that in any way, shape or form the State is arguing 1 that the Defendant set out to intend to kill 2 Samantha Thomas. What the Defendant did, we submit 3 4 that the evidence will show, is that he was aware of a risk that the results would occur but 5 6 consciously disregarded that risk, and that is 7 reckless murder in the State of Alabama and that is what the Defendant is indicted and charged with. 8 9 And we submit to you, ladies and gentlemen of 10 the jury, and at the end of this case, we will ask 11 you to return a verdict of guilty of reckless 12 murder against the Defendant, Jonathan Nakhla.

THE COURT: Mr. Jaffe, for the Defense.

(OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DEFENSE)

MR. JAFFE: Thank you, Your Honor. May it please Your Honor and Counsel?

THE COURT: Yes, sir.

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MR. JAFFE: Good morning. Let me first say that the picture that was just painted certainly is horrific.

(OFF THE RECORD)

MR. JAFFE: There's a reason that at the end of the case the judge is going to instruct you that what the lawyers say is not evidence. The only evidence that you can consider is that which you

hear from the witness stand attached to and applied to the instructions the judge gives you at the end of the case. And there's a reason for that, and I'm going to show you one of them right now but there are more, many more.

This is our client, Dr. Johnny Nakhla,

(Indicating) and I'm going to come back to this in
a minute, but I'm showing it to you now for a
reason. She, the State prosecutor, said that he
kept going back and forth to bring in alcohol.

If you look closely at this and we can zoom in on it, that's right after Dr. Nakhla got home from work. And if you look closely at what's in that cup, it's coffee. In fact, there's another one. There's a coffee place right down -- there it is. There's another cup of coffee that he has just gotten when he returned from work. You weren't told that, and that's a reason that what you are to consider is only the evidence you hear from the witness stand and not what some lawyer prosecutor tells you she thinks or believes the evidence is.

And it's not just the cup of coffee that
we're going to talk about. It's many more
differences in the way we see what the evidence is
going to show you. Now, the prosecutor outlined

the law in this case that you were to apply, so we're going to talk a little bit about now as well.

I think that the judge has said very eloquently that we are bound by the law, and I'm not going to get into and argue that now because that's not probative. But in all the courthouses, in some courthouses there's an emblem that says we are bound by the law so we can be free.

And the binding of the law deals with the oath that each of you took and oath, oaths, but it's really an oath is that you will hold the prosecutors through their promises of what they're going to prove to you beyond a reasonable doubt.

And if they fail to prove to you, beyond a reasonable doubt, every single material element in this case, then your verdict by your oath is not guilty. I'm going to talk more about this, but I'm just sort of responding to some of the things you heard and you've already seen one significant inaccuracy and there are more. We're going to talk about what we believe the evidence will show.

Now, let's talk a little bit about entitlement, but first let's talk about the expensive car. You know, not only what you were told the evidence is going to show that isn't

accurate as I have just shown you, but there's some things you haven't been told that put this entitlement in a proper context, and I'm going to do that for you right now.

Here's what you weren't told and here's what the evidence is going to show you. No question about it, that after this horrific crash, it took the life of this promising medical student, Dr.

Nakhla suffered a serious concussion, not one that was going to keep him in the hospital for weeks but a concussion.

And you were taught a little bit about what was said on voir dire or what our -- depends on how you want to call it. And you were mentioned about what Mr. Knizley said about the car and we're going to talk about that in a minute.

But you might remember that some of the jurors that suffered a concussion, potential jurors knew someone that had --

MS. RICH: Judge, I'm going to object to him referencing anything like that. That's what the evidence intends to show. Not what the --

THE COURT: Stop. I'm going to overrule the objection. Just gets to the facts. Let's don't talk about the voir dire process.

MR. JAFFE: Right, I was responding to her.

THE COURT: Go ahead.

MR. JAFFE: What you're going to hear is that when someone has a concussion and goes into shock where you're confused, they are disoriented and they say all kinds of things that they really don't mean. And one of the things you're going to get to hear is the entire context of that. Because when that concussion occurred, it caused Dr. Nakhla to get 16 stitches on his head. And you're not just going to hear that he's confused and talking about his watch and his tires and his car. He was so upset.

First of all, he couldn't believe that

Samantha Thomas had died. He was in denial. The

evidence will be he couldn't believe it. He

refused to accept it. He refused to believe it.

