

#3 DNA FORENSIC SYMPOSIUM  
TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION:  
THE STORY OF THABO BESTER,  
"FACEBOOK RAPIST"  
AND HOW DNA PLAYED A ROLE IN  
THIS EXTRAORDINARY CASE

DNA FORAFRICA 12-14 JUNE 2023 | CAPE TOWN  
WHERE JUSTICE, SCIENCE AND HUMANITY INTERSECT

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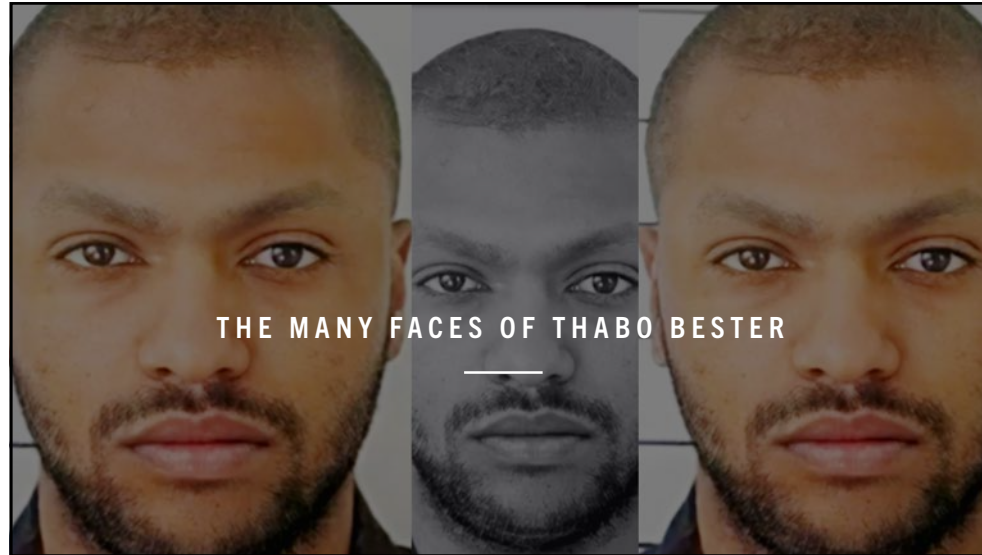
DNA FORAFRICA UNODC

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## BACKGROUND

- In October 2011 I am called in to interview Thabo Bester
- Bester had committed two rapes in Durban and one murder in Milnerton (Cape Town), each crime was a week apart from the other
- He was referred to as the Facebook Rapist, however none of his rape or murder victims were lured via Facebook
- Bester had an extensive history of committing fraud
- His preferred modus operandi was to book 'models', then steal their phones and laptops, leaving the models stranded. Sometimes there were up to 14 victims simultaneously conned by him

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### WHO IS 'THABO BESTER'

- Thabo Bester, Thomas, Thabo Bester Magagula, Tom Motsepe
- Grew up on a plot in the south of Johannesburg, where his mother was a domestic worker
  - Also says he lived most of his life with his grandmother*
  - Grandparents were alcoholics*
- Never knew his father, has 4 or 5 siblings, he is the eldest, doesn't know his siblings
- Dropped out of school in Standard 5 (Grade 7) after his grandmother passed away
- By age 14 was begging on the streets
- Mentions incidents of sexual abuse in his teens
- As a juvenile began conning people out of money

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## CONTACT WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

- 2005: As juvenile arrested for conning wife of Derek Watts (Carte Blanche) out of money
- 2008: Arrested for fraud (suspended sentence)
- 2009: Arrested for selling fake concert tickets
- Served time in prison but his timelines don't add up

