



Department of Justice

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THREE BRANDON, MISS., MEN PLEAD GUILTY FOR THEIR ROLES IN THE RACIALLY MOTIVATED ASSAULT AND MURDER OF AN AFRICAN- AMERICAN MAN

Victim Died After Being Run Over by Truck

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department announced today that Deryl Paul Dedmon, 19, John Aaron Rice, 19, and Dylan Wade Butler, 20, all from Brandon, Miss., pleaded guilty today in U.S. District Court in Jackson to federal hate crime charges in connection with an assault culminating in the death of James Craig Anderson, an African-American man, in the summer of 2011.

Dedmon, Rice and Butler were each charged with one count of conspiracy and one count of violating the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, for their roles in the death-resulting assault of Anderson, 47, of Jackson, Miss. Dedmon, Rice and Butler entered guilty pleas to both counts. The maximum penalty for these charges is life in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

“We hope that today’s guilty pleas provide some closure to the victim’s family and to the grievously wounded community that has mourned Mr. Anderson’s death,” said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “Today’s historic pleas mark the first time that the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act has been used in a case where the defendants’ actions resulted in a victim’s death. The Department of Justice will vigorously pursue those who commit racially motivated assaults and will use every tool at our disposal to ensure that those who commit such acts are brought to justice. And I note that our investigation in this matter is ongoing.”

“The actions of these defendants who have pled guilty do not represent the values of Mississippi in 2012,” said John Dowdy Jr., U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi. “The swift and certain investigation by the Jackson Police Department and especially the FBI shows that crimes committed because of a person’s race will not be tolerated. Justice will be color-blind, and hopefully this pursuit of justice in Mr. Anderson’s death will help the family in their healing process.”

“Hate itself is not a crime, and the FBI is mindful of protecting freedom of speech and other civil liberties. The investigation into the murder of James Craig Anderson was

not simply an effort to identify who was responsible, it was incumbent upon the FBI to uncover and prove the motivation behind the crime,” said Dan McMullen, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI. “The answer we discovered, put simply, was that James Craig Anderson was killed because of the color of his skin. Hate crimes have a devastating impact on families and communities, and every sector of our community has a role to play in helping to ensure that no person is targeted for violence because of who they are, what they look like or what they believe.”

Today in court, Dedmon, Rice and Butler admitted that beginning in the spring of 2011, they and others conspired with one another to harass and assault African-Americans in and around west Jackson. On numerous occasions, the co-conspirators used dangerous weapons, including beer bottles, sling shots and motor vehicles, to cause, and attempt to cause, bodily injury to African-Americans. They would specifically target African-Americans they believed to be homeless or under the influence of alcohol because they believed that such individuals would be less likely to report an assault. The co-conspirators would often boast about these racially motivated assaults.

The defendants further admitted that on June 25, 2011, they and others attended a birthday party in Puckett, Miss., for a mutual friend. During the party, the defendants and others talked about going to Jackson to harass and assault African-Americans. By the early morning hours of June 26, 2011, the defendants and four other co-conspirators agreed to carry out their plan to find, harass and assault African-Americans.

At around 4:15 a.m., Rice, Butler and two co-conspirators drove to west Jackson in a white Jeep with the understanding that Dedmon and two other co-conspirators would join them a short time later. Rice, Butler and the other two occupants of the Jeep then drove around west Jackson and threw beer bottles from the moving vehicle at African-American pedestrians they encountered. At approximately 5:00 a.m., Rice, Butler and the other two occupants of the Jeep spotted Anderson in a motel parking lot off Ellis Avenue. The occupants of the Jeep decided that Anderson would be a good target for an assault because he was African-American and appeared to be intoxicated. Rice and another co-conspirator decided to get out of the Jeep to distract Anderson while they waited for Dedmon and the other co-conspirators to arrive.

After Dedmon and the other two co-conspirators arrived in Dedmon’s Ford F250 truck, Dedmon and Rice physically assaulted Anderson. Rice first punched Anderson in the face with sufficient force to knock Anderson to the ground, and then Dedmon punched Anderson in the face multiple times while he was on the ground. After the assault, Rice, Butler and two co-conspirators left the motel parking lot in the Jeep. As they left, one of the occupants of the Jeep yelled, “White Power!” Prior to getting back into his truck, Dedmon responded by also yelling “White Power!” Once back in his truck, Dedmon deliberately used his truck to run over Anderson, causing injuries which resulted in Anderson’s death.

After Anderson's death, a number of the co-conspirators including Rice and Butler agreed to, and did, give false statements to law enforcement officials about the nature of their interactions with Anderson.

These guilty pleas were the result of a cooperative effort among the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Mississippi and the Hinds County, Miss., District Attorney's Office. This case was investigated by the Jackson Division of the FBI and the Jackson Police Department. It is being prosecuted by Trial Attorney Sheldon L. Beer and Deputy Chief Paige M. Fitzgerald of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, and Glenda R. Haynes of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Mississippi.

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