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## **Colorado Man Sentenced to 16 Years in Federal Prison for Unprovoked Stabbing of Black Man**

*Defendant previously pleaded guilty to a federal hate crime*

EUGENE, Ore.— A Colorado man was sentenced to federal prison today for stabbing a Black man from Ontario, Oregon, while the man was sitting in a fast-food restaurant.

Nolan Levi Strauss, 27, was sentenced to 16 years in federal prison and five years' supervised release.

"This defendant is being held accountable for his brutal and racially-motivated attack against a Black man carried out because of the color of his skin," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "Racially motivated attacks have no place in our society, and the Civil Rights Division will continue to vigorously enforce federal laws that prohibit bias motivated violence."

"We hope the lengthy sentence imposed today will bring some measure of peace and closure for the man viciously attacked by Nolan Strauss," said Acting U.S. Attorney Scott Erik Asphaug for the District of Oregon. "The sentence should also send a clear message to anyone contemplating similar acts of violence: hatred and bigotry will not be tolerated."

"All Oregonians should be able to live and work without fear that their skin color will mark them for violence," said Special Agent in Charge Kieran L. Ramsey of the FBI Oregon Field Office. "Beyond the physical and emotional damage done to a victim, such violence can infect an entire community with divisiveness and despair. This is not the kind of place that any of us want to raise our families, and we stand with the entire community in saying this is not acceptable and we will not allow it."

According to court documents and statements made at the sentencing hearing, on the morning of Dec. 21, 2019, Strauss was at a Pilot Travel Center in Ontario, Oregon, when he saw a Black man walk into the adjoining Arby's Restaurant. Strauss did not know the man and had never seen him before, but he decided he wanted to kill the man, because he was Black. The man was at the Arby's to provide documentation for a pending job application. He sat in a booth by himself and waited to meet with the restaurant manager, when Strauss entered the building and approached the man from behind.

Suddenly, unprovoked and without warning, Strauss stabbed the man twice in the neck, cutting his jugular vein and causing blood to rush out of the man's neck. The man struggled to wrest the

knife from Strauss, certain that he would die if he was stabbed again. A maintenance worker approached Strauss and directed him to drop the knife several times. Finally, the stabbing victim broke free from Strauss's grip and ran to the other side of the restaurant where he collapsed on the floor, his clothes soaked with blood. While employees tried to provide first aid to the victim and his life-threatening injuries, the maintenance worker used a belt to secure Strauss's hands behind his back and waited for police to arrive.

While they waited, the worker asked Strauss why he stabbed the man. Strauss replied, "Because he was Black, and I don't like Black people." Strauss was arrested at the scene. In two interviews with the police later that day, Strauss explained his beliefs about Black people, describing them as manipulative, lacking morality, and "not good people." As Strauss told police, the color of the victim's skin was Strauss's "only problem with him."

As a result of Strauss's attack, the stabbing victim suffered two large lacerations to his neck. He was evaluated in Ontario and subsequently life-flighted to a hospital in Boise, Idaho, for emergency surgery.

On Sept. 17, 2020, a federal grand jury in Eugene returned a one-count indictment charging Strauss with a hate crime involving an attempt to kill. On June 17, 2021, he pleaded guilty to the charge.

During sentencing, U.S. District Court Judge Michael J. McShane ordered Strauss to pay \$X in restitution to his victim.

This case was investigated by the FBI with assistance from the Ontario Police Department, Oregon State Police and the Malheur County District Attorney's Office. It was prosecuted by Trial Attorney Cameron A. Bell for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Gavin W. Bruce for the District of Oregon.

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