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Rodney Rodell Henry receives six month jail sentence
for committing a bias crime days before Pride festival in Portland, Oregon

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Today, Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill announced that 45-year-old Rodney Rodell Henry received a six month jail sentence after a jury unanimously convicted him of one count of intimidation in the second degree and one count of harassment following a bias crime that happened days before the community celebrated the annual Pride festival in downtown Portland.

In addition to the jail sentence, the court put Henry on three years of formal probation.

"Only because the victim and witnesses quickly reported this crime to the Portland Police and then courageously followed through by testifying at trial was Mr. Henry held accountable," said Multnomah County Deputy District Attorney Kevin Demer, who prosecuted this case. "My hope is that the court's significant sentence sends a message that criminal behavior motivated by bias is not acceptable in Multnomah County."

The jury, which returned its verdict on October 31, 2019, found that Henry unlawfully and intentionally, because of his perception of the sexual orientation of the victim, subjected the victim to offensive physical contact and that he unlawfully and intentionally harassed and annoyed the victim.

This investigation started on June 7, 2019 when Henry rode his bike up to a group of Portland Sidewalk Ambassadors assigned to the City of Portland's Clean & Safe District.

The Sidewalk Ambassador Program provides information and assistance to downtown visitors, residents and workers.

When this incident occurred, the group was at a kiosk by Pioneer Place.

One of the ambassadors had a Pride rainbow bandana hanging from his backpack.

During trial, one of the ambassadors testified that Henry yelled out "federal target" to the group, which did not immediately understand the meaning.

Henry then "flicked" the rainbow flag and said something to the effect of "we don't like that on these streets," referring to the flag.

The victim challenged Henry and told him to leave, which is when Henry abruptly tried to punch the victim with a full swing, according to court testimony. The victim was able to lean back to avoid being punched in the chest.

Officers with the Portland Police Bureau's Bike Theft Task Force responded and obtained surveillance video that showed Henry approach on the bike acting aggressively and flicking the victim's rainbow flag, according to evidence presented during trial.

The Multnomah County District Attorney's Office was an active participant of the Oregon Attorney General's Hate Crimes Task Force and helped draft the language that was in Senate Bill 577. The law, which went into effect on July 15, 2019, renamed the crime of "intimidation" to "bias crime," added gender identity to the list of protected categories and removed the requirement that two or more people commit the crime in order to make it a felony in certain circumstances.

This case was issued before Oregon's new bias crime law went into effect. As a result, the crime Henry was convicted of should be referred to as "intimidation in the second degree."

All potential bias crime cases, whether they are a felony or misdemeanor, are reviewed by the Violent Crimes Unit within the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office. If a case is issued, the felony-level attorney will retain the case.

If you are the victim of a bias crime assault or you are witnessing one, immediately call 9-1-1. If you are the victim of a bias crime and the suspect is no longer present or if you have information about a bias crime committed in the past, call the non-emergency line at 503-823-3333.

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