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## THE FIRST RAPE

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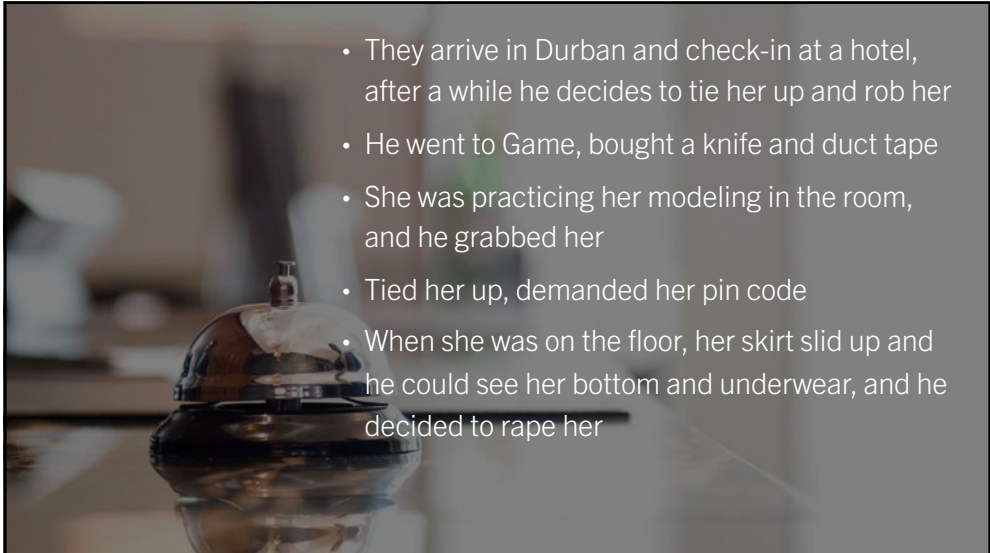
- He couldn't continue to lure unsuspecting females with the promise of a modeling job due to police attention
- Put an advert for *Pepsi Model Search* (a fake campaign) on FHM website
- The lady responded, and he said he would come to Johannesburg and meet her at the SABC



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- The following day he met the lady and her boyfriend who wanted to make sure it was above board
- After 5 minutes Bester had convinced him it was legitimate
- His plan was to take her phone and laptop, but couldn't with the boyfriend there so he told her the job was in Durban
- Bester and the lady drove down to Durban in her car

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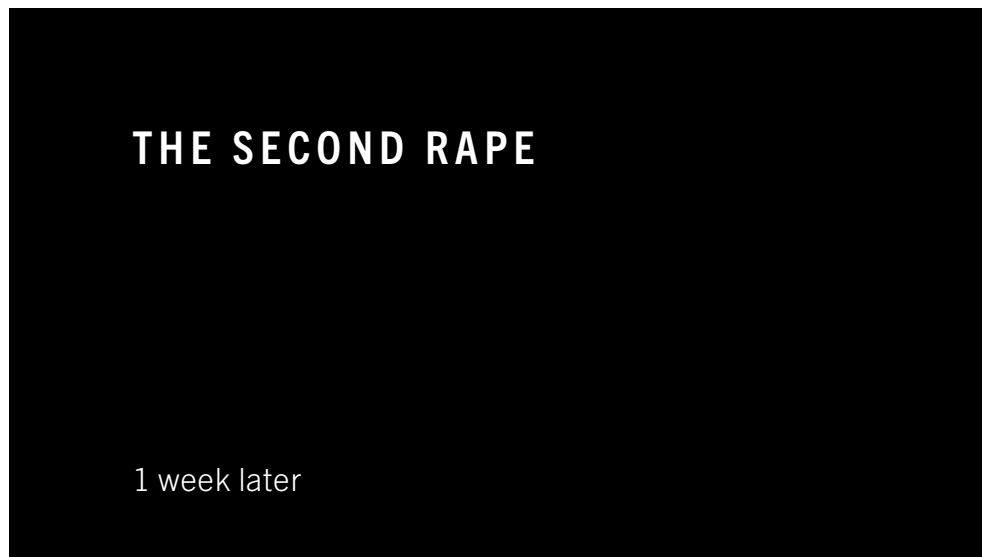
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- They arrive in Durban and check-in at a hotel, after a while he decides to tie her up and rob her
  - He went to Game, bought a knife and duct tape
  - She was practicing her modeling in the room, and he grabbed her
  - Tied her up, demanded her pin code
  - When she was on the floor, her skirt slid up and he could see her bottom and underwear, and he decided to rape her

