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Michael Black sentenced to formal probation following hate crimes investigation, conviction

Today, Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill announced that 65-year-old Michael Black received a formal probation sentence after a judge found him guilty of intentionally putting an African American teen in fear of imminent serious physical injury because of the victim's race.

The court convicted Black of one count of intimidation in the second degree and one count of menacing.

"This crime occurred because of the prejudicial and racist assumptions Mr. Black made because of the victim's race," said Multnomah Deputy District Attorney BJ Park who prosecuted this case. "Mr. Black, a white male, made threats to shoot a 14 year old African American and his friends simply because they walked by his house and he didn't like that and because of the victim's race."

During a victim impact statement, the victim's mother described the impact this incident had on her son, family and community.

Court imposed sentence in State v. Black

• Three years of formal probation;
• Complete 150 hours of community service;
• Have no possession of weapons;
• Complete an anger management course or diversity-sensitivity training;
• Write an apology letter to the victim and his family.

If Black fails to comply with the terms of his probation, or if he violates any laws during his probation, he could face additional sanctions, including up to 364 days in jail.

This investigation started on May 10, 2019 when the victim and his friends were walking home from school around 7:30 p.m. following basketball practice. The victim was on his bike while his two other friends were walking. As a result, the victim would end up in front of his friends and then wait for them to catch up.

While in the 19400 block of Northeast Glisan Street, the victim rode his bicycle into a cul-de-sac. Black was sitting in a lawn chair in his garage at the end of the cul-de-sac.

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Black saw the victim riding his bike and proceeded to yell out “this is private property” and immediately used a racial slur. When the victim brushed off the remarks, Black yelled “I’ll blow your head off,” stood up and went inside his house.

The victim feared Black would come back outside with a gun. The victim never got off his bike, never approached Black and never made any verbal or physical threat.

All three of the teens started running away. Once safely at one of their homes, the boys reported what happened to an adult and police were notified.

When questioned by police, Black said he would have only shot at the victim had the victim attempted to come on his property but Black could not provide any reason as to why he believed the teen – who was approximately 50 feet away from him – was going to enter his home.

At his sentencing hearing, Black expressed remorse for his actions and apologized directly to the victim’s mother.

The Multnomah County District Attorney’s Office recognizes Gresham Police Officer Daniel Tatro, the lead investigator on this case. Furthermore, we recognize District Attorney Victim Advocate Chanel Thomas for the support and advocacy she provided the victim and his family throughout 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.

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 misdemeanor crime 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.

This crime occurred perform July 15, 2019 and so the charge Black was convicted of should be referred to as “intimidation in the second degree.”

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