He refused to even conceptualize it. So it's not

just that you're going to hear. You're going to

hear how upset he was. You're going to hear him

screaming about it. Amongst his confusion of going

in and out of denial, you're going to hear that his

friend in a car he was driving was dead.

You're not going to hear just about a watch and tires and a car. You're going to hear some

real real real shocking, confusing, upsetting, yelling, crying by this young man we represent, you're going to hear that. You're going to see it on video, so it's not just me sharing this with you.

I mentioned a moment ago that we represent

Dr. Nakhla and you're going to maybe hear us

sometimes saying Dr. Nakhla or Johnny, Johnny

Nakhla. And I think it's important for you to know

that he still is a doctor, but he's no longer a

licensed doctor. He voluntarily gave his

license up after this occurred because he knew that

he couldn't perform his responsibilities as a

neurosurgeon while this criminal charge hung over

his head, and he won't be a licensed doctor unless

and until the criminal charges are over. If I

could, Judge, I want to get a little water.

THE COURT: Yes.

MR. JAFFE: You were explained the law on reckless murder. And we're going to talk about, like Ms. Rich talked about from the beginning and then later at the end, and I'm going to address that with you. But while you were just told that the theme of the prosecution's case is entitlement, so I'm going to give you the theme of the Defense's

case.

And the Defense's case is this is a civil negligence matter and I agree with that --

MS. RICH: Objection, Your Honor.

MR. JAFFE: It's his response.

THE COURT: Overruled. Go ahead.

MR. JAFFE: So I just want to share that with you. We're moving on from it now, but she gave you her theme and we're giving you ours. It's not a reckless murder case under Alabama law. The evidence will not convince each and every one of you beyond a reasonable doubt. And they're going to be a lot of reasonable doubts. And unless they can overcome them, this young man we represent, 36 at the time, no, 38, is presumed to be innocent. Your oath will require you to find him not guilty.

And I just want to say that we don't have any burden. The judge has talked over and over and over about our American system, how fortunate we all are to live in this country where a person doesn't have to testify or prove anything because if that were the case, he wouldn't be presumed innocent and then he would have a burden and he has none.

Now, let's talk more detailed facts that we

believe the evidence will show you. Before doing that, I want to say right now that you might see us object a good bit and we, as officers of the court, and all of us lawyers are, if we believe something is objectionable, we're going to object. So don't think we're trying to hide things from you because we're not. We just are required by our oaths to object any time that we believe inadmissible evidence is offered.

And a second thing I want to say is I want to warn you about the evidence that you're going to see. You are going to see, I think, the worst picture you've ever seen in your life. It is a picture that was described to you by Ms. Rich, prosecutor. And the only thing I'm going to say about that picture is the evidence will be that it won't prove anything to you and it will have a tendency to upset and inflame you, and the judge will, I'm sure, instruct you that you can't allow that to happen.

I'm going to just warn you, expect a picture that won't prove anything to you. We already know how horrific this crash was. And what could be worse than a picture of part of a head on a guardrail? I can't even look at it, but it's not

proof that he is guilty of a crime.

Now, let's talk about that day. It was gone into extensively, again, what you haven't heard. You heard a lot about Samantha Thomas. Let's talk about what Dr. Nakhla did that day and put some of this stuff in context.

Dr. Nakhla got up in the morning and he, during the course of his day, is a neurosurgeon, this is what we expect the evidence to show you. But this is not what I'm telling you, that Dr. Nakhla performed three major surgeries, two brain surgeries and one spine reconstruction.

Two of those cases involve cancer, saving lives. That was his day. His day wasn't going out and getting a dozen White Claws and drinking them during the day. That wasn't his day and he had a stressful day, too, the evidence will be.

And seriously, that's how it began and that's how it ended and a long day and yes, as the prosecutor told you, he lived at the same apartment complex that Samantha Thomas lived in and they were friends. The evidence will be that two weeks before Samantha Thomas came to his birthday party. She was friends with his wife. This wasn't somebody he was hitting on, somebody that he was

friends with.

And he lived at the same apartment complex that she did with his wife Sally and their two children, Ethan and Noah, one's nine and one's four, a loving father. And when he gets home, parks his car and starts walking to his apartment, he didn't know that he was going to walk by the pool and see two or three people because I don't remember if Tristan Hughes was there at the time.

