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THREE MEN SENTENCED FOR ATTEMPTING TO INTIMIDATE
AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS AT BEEKMAN JUNIOR HIGH
SCHOOL, BEEKMAN, LOUISIANA, MOREHOUSE PARISH

Monroe, La.: United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley announced that three men were sentenced yesterday for a federal hate crime stemming from an incident that took place at Beekman Junior High School in Beekman, La., Parish of Morehouse. U.S. Magistrate Judge Karen Hayes sentenced James Lee Wallis Jr. to eight months in prison, Tony L. Johnson to six months in prison and Brian Wallis to five months in prison. All three defendants will also receive one year of supervised release and must attend a cultural diversity and sensitivity program.

On Aug. 12, 2011, defendant Tony L. Johnson, 31, of West Monroe, La., pleaded guilty to intentionally attempting to intimidate and interfere with African-American students who were attending Beekman Junior High School. Brothers Brian Wallis, 22, of Conway, Ark., and James Lee Wallis Jr., 26, of Bastrop, La., pleaded guilty to the same offense on Sept. 2, 2011. During their respective plea hearings, all three defendants admitted that they hung a dead raccoon in a noose from a flagpole located in front of Beekman Junior High School. They each further admitted that they were angered by the school's new busing policy, which had increased the number of African-American children attending the school, and that they wanted to scare the African-American children into leaving the school.

"Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division Thomas E. Perez, stated, "Every child, regardless of race, is entitled to an education free from intimidation or discrimination. Unfortunately, acts of hate such as this one are all too common in this country in 2012. The Justice Department will continue to enforce our nation's civil rights laws in order to protect the most vulnerable in our society."

“U.S. Attorney Finley stated, “There is no place in our schools for this kind of intimidation. Every child has the right to an education and to feel safe in school. I hope this case sends a message that this type of activity will not be taken lightly.”

The investigation was conducted by the FBI. The case was prosecuted by Supervisory Assistant U.S. Attorney Mary J. Mudrick, Western District of Louisiana, and Senior Litigation Counsel Mark Blumberg and Trial Attorney Christine M. Siscaretti of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

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