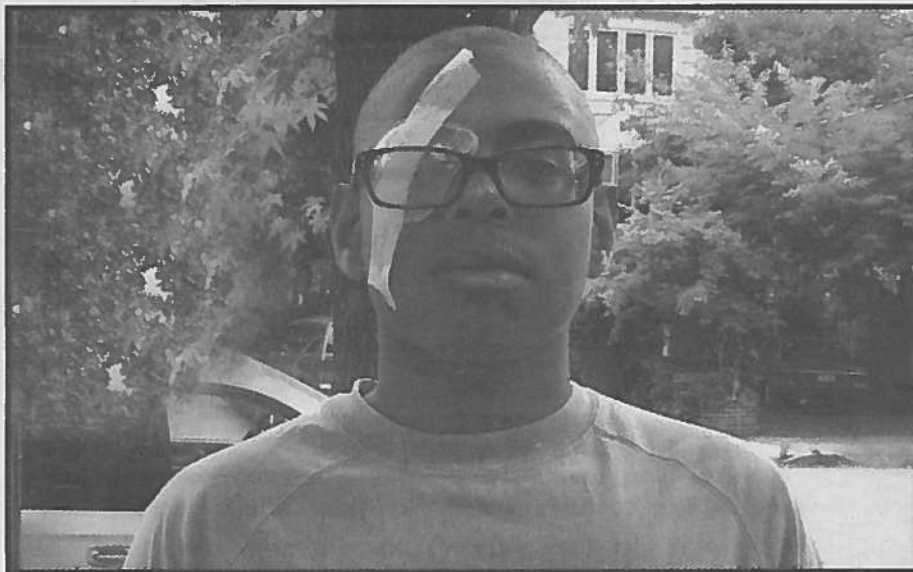


Kardin Ulysse, present day. Photo by Sam Akhtar



Ulysse in hospital bed following corneal transplant last year.

Courtesy of Sanford Rubenstein



The young man a few days after the brutal attack last year.

Photo by Sam Akhtar