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Bias crimes case filed against man who threatened a group of teens

Today, Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill announces 21-year-old John Yeargain is accused of threatening to cause serious physical injury to a group of teens because of his perception of the victims' race or the color of their skin.

Yeargain is charged with seven counts of bias crime in the first degree, seven counts of unlawful use of a weapon and seven counts of menacing.

According to court documents:

This investigation started on July 20, 2020 when the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office responded to a disturbance in the 800 block of Northeast Harlow Road in Troutdale, Oregon.

During the investigation, deputies learned that a man, later identified as Yeargain, approached the group of seven teens and used racial hate speech to threaten them while in possession of a weapon described as either a hatchet, axe or machete.

The group consisted of Hispanic and African American individuals aged 14-19.

MCSO deputies learned that while the group swam in the Sandy River an unidentified woman approached and directed racial hate speech toward the group of teens. During the fight, the unidentified woman used a backpack to hit one of the teens. The investigating MCSO deputies observed fresh injuries on the victim consistent with someone being hit with a backpack.

The identity of the woman remains unknown at this time.

The victims reported that after the fight, Yeargain and a group of individuals re-approached the teens and that Yeargain used racial hate speech, threatened the group and did so using a weapon.

MCSO deputies contacted Yeargain who denied being involved in any disturbance. However, he confirmed seeing the fight between one of the teens and the unidentified woman. While speaking with the sheriff's office, Yeargain used racial hate speech several times while describing the group.

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

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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.

COVID-19 Notice

The health and well-being of all employees and community members we serve is a top priority for the Multnomah County District Attorney. Our office is working with the court, defense bar, local law enforcement and other system partners to carefully balance the needs of public health and public safety.

For information about the operational changes implemented by the District Attorney's Office in response to the novel coronavirus, please [click here](#).

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