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- He went immediately to a jewelry shop to try and purchase something valuable.
- He checked into a hotel in Point in Durban and allegedly tried to commit suicide with a razor on his arms
- No stitches were needed

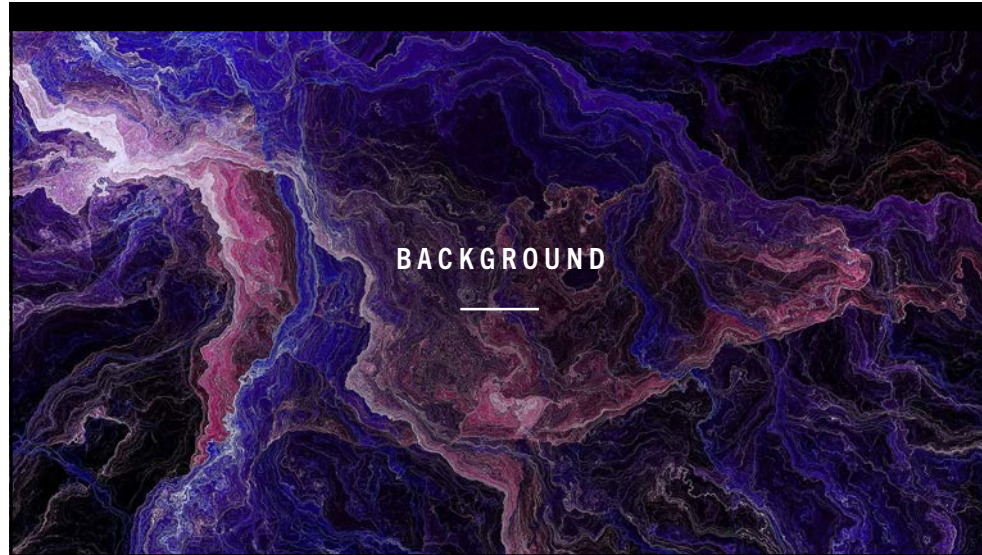
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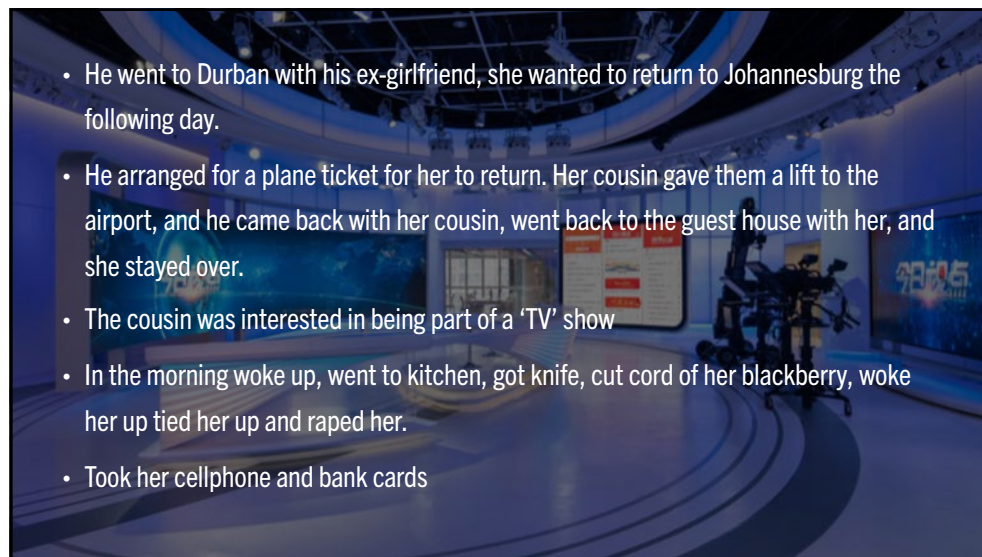
## THE SECOND RAPE

