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LOUISIANA MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL HATE CRIME FOR NOOSES TARGETING “JENA SIX” MARCHERS

LAFAYETTE, LA - Grace Chung Becker, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division, and Donald W. Washington, United States Attorney for the Western District of Louisiana, today announced that Jeremiah Munsen, 18, of Colfax, Louisiana, pled guilty to a federal hate crime for his role in using nooses to threaten marchers who participated in the “Jena Six” civil rights rally.

On September 20, 2007, in an incident that garnered national media attention, Munsen and another person allegedly attached the nooses to the back of a pickup truck and repeatedly drove slowly and menacingly past a large group of African American individuals who had gathered at a bus depot in Alexandria, Louisiana, after attending the civil rights rally in Jena.

The defendant admitted today that he displayed two large, life-sized nooses from the back of his pickup truck with the intent to frighten and intimidate the demonstrators. He and the other person with him hung the nooses in a manner so as to be clearly visible to the gathered demonstrators, and Munsen then drove past the group two or three times while the other person glared out the window at the demonstrators. Munsen further admitted that he and the other person had previously discussed the Ku Klux Klan and how they thought the Klan would have responded to the rally in Jena, and he acknowledged that the Jena Six rally followed extensive public discussion regarding, among other things, the history of racial lynchings in the United States and the perception that a noose, when displayed in a racial context, constituted a symbol of racial violence.

At sentencing on August 15, 2008, at 9:30 a.m., Munsen faces a maximum punishment of 1 year in prison and a \$100,000 fine.

Acting Assistant Attorney General Grace Chung Becker said, “The defendant used a noose to threaten peaceful civil rights marchers who were in Louisiana to rally against racial intolerance,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Becker. “The Department of Justice will continue to vigorously pursue these types of racially motivated threats when they violate federal law.

United States Attorney Donald W. Washington said, “The defendant today took

responsibility for committing a federal hate crime by using a powerful symbol of hate to intimidate a group of interstate travelers because of their race. It is a violation of federal law to intimidate, oppress, injure or threaten people because of 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 was prosecuted jointly by the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice and the United States Attorney’s Office.

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