

JONAH SHACKNAI



September 19, 2011

Honorable Kamala D. Harris
Attorney General of the State of California
Office of the Attorney General
1300 "I" Street
Sacramento, California 95814-2919

Dear Attorney General Harris,

I write to request your assistance under Article 5, Section 13 of the California Constitution in bringing some clarity, dignity, and ultimately, closure to the devastating deaths of my youngest son, Max Shacknai, and my girlfriend and companion of two years, Rebecca Zahau, in Coronado this July.

The heartbreak of these losses, as anyone might imagine, is unbearable. My family and I struggle to move forward and deal privately with our grief. Unfortunately, despite the announcement on September 2nd of the findings of the investigation of the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, the Coronado Police Department, and the San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office that Rebecca's death was a suicide, the unrelenting and often vicious speculation and innuendo in certain media outlets continue to bring further pain to everyone who has been touched by these tragic events. It is my hope that your review of Rebecca's death will serve the interests of justice by providing confidence, comfort and resolution not just to the families directly impacted by these tragedies, but also to the public at large, which has taken an interest in these highly unusual circumstances.

Throughout this ordeal, my deepest sympathy continues to go out to Rebecca's family. Having lost Max, we unfortunately understand all too well the limitless pain they are experiencing. With my life torn apart by the sudden deaths of two loved ones in my home, I also appreciate profoundly the Zahaus' search for answers. Having received a courtesy private and highly detailed briefing from law enforcement on August 30th shortly before the authorities' September 2nd press conference, as the Zahaus and our family each separately did that same week, I was and continue to be persuaded that the announced conclusions were sound, scientific, and supported by a thorough and competent investigation. Admittedly, the circumstances of Rebecca's suicide were so unusual and upsetting that it was difficult to accept the hard facts as they were presented. However, all the evidence, including the information disclosed at the press conference and in the released materials, as well as certain other pertinent facts, helped to provide some much needed explanation and context for the events that occurred.

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That said, given the undeniably strange circumstances, Rebecca's family and others continue to have questions. Certain media outlets have recklessly exploited those questions for ratings, which in turn has fueled broader skepticism in the investigation and resulted in additional pain to those who already have suffered enough through these awful events. Following the enormous losses of Max and Rebecca, it is intolerable to sit back and watch my other children and the rest of my family, and my former wife Dina's family, tormented with these unfounded rumors and accusations. For this reason, and to further enhance the public's confidence in the integrity of the law enforcement process and finally bring closure to these terrible tragedies, I would respectfully request that you undertake to evaluate the investigatory methods and conclusions of the San Diego and Coronado authorities in this case.

If your office believes any further investigative steps are warranted, then of course the interests of justice demand they be pursued, and if your assessment serves to validate the September 2nd findings, then hopefully this matter can be resolved finally. To be clear, I have no reason to doubt the San Diego and Coronado authorities' findings, and I remain appreciative of their dedication and professionalism throughout this process. At the same time I believe the only way to achieve some dignified resolution for everyone who has been touched by the horrible events of this summer will be through the efforts of your office.

I pray Max and Rebecca are now at peace, and I hope you might be able to help the rest of us devastated by their losses achieve some peace and closure as well. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Jonah Shacknai

cc: William D. Gore, Sheriff, San Diego County
Jonathan Lucas, M.D., Deputy Medical Examiner, San Diego County
Louis Scanlon, Chief of Police, City of Coronado