1 week later

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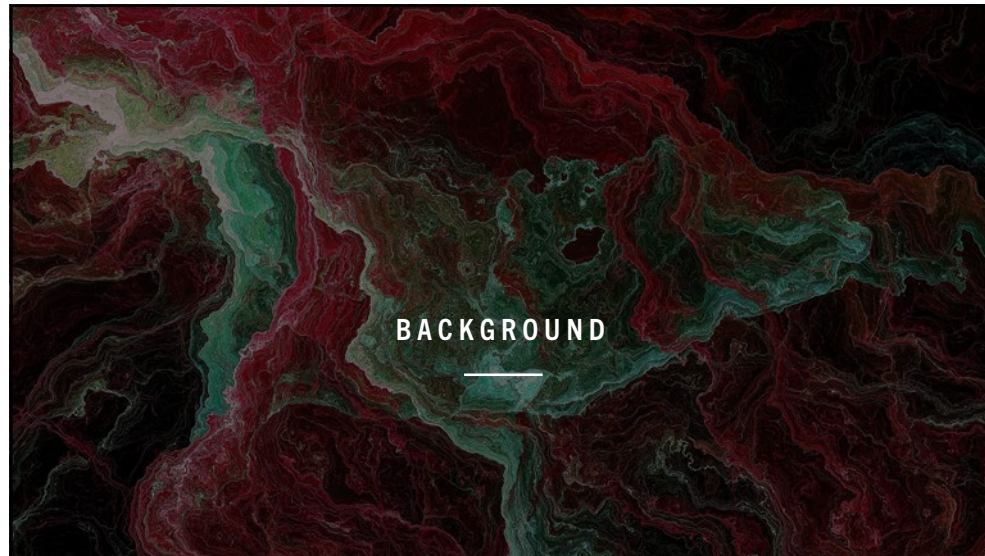
- He went to Durban with his ex-girlfriend, she wanted to return to Johannesburg the following day.
- He arranged for a plane ticket for her to return. Her cousin gave them a lift to the airport, and he came back with her cousin, went back to the guest house with her, and she stayed over.
- The cousin was interested in being part of a 'TV' show
- In the morning woke up, went to kitchen, got knife, cut cord of her blackberry, woke her up tied her up and raped her.
- Took her cellphone and bank cards