But at least Samantha Thomas and Paige

Farley, he didn't know he was going to see them

drinking at the pool. He had no idea. He walked

by and he said his hellos. And the first thing

that happens is Paige Farley who yes, is a

competitive marshal arts person, the evidence will

be that Samantha Thomas told Paige to throw him in

the pool, and she actually tried to do that.

And he had papers on him and other stuff on him that was important medical documents and he resisted that. And I don't remember so don't hold me to this, but it could be that she ended up in the pool but he didn't. He didn't know that earlier that day the evidence will show you he did not know and you weren't told a moment ago that sometime turning the middle of the day Samantha

Thomas and Paige Farley talked about let's get together at the pool.

And Paige Farley happened to have 12 undrunk

-- I always forget the name of that, I mentioned it
earlier. What's the name of that? Claw, White
Claw. I always forget that because I didn't know
what it was until I Googled it.

Anyway, didn't know that they were going to go get -- in her refrigerator were 12 undrunk White Claws, 12, a dozen and that Samantha Thomas picks her up, the evidence will be, brings her to the pool. And there's no discussion that she was going to spend the night. She didn't bring any personal effects with her. They were going to hang out by the pool and drink and that's what they did.

Dr. Nakhla didn't drink any of those 12 -whatever it is. He didn't drink any of them and he
didn't know they had drunk them, although they were
there. The bottles and the packages were still
there. He didn't drink any of that. He didn't
know they drunk all of that. He was drinking
coffee then. After he resisted because of the
papers getting thrown in the pool, he goes and he
works out.

You can see and you will see that he ends up

in workout equipment and he goes and he has a workout and now he's returning with another cup of coffee. Goes into his apartment, decides he's going to join his friends.

So he goes and he brings down -- at some point, pours himself a drink and at some point goes back up and gets a bottle of wine and brings it down. Apparently, they had run out of alcohol. Brings down a bottle of wine, and they're drinking wine and they're conversing and they're talking. And if there's any -- the State tries to tell you that he was hitting on them, the evidence will not be that at all.

If there's any kidding around and horsing around, that's what it was. It wasn't anybody hitting on anybody. So the pool does close at 10 o'clock. The White Claws were already consumed. I think Tristan Hughes had 2, I think Paige Farley had maybe 6 and I think Samantha Thomas had four is my recollection. The evidence will be what the evidence will be. Dr. Nakhla didn't have any of them.

So they're sitting around and they're socializing and de-stressing, decompensating and at 10 o'clock when the pool closed, ultimately, they

ended up at what is the gazebo, and at the gazebo they're still drinking some wine.

And before that, Dr. Nakhla took Paige on a ride. And I want to tell you right now what the evidence is going to be and it's not easy for me to say this to you and it's not going to be easy for Dr. Nakhla to admit this to you but yes, he was overly proud of his car. No question about it.

The evidence is going to show you that and we admit that because it's true. The evidence will be that he was too proud of his car. He liked to show it off.

And that's unfortunate, but it's not illegal and it didn't cause her death. So Paige Farley does go for a ride with Dr. Nakhla. It's about a 10-minute ride. There's been no evidence, at least proof of how fast he was going with her. But one thing we do know is that when she returned and before they left, Samantha Thomas encouraged Paige to go for a ride in the car because she had been in it before which you weren't told.

Now, that already had happened. They're at the gazebo. It's after 10. You were just told that after that car ride between Paige Farley and Dr. Nakhla, so she went to sleep and that's not

what the evidence will be. The evidence will be that ultimately later on she went to sleep because she was so intoxicated that she was passing out. She had to be helped back to Samantha Thomas's apartment and put to sleep on the couch because she was passing out from drinking so much. You weren't told that, but that's what the evidence is going to show you.

Now, ultimately, Tristan Hughes leaves.

They're at the gazebo. Dr. Nakhla orders some food and it's delivered, Bone Fish, fried calamari.

They're eating their food. He probably ate most of it, but it was for everybody.

Tristan Hughes leaves. The evidence is going to be that Samantha Thomas also around midnight or so goes to her room. Now, he had been talking about going out for a drive and maybe getting some ice cream earlier. That's what the evidence is going to show you.

