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Louisiana Man Indicted for Federal Civil Rights Violations for Nooses Targeting "Jena Six" Marchers

WASHINGTON – Grace Chung Becker, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division, and Donald W. Washington, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Louisiana, today announced the indictment of Jeremiah Munsen, 18, on federal hate crime and conspiracy charges for his role in threatening and intimidating marchers who participated in a civil rights rally in Jena, Louisiana, by displaying two hangman's nooses from the back of a pickup truck.

The indictment alleges that on Sept. 20, 2007, Munsen, along with another individual, conspired to threaten and intimidate the African-American marchers because they were exercising a federally protected right to travel between states. According to the indictment, Munsen and his co-conspirator fashioned two nooses out of extension cords while discussing the Ku Klux Klan and the civil rights rally in Jena. Munsen and his co-conspirator then attached the nooses to a truck and traveled to Alexandria (near Jena, Louisiana) where they repeatedly drove slowly past a group of marchers gathered at a bus depot waiting for buses that would return them to Tennessee. In addition to the civil rights conspiracy charge, the indictment also charges the defendants with a federal hate crime.

"This indictment accuses the defendant of conduct that constitutes a federal civil rights conspiracy violation and a federal hate crime," U.S. Attorney Donald W. Washington said. "It is a violation of federal law to intimidate, oppress, injure or threaten people because their race and because those people are exercising and enjoying rights guaranteed and protected by the laws and Constitution of the United States. Our civil rights laws protect the civil rights of all Americans, and they remind us that we are all members of one particular race - the human race."

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Alexandria Police Department investigated this case, which is being prosecuted jointly by the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The charges set forth in an indictment are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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