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Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office
Autopsy Report

Decedent: **Ben Moussa Keita**

Case #: **17SN0058**

OPINION

This 18-year-old Black male, Ben M. Keita, Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office case number 17SN0058, died of *asphyxia due to hanging*.

Postmortem examination reveals a well-developed, young adult, Black male with typical findings of hanging. There is a focal small abrasion on the left thumb; however, no other injuries of a significant nature are identified. There is also no evidence of significant preexisting natural disease. The heart blood was noted to contain ice crystals and it is possible that the decedent had been in a semi-frozen state for a number of weeks; due to the frigid environmental temperatures (measured at local weather stations with lows in the teens and twenties, the postmortem interval could be up to several weeks (possibly up to six)).

Postmortem toxicological examinations of central blood for ethanol and common drugs of abuse are negative.

Originally the manner of death in this case was classified as *suicide*. Although at autopsy I did not see any evidence of trauma beyond the evidence of hanging, the circumstances of the very high tree branch, uncertain location of the decedent for the 6 weeks prior to discovery (with a report that the area where the body was found had been previously searched), and lack of any reported suicidal ideation or attempts makes a *definitive* classification of the manner as *suicide* uncertain.

"*Undetermined*" is a manner of death that may be utilized by the classifier of death whenever two competing, equally likely manners are present. Classifying a death as "*undetermined*" does not preclude subsequent legal activity in any way. It simply means that the classifier was not comfortable choosing one manner over a competing manner, based upon the information available to the classifier of death. In such cases, it has been recommended that correlation of the case history, previous medical history (in this case any histories of depression or prior suicidal ideation, which were not reported) and autopsy findings should occur.

Therefore, based upon investigative information available at autopsy, complete external and internal examination, and postmortem toxicological studies, the manner of death in this case is classified as *undetermined*.

Stanley Adams MD
Stanley Adams, M.D.
Associate Medical Examiner

26 January 2017
Date Signed SA/NCTSMS0001

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