And Dr. Nakhla decides, well, we can still do that. So there's a phone call, it lasts about a minute to Samantha Thomas and they go back down to the gazebo, hang out for about 30 minutes and then they get -- and just stop it for a minute and I'm going to ask you to zoom in on it for a moment.

(PLAYING VIDEO)

MR. JAFFE: Just stop there. And then they decide they're going to go out. Now, the reason I want you to see this now and you're going to see it during the trial, it's evidence, we expect the evidence to show is that they are walking -- can you zoom out on that? Zoom in and hold it, please.

Now, you were just told that somehow she hesitated. I'm not sure why you were told that, but that's not what the evidence is going to show you because I'm going to show you what the evidence is going to show you right now. The hesitation is he's got to put his top down. And by the way, I'm not going to show you it to you now, you're going to see later on that when he and Paige went for a drive, they were still horsing around and Paige has a towel and whips him with the towel. In other words, you know how you get a towel and you go like that and Paige does that to him because they're friends, although he didn't know Paige very well.

(PLAYING VIDEO)

MR. JAFFE: Now, if you'll take them to where they get into the car but before they get in -- stop. Nobody is wobbly. Nobody is unsteady.

Nobody is in a hurry. They're walking slowly to

the car. If you'll continue on until he gets in.

That's it. Stop there. All right. Let him get in and open the top, please.

Now, you'll see the top come up. The top is up. She slowly gets in the car and then they take off and they go approximately a mile, 1.2 miles before this horrible crash happens. And the way they took was Dauphin Street and you know there's two or three stop signs there.

And you will see and the evidence will show you that it was about four minutes between the time he left, they left together and go through the gate and navigates stop signs and got on the service road. And then it was a total of 1.2 miles from the gate to where this wreck occurred.

You were read the DUI statute by the prosecutor and you also know that it's not illegal to drink and drive. The legality comes when someone cannot safely operate a motor vehicle which is another way of saying that they're too impaired to safely occupy a motor vehicle. And if they're not, then it doesn't matter that they had drinks before they drove, especially if they ate fried food. And I'm going to leave that there and you'll hear more about that when Dr. Harper testifies.

You were told a moment ago that Johnny lied about the speed. Well, I think it's important for you to be watchful for the evidence that you're going to hear about and that's this; when Dr.

Nakhla gets to the hospital and is treated for his concussion -- and yes, they drew blood several different times. And the way they came up with .12 or .11, whatever it was, what's called retrograde extrapolation.

The only thing I want to say right now about that because I'm about to close in the next five minutes and sit down and let's hear the evidence.

But anything I say, I want you to hold me to it.

Just like I want you to hold the State only to what they say that their burden of proof is.

But retrograde extrapolation, the evidence will be, is when they don't know what the blood alcohol is at the time of the event, no matter what the event is, like, even when they stop, in this case, when a fatality occurred, when a crash occurred. They don't know.

So they do a bunch of complex mathematical formulas. But to do that, the evidence will be, they have to make assumptions, assumptions. And the assumptions they have to make include but are

not limited to; well, when was the last drink consumed, the body weight, the gender of the person and, most importantly, whether they were in what's called the absorption stage or the elimination stage.

And if they don't know that information, the evidence will be, then they're speculating, whether they're using math, whether they're using calculus, whether they're using geometry, whether they're using anything like that, they are basically speculating on what the blood alcohol was at the time of the collision.

And that means that they go back and the blood was taken, for example, at various times at the hospital and then they do the math and they try to figure it out, what it was. There's not going to be any proof, real proof, not any solid proof, any credible proof of what it was because it's based on assumptions.

Dr. Harper didn't take it into consideration because he didn't know and he wasn't told, the food that was taken, eaten by Dr. Nakhla that was fried and he was given the wrong weight. He was told 200 pounds, but Dr. Nakhla is 160 to 170. But having said that, just know that it's cut and dry is what

you were just told.

Now, while in the hospital, he is speaking with medical personnel and with detectives. And he was asked where were you going, I'm going to get some ice cream. How fast were you going, I don't know. Well, what do you think and he admits he was probably speeding. All I'm suggesting to you is this, you heard about this EDR or ACM, whatever you want to call it. As the prosecutor said, it's a black box that's like in an airplane or in this case it's in a car.

