# Wigdor Files Complaint of Sexual Assault and Negligence Involving NBA Superstar James Harden

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Today, Wigdor and our co-counsel, Ellwanger Henderson, filed a complaint on behalf of Marisa Watley against LA Clippers star James Harden and his nephew, Justice Armani Blackburn, alleging sexual assault against Mr. Blackburn and negligence against Mr. Harden. The allegations stem from Mr. Harden's New Year's Party where Blackburn raped the plaintiff, Ms. Watley, while Ms. Watley was unconscious.

Additionally, Ms. Watley alleges negligence against James Harden due to the conduct of his in-home security staff after the party, on the morning of New Year's Day. As alleged, two of Ms. Watley's friends (named as Doe witnesses), who had attended the party with her, were removed by Mr. Harden's security from his home, despite their pleas that their friend was still inside. The friends then contacted Ms. Watley's sister, Elaina Watley, who used her own network to get in touch with Mr. Harden's sister—who, by coincidence, was the mother of Justice Blackburn. As alleged in the complaint, after Elaina Watley transmitted a photo of her missing sister to Mr. Harden's security, Mr. Harden's security stated that there was a woman present in the house with Mr. Blackburn, but that the woman was not Marisa Watley. As described in the complaint, the woman in the home was in fact Ms. Watley, who was sexually assaulted by Mr. Blackburn around that time. The complaint alleges that, had Mr. Harden's security acted responsibly in response to the outside calls for help and the photo, they would have been able to prevent the rape.

The full complaint for Watley v. Blackburn, Harden, & John Doe Security Guards may be found here.

**ON RECORD**

Statement from Marisa Watley:

> "Since New Year's Day, when I reported the rape by Mr. Blackburn to the police, I have remained puzzled by how Mr. Harden's security behaved that day—it is painful to imagine that this all could have been stopped in time. I hope this complaint pushes security employees generally to act more responsibly when women are in danger."

Statement from Marisa Watley's attorneys Michael J. Willemin and John S. Crain (of Wigdor LLP) and Jay Ellwanger and Kaylyn Betts (of Ellwanger Henderson):

> "Ms. Watley has shown great strength and courage in coming forward to hold Mr. Blackburn and Mr. Harden accountable for what happened to her on New Year's Day 2025 in Mr. Harden's mansion. This rape was immediately reported to the police, and we will bring Mr. Blackburn and Mr. Harden to justice through the civil justice system."

Please reach out to Wigdor LLP Partner Michael J. Willemin (mwillemin@wigdorlaw.com) or Director of Marketing Tess Neudeck (tneudeck@wigdorlaw.com) with any questions.

**Press Coverage:**

- Fox News
- The Athletic
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