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Contact: Leslie Wolf Branscomb at
lawolf@sandiego.gov or (619) 533-5896

Hate Crime Conviction Obtained in Crest Café Case

Defendant used slurs, knocked over tables, scrawled swastika on window

San Diego City Attorney Mara W. Elliott announced that her office has secured a conviction for a hate crime that impacted employees and customers of the Crest Café in Hillcrest.

Cameron James, 43, pleaded guilty on January 6 to misdemeanor battery with a hate crime allegation and interfering with a business. The judge denied probation and sentenced James to 273 days in jail.

On July 24, 2021, James approached the Crest Café on Robinson Avenue and called an employee a “faggot” and other slurs. The Crest Café has Pride flags and other LGBTQ+ symbols displayed at the business. During the incident, the defendant threw a tray of food at the victim, knocked over tables and chairs, struck the victim with a chair, drew a swastika on the window of the café, and told the victim, “You’re gonna die tonight.”

When police arrived, James was found on the ground near the restaurant, possibly intoxicated.

“An assault on our LGBTQ+ community is an assault on all of us. This conviction sends a strong message that hateful speech and violent behavior is unacceptable and will not be tolerated,” City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. **“Everyone deserves to be safe in their own community and free from abuse.”**

The City Attorney’s Office has prosecuted more than 23 hate crime cases in the past three years. A hate crime is defined as a crime against a person, group, or property motivated by bias against the victim based on the victim’s actual or perceived membership in a protected social group. Examples include threats, both verbal or written; physical assault or attempted assault; and hate-related graffiti, including swastikas and other offensive symbols.

This case was prosecuted by Chief Deputy City Attorney Taylor Hearnberger of the Special Prosecutions Unit, under the supervision of Assistant City Attorney Paige Folkman.

What to do if you are the victim of a hate crime:

- If you have been assaulted, contact 911 or go to a local hospital if you need immediate medical attention.
- You can also report hate crimes to the San Diego Police Department by contacting the SDPD's 24-hour number for non-emergency calls and general information at (619) 531-2000. Call (858) 484-3154 if you live in the 858 area code.
- Or you can file a crime report online at <https://www.sandiego.gov/police/services/file-police-report>. You can also call the City Attorney's Office at (619) 236-6220.

For more information, please visit the City Attorney's website, here:
<https://www.sandiego.gov/cityattorney/resources/say-no-to-hate>.

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