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# THIRD INCIDENT: MURDER

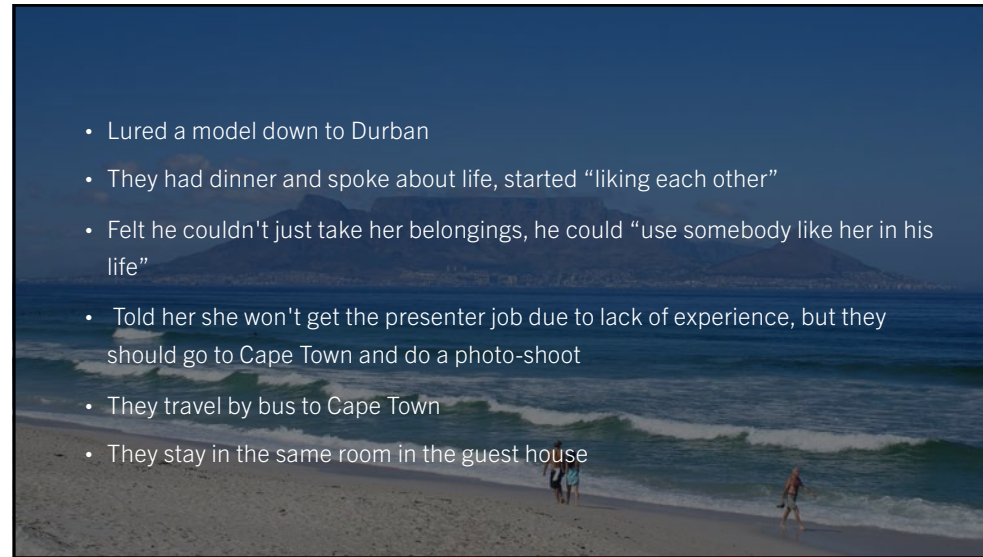
1 week later

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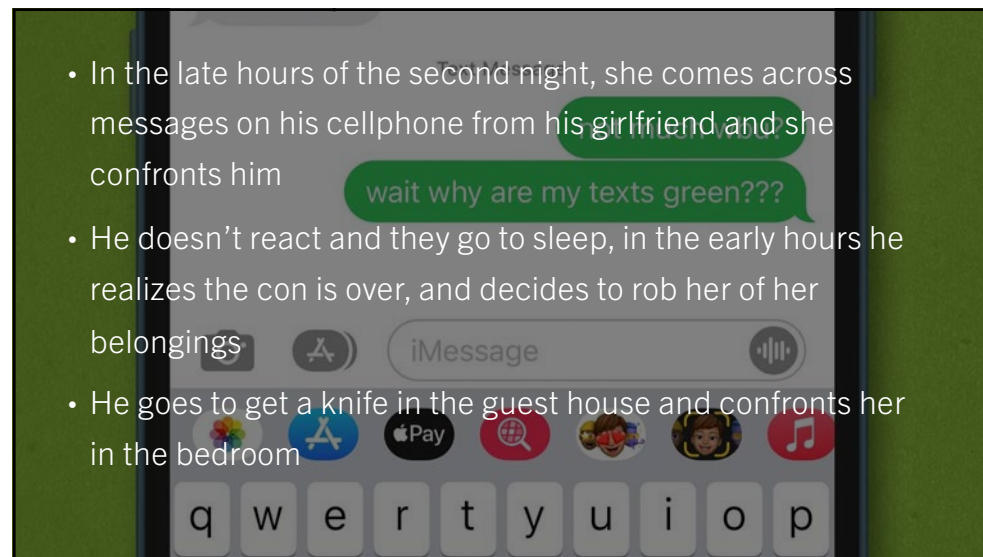


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*“She saw I had a knife. I walked towards her, she grabbed me, we tussled, fell on bed, I cut myself. I stabbed her in the process. We were fighting and she got stabbed in the process (chest or side). She lied on her stomach, I tied her.*

*I wasn’t sure if she was stabbed or scratched. I was talking to her, but she wasn’t responding. Tried to shake her and she wasn’t doing anything. She was still warm so maybe she was still alive.”*

- In the morning he left and told the guest house owner she was going to sleep late

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## SERIAL RAPIST AND MURDERER

- At this point he can be classified as a serial rapist who has escalated into serial murder
- If not arrested, we can expect his rapes and murders to continue
- We often see trial-runs in serial sexual offenders as they move closer and closer to their intended crime

*Luring models with con story- robbing them*

*Luring models- raping them*

*Luring model- murder*

If only about robbing them, why always models?

Con story of employment is most often con used by serial rapists and murderers in South Africa



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## THABO BESTER

*“Honestly speaking, about the rape, I think some part of me always wanted to feel how it feels like to have a knife and have somebody under your control”*

