



## \$3 Million for Spinal Injuries

**Korbeh v. Duran:** A Middlesex County jury awarded \$3 million on May 19 to a Clifton woman who suffered spinal injuries when the car she was riding in overturned on the New Jersey Turnpike.

Malaka Korbeh, now 20, of Clifton, was injured while riding in the back seat of a car driven by Jonathan Duran on the northbound highway near Exit 8A in Cranbury on Sept. 3, 2011. Duran's car overturned after it was struck in the rear by one driven by Emmanuel Egbutu, then struck another car in front of it.

Duran and Egbutu offered conflicting accounts of how the accident happened. Duran claimed he had been driving in the left lane for several miles when traffic had to slow down due to construction and he was rear-ended by Egbutu. Egbutu, however, said Duran suddenly changed lanes in front of him because he could not stop in time to avoid an accident in the middle lane.



PHOTO COURTESY OF EDWARD LUTZ

### EDWARD LUTZ

Korbeh testified that Duran had been driving erratically and making frequent lane changes before the accident.

Korbeh had several bulges in her lumbar and cervical discs. She underwent three lumbar manipulations under anesthesia, and she was advised to have surgery for lumbar fusion but she did not have the money, said plaintiff

lawyer **Edward Lutz**, a solo in Parsippany.

Egbutu settled for \$90,000. Before trial, Duran made no settlement offer until the day of jury selection, when he offered \$25,000, said Lutz. Korbeh demanded \$250,000 from Duran and issued a Rova Farms letter against him.

After a four-day trial before Superior Court Judge **Arthur Bergman**, the jury, charged with apportioning fault between Duran and Egbutu, found Duran was entirely at fault for the crash and awarded \$3 million in damages.

The lawyer for Duran, **Robert Helwig of Hoagland, Longo, Moran, Dunst & Doukas** in New Brunswick, and **Michael Bustard, of Styliades & Jackson** in Mount Laurel, representing Egbutu, did not return calls seeking comment.

— **By Charles Toutant**