But remember and the evidence will be that this is not the original black box. This is a Lamborghini engine in an Audi Spyder 8. What that means will be for you to determine. But the thing I want to leave you with is this, is that we know this for certain, the evidence will be that the EDR was defective. It wasn't working accurately. Now, well, how is the evidence going to show you that because it is designed to take measurements of speed and it is -- it points where the airbag deploys and it's supposed to record the deployments of the airbag. And in this case the evidence will be 100 percent crystal clear that it didn't record them accurately. It didn't work. And if it didn't

work on the deployments, we have to question then about the speed. I'll ask you to be looking out for that.

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And finally, you were told about Chris Davis. I do not know what the evidence will show you about what Chris Davis is going to say. I don't know. So I'm at a loss as to how to respond to that. I do know this, I do know that Chris Davis was driving his, I think, Lexus in this area and there's no secret about this area. And we do know this, that when he cuts suddenly with no turning signal in front of Dr. Nakhla, causing Dr. Nakhla to swerve, Dr. Nakhla is going south, Chris Davis is taking a turn left in front of Dr. Nakhla. Dr. Nakhla hadn't have swerved, he would have T-boned Chris Davis. And I don't know what Chris Davis is going to say, but I know the evidence is going to show you this, he didn't call the police. He didn't call 911. He refused to give a statement and cooperate in this investigation. And that the only thing we know the evidence is going to show you is that -- I think it was the following day, his uncle or someone close to him agreed to bring over I think a handwritten statement about Chris Davis that night as he turned into the Comfort Inn

in his Lexus. That's all we know.

So I'll be like you. I'll be listening to hear what Chris Davis is going to say, and I will be interested and I will suggest that you might want to be interested, when did he come forward? When was the first time he gave a statement? What does the statement say? What's he going to say when he testifies? I don't know.

But I do know that he didn't cooperate, didn't call 911 and they couldn't find him that night, and he refused to give a statement. That much I know, and you can hold me to that and anything else I say, hold me to it.

So as I wind down, Dr. Johnny Nakhla has and will express his deepest deepest deepest heartfelt

-- I don't have a good word for it other than that he will live this tragedy every day for the rest of his life as well as his kids and his family. He will never get over it and nor will Samantha

Thomas's family, a horrible, horrible, horrible tragedy.

And there are legitimate questions of civil negligence, but when it comes to reckless murder, no. No matter how they want to present or argue it, they will fail to prove to you, to each of you,

beyond a reasonable doubt, that he was recklessly indifferent to whether Samantha Thomas lived or died.

In fact, it is to the contrary. He will forever mourn the loss of his friend and the friend of his family. No matter how they want to paint him, they can't change that, and charging him with murder will not bring Samantha Thomas back.

But Dr. Nakhla, a neurosurgeon that saved lives, including on this day, will not be a doctor while these criminal charges are here and not be a neurosurgeon. And at the end of this case, we're going to ask you to find him not guilty, meaning hold the State of Alabama to its proof and honor your oath to hold them to proving each and every element of these charges. And I say charges because it's not just reckless murder they want to call it, extreme indifference to the value of human life other than one's self. That's a short version of it. It's also other charges that you'll hear about, manslaughter, criminal negligent homicide --

MS. RICH: Judge, I'm going to object at this point. None of that has been ruled on nor interjected.

MR. JAFFE: I don't think they should be --

THE COURT: Get back to the facts. Go ahead. 1 2 MR. JAFFE: Okay. Or vehicular homicide --3 MS. RICH: Judge, objection. THE COURT: Go ahead, wrap it up. 4 MR. JAFFE: I am, in 10 seconds. 5 6 THE COURT: That's fine. 7 MR. JAFFE: You will find him in our -- we're very clearly suggesting to you that at the end of 8 9 this case, you will find him not guilty of these 10 charges. And I appreciate your attention and we 11 are glad you're on this jury. It's the best jury 12 possible for this case in that Dr. Nakhla trust 13 each and every one of you --14 MS. RICH: Judge, I'm going to object. 15 improper --16 MR. JAFFE: That's all, Judge. THE COURT: Sustained. That's argument. 17 18 Ladies and gentlemen, let's do this. It's 11:05, 19 we've been going for a while. Let's take a 20 10-minute break, personal break. Is that good? 21 Even 15 minutes, let's start back at 11:20. 22 So the way this is going to work each day is 23 you'll take your notepads with you and you'll 24 probably get into a custom of kind of sitting in 25 the same chair every day, that's what juries do.