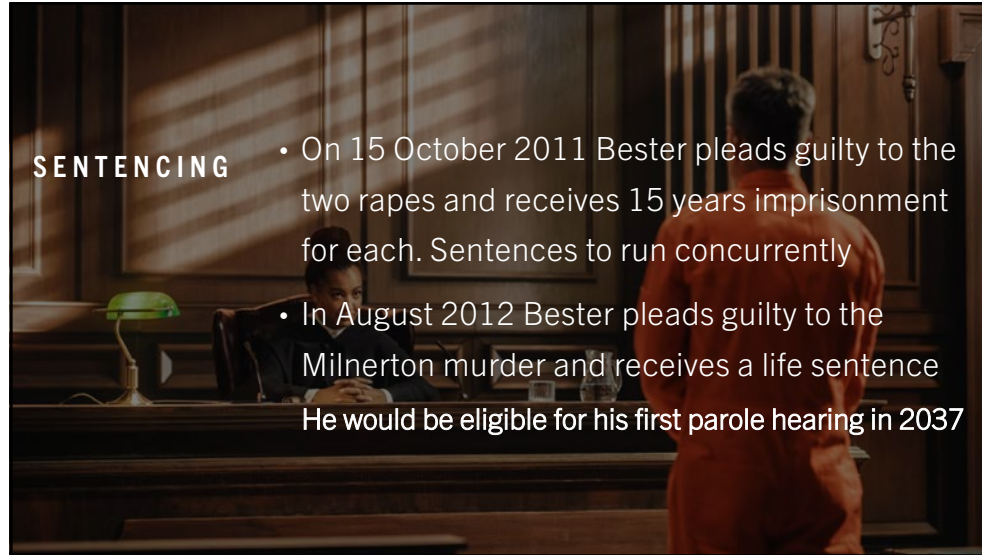
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*“My whole life, everything bad happened to me, involved a knife or tying me up, and couldn’t fight back, nothing I could do about it. If someone ties you up and puts you in a corner and tells you to shut up there is nothing you can do. You start to wonder how this person thinks, you want to know why they were doing it and how they felt, I also wanted to know. In same two incidents I feel this way, I know its wrong, that’s why I pleaded guilty to it. “*

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**SENTENCING**

- On 15 October 2011 Bester pleads guilty to the two rapes and receives 15 years imprisonment for each. Sentences to run concurrently
- In August 2012 Bester pleads guilty to the Milnerton murder and receives a life sentence  
He would be eligible for his first parole hearing in 2037



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IF YOU THOUGHT  
ALICE IN  
WONDERLAND HAD  
RABBIT HOLES..



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A screenshot of a news article from news24. The headline reads: "Facebook rapist' found dead after prison cell caught alight". The article is dated 04 May 2022 and includes a video player and a thumbnail image of the Mangaung Correctional Centre. The thumbnail image shows a brick wall with a sign that says "Mangaung Correctional Centre" and a logo with the letters "G.S." below it.

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## SUICIDE

- On 3 May 2022 reports appear in newspapers that Bester died in his single cell after setting himself alight
- His body is collected by someone claiming to be his wife
- Dr Nandipha Magudumana



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## 8 NOVEMBER 2022 REPORT BY GROUNDUP

**GroundUp** LINKS ▾ ABOUT DONATE Search article

### Many mysteries surround the death of 'Facebook rapist' Thabo Bester

SAPS says the outcome of DNA tests to determine the body's identity can be expected "at any stage", six months on from the fire.

8 November 2022 | By [Marecia Damons](#)  
 News | [Bloemfontein](#)

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## DNA

- It appears that at the time of his 2011 arrest for the two rapes his DNA was not taken by investigators  
*Probably because he confessed quickly*
- Using Bester's mother's DNA it was confirmed that the person in the cell was not Thabo Bester

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THE DECEASED IS IDENTIFIED AS  
KATLEGO BERENG



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- He apparently died in hospital, but was believed to have died of an overdose
- Magudumana allegedly claimed his body a few days before Bester's 'suicide'
- Unsure if his body was claimed from the hospital mortuary or forensic pathology services

Doesn't seem like an autopsy was done despite being an unnatural death at the time

*\*Body was autopsied after the 'suicide' in the cell*

*\*Blunt force trauma to head was the cause of death*

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**VIDEOS SURFACE OF HIM HOSTING EVENTS WHILE IN PRISON**



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**BESTER IS REPORTEDLY SEEN IN